

OUTDOORS

Overdue bike/ped plan may be forthcoming

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Cycling is unquestionably very popular in Southwest Florida, as are the pedestrian activities of running, in-line skating, and especially walking. One can find many people using human-power for exercise, recreation, transportation, and fun just about anywhere or anytime.

As anyone who engages in these activities can attest, some places have ideal conditions for one or all of these while others are downright scary, if even accessible. Considering that we spend enormous amounts of money to plan, design, and build infrastructure that benefit motorists it seems only fair that we give enough consideration for human-powered users as well.

That's not to say that we don't pay any attention or expend some resources on pedestrians, cyclists, and those with disabilities, because that's not the case. But we clearly don't do enough, as is evidenced by the fact that there are still

many places where a non-motorist can't safely or efficiently access — a situation motorists don't face.

Case in point: Try riding your bike on Cypress Lake Drive or College Parkway — not on the sidewalk but on the road. Pedestrians are accommodated but cyclists are totally overlooked. Unless you are willing to brave heavy and fast traffic, you must deal with riding on a 5 to 6-foot concrete rollercoaster (i.e. the sidewalk) with so many driveway hazards it's not if, but when, a collision with an exiting or entering motor vehicle will occur, not to mention the problems a cyclist's presence creates for pedestrian users.

Another example: Take a walk on U.S. 41 from just north of Crystal Drive to Daniels Parkway/Cypress Lake Drive. Wear good shoes because you'll be traversing the ditch; a sidewalk doesn't exist on either side of that segment of one of our major north-south roads. Like most of U.S. 41, this section is also a key business corridor and primary transit route. How is this possible? By the way, there's a poorly designed paved shoulder so cyclists aren't as bad off as are pedestrians, although conditions aren't sufficient.

Those are but two cases of inadequacies in our bicycle/pedestrian network; there are many, many more. But we have an opportunity to begin addressing these shortcomings in a comprehensive manner that will include all public-access roads.

Recently, the Lee County Metropolitan Planning Organization, a body of elected officials representing our various

jurisdictions, has indicated its interest in moving forward on MPO staff's recommendation to create a bicycle/pedestrian master plan that would identify needs and develop strategies for prioritizing the funding necessary to implement a plan that would tie together roads managed by state, county, and every municipality. Currently each jurisdiction has one form of plan or another, some very comprehensive while others are merely a "wish list." Ideally, an MPO plan would work from existing plans — making improvements to those that are lacking in enough substance to be effective — and coordinate them all. A trails and greenways element would also be an important component of the final product.

Creating an effective transportation network takes careful comprehensive planning, something the MPO and various other local governments have done well, at least in terms of motor vehicle accommodation. It's now time to do the same for the many other users for whom our public rights of way are intended. If you agree, please take a moment to contact your elected representative to express your support for this initiative. If you don't know exactly who to approach, you can always pass along your comments to Lee County MPO by e-mailing MPO Director Don Scott at dscott@swfrpc.org or calling (239) 338-2550 ext. 238. Or, of course, I'd be happy to take your comments and get them to MPO members and staff.

Until next time, I'll look for you on the roads. ■

☰ Bike/ped happenings ☑ ☰

Summer's brutal weather is nearing an end so bicycling, running, and walking events will soon abound. Here's a listing of some local near-term activities:

CYCLING:

- >> **Trek Breast Cancer Awareness Ride** Oct. 11 from Coconut Point Mall. <http://trekbikesflorida.com>
- >> **Everyone Rides** Nov. 2 from Buckingham Park. www.everyonerides.org
- >> **Caloosahatchee River Ride** Nov. 23 from Caloosahatchee Regional Park. <http://crca.caloosachee.org>
- >> **Iron Joe Turkey Ride** Nov. 30 from North Collier Regional Park. www.naplespathways.org
- Visit Caloosa Riders Bicycle Club** at www.caloosariders.com for more information on local bicycling activities, including weekly rides, and Florida Bicycle Association at www.floridabicycle.org for statewide happenings.

RUNNING:

- >> **Fort Myers Cops & Joggers 5K** Oct. 25 in downtown Fort Myers
 - >> **Veterans Day Midpoint Madness 5K** Nov. 11 at Royal Palm Square on Colonial & Summerlin
 - >> **Turkey Trot 5K** Nov. 27 at Cape Coral Hospital
 - >> **River Run 10K and 2-Mile Walk** Dec. 6 in downtown Fort Myers
- For details** of these and other running events the Fort Myers Track Club website is the place to go — www.fortmyerstrackclub.com.

— Dan Moser is league cycling instructor/trainer and a former bike/ped coordinator who cycles regularly for transportation, recreation, and fitness. He may be contacted at moserdeleon@juno.com or (239) 334-6417.

Where's the Blueway Mobile?

- >> **Saturday, Oct. 11:** At Kids Day at Bass Pro Shops Outdoor World in Gulf Coast Town Center
- >> **Sunday, Oct. 12:** At the second annual Pirate Festival in Fort Myers Beach

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