



OKLAHOMA
BICYCLE SOCIETY

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ON BIKES AND BIKE TRAILS

— Debbie Allen

Bicycling today is experiencing a tremendous boom. In 1972 alone, over 13 million bikes were sold — 2.4 million more than the number of cars in the same time. It is estimated that there are presently over 80 million bike riders in the country. Along with this boom is a trend away from considering a bike as merely a children's toy, but also as a viable means of transportation and recreation for adults.

Increased interest in bicycling by voting adults has caused increased pressure on law-makers at all levels of government to provide funds for the construction of bike trails and facilities. And, gradually, progress is being made.

On the local level in Oklahoma, Norman and Stillwater are working on developing bikeways and already have several miles of bike lanes and trails. Tulsa has just completed a 2½ mile bike path along the Arkansas River. They have designated 5 bike routes and are planning on extending the system. Oklahoma City is currently studying the feasibility of marking off a bike lane on the road around Lake Overholser and is going to request money for bike trails in the next general city bond election.

In the state legislature there are currently two versions of a bill (number 1368 and committee substitute for 1368) sponsored by representative Lindstrom of Lawton which provide for funding of a system of bicycle, hiking, and equestrian trails. One bill calls for the trails system to be under the jurisdiction of the state highway department and one under the state parks department. Both bills are now being studied in committee.

There has even been progress toward bike trails on the federal level. The recently passed Federal Aid Highway Act of 1973 allows up to \$40 million of highway trust funds to be spent for bicycle trails and pedestrian walkways (no state to spend over \$2 million of these funds per year). These funds are matched by the states with the Federal government paying from 50 to 90% of the cost. An important part of this bill is that these bikeways may be built on available land not on the highway right-of-way so long as the bike route accommodates bicycle traffic which otherwise would have used the federal-aid route; i.e., bike riders will not necessarily have to travel 10 feet from an interstate highway.

This all sounds very encouraging to the bike rider. There is tremendous potential for bike trail development right now; it could also stop cold right now unless there is con-

siderable input from bike riders demanding that trails be built and also helping in the planning process. While the federal funds are available, it does not say in the law that these funds have to be spent; only that up to \$40 million may be spent. On the state level money is always scarce; legislators will not support a bike trail bill unless the 43% of the population that rides bikes tell them that this is one way they want their tax dollars spent. And cities must not be allowed to feel that three or four miles of bike trails are in any way adequate for the bicycling population; unless supported they will tend to "rest on their laurels" and not tackle the hard problems of providing a viable bicycle trail network for the city.

What can you, as a bike rider do? Write your councilman and mayor, saying you want bike paths. Write representative Lindstrom and your state representative saying that you support bill 1368. Call your city planning department and ask how you can help with their bike trail plan (and if they aren't working on one, ask why not). If you, and everyone who reads this, devotes a half hour today to these calls and letters, Oklahoma will get its bike trail system.

Editor's note: Debbie Allen is a vivacious young mother of one. She is the Oklahoma City Parks & Recreation Councilwoman for Ward 2. She spent the summer putting together a plan for bikeways in Oklahoma City which is presently under consideration by the City Parks Commission. She is basically an environmentalist with the Sierra Club and became enthusiastic about bicycles after attending the National Symposium on Bicycles in Boston in June this year.

Strong Support for Bicycles in Oklahoma City

The Director of Parks and Recreation Department, Mr. R.R. "Pat" Murphy, is a real friend of the bicyclist. In an interview with Mr. Murphy, Pat was found to be way ahead of most people. He has been thinking bicycles for years. He has gone on record for bicycle pathways to be included in the Broadway Extension and Capitol Expressway road structures. He also has been encouraging consideration of an East-West bicycle route along Reno using the drainage canal in the median. He envisions covering the drainage canal over in such a fashion that it could be utilized for bikes. This may all sound strange coming from the Manager of Parks and Recreation, but in his years of experience with Oklahoma City development, he sees the need to develop transportation modes in and out of the City center for other than private automobiles.

Pat Murphy was very enthusiastic in supporting our Century Ride. And, when he found that bicyclists had on occasion been prohibited from using the roadways in and

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