



## Changing cycling from ground up

**Wheel strategy - A city bicycle summit looks at increasing ridership, safety and awareness**

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At the bicycle conference, Jim Middaugh introduced himself in a thrifty way: "Recovering auto user. I've been straight now 12 years."

Beth Hamon identified herself as the founder of a sublime bicycle touring event -- "Slug Velo" -- that features monthly rides for anyone who likes a low velocity. "Socially paced," she said.

They were among about 400 people who vigorously participated in a city-sponsored Bike Summit at Portland State University on Saturday. The summit asked, and made a start at trying to answer, versions of this question:

In times of rising gas prices, dependence on oil and nationally escalating obesity rates, what are strategies to get more people onto bikes while expanding the state's bicycle industry?

Answers included making byways safer and arranging buddy systems to help newcomers commute. Another hope: Helping bike-oriented businesses network to build on Portland's "Gold" ranking -- the highest of any large U.S. city -- from The League of American Bicyclists.

Bicycle safety -- and perceptions of safety by prospective bike riders -- were major discussion topics. Solutions included public education and rethinking roadway designs.

Saturday's summit followed last week's unveiling of a study, commissioned by the Portland Office of Transportation, that said bicycling has created a Portland business segment of 600 to 800 jobs while annually generating \$63 million. The report also said that Portland averaged about six bike-related events per day.

The summit was a chance for attendees to brainstorm how to become the first big city in the nation to achieve "Platinum" bicycling status, with the attendant marketing plums. The key, most agreed, would require blending teamwork with hard work.

"I hope there won't be too much self-congratulation because I'm in a feisty mood, and I want all of you to be in a feisty mood," City Commissioner Sam Adams, who oversees the city's transportation office, said with a smile. He urged them to continue helping Portland create "the kind of city where you can have a life without having a car."

Rep. Earl Blumenauer, D-Ore., said that it was important to get back to the basics of walking and pedaling and that he had saved hundreds of hours, and thousands of dollars, by riding a bike whenever possible. Yet public acceptance is far from complete, and he mentioned a time at the White House when guards questioned him when he showed up with a bike.

"We did establish with my identification that I was a member of Congress," Blumenauer said, and then they let him in.

Asked by moderators how to get more people on bicycles, attendees offered ideas:

Create rental hubs where anyone could find a bike and get the latest on routes and other cycling information. Educate delivery businesses about the uses and availability of cargo carts that enable a cyclist to haul several hundred pounds of goods. Create a lot more parking for bikes. Become a center for electrically powered bicycles.

Evan Manvel, executive director of the Bicycle Transportation Alliance, said a BTA study found 60 percent of the population was interested in riding but not quite there. He unveiled a major BTA campaign to create

safe bicycle routes for children between home and school while designating more low-traffic side streets partly as boulevards for bicycles. Manvel characterized those as relatively inexpensive steps that could have a giant impact.

"We are seeing the beginning of the revolution," he said.

Before many attendees finished the day with a bike tour of boulevards, one of the workshop panelists brought the business of changing habits down to a daily choice: Whether to take the car or bike.

"That one decision you make in the morning, when you are leaving," said Timo Forsberg, "is the point of change."

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