

NIH'ers Ride Bikes To Save Energy And Money

Rising gasoline prices and the initiation of parking fees in November have spurred NIH employees to find alternate ways of getting to and from work. Over the past 6 months, employees have turned to the bicycle as a way to beat the additional expense of transportation, to help save on energy, and to improve their health.

On Nov. 7, 150 employees heard NIH Director Dr. Donald S. Fredrickson, Montgomery County transportation officials, and representatives of the Maryland-National Park and Planning Commission speak on the development of the bikeway system for NIH and the surrounding area.

The meeting marked the first time a Federal organization solicited help from Montgomery County to assist bicyclists. NIH is the largest

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Dr. Fredrickson starts out for a noon-hour ride after taking his bicycle from a bike rack near his office.—Photo by Gary Best.

BIKES

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employer in the county, and each day over 300 bicyclists enter and leave its grounds.

One of the new breed of employees travels up to 22 miles per day to get to work. Most employees who ride their bikes to work, however, average 5 to 6 miles per day round trip. Their bikes may be placed at bike racks located at 18 different NIH locations. All a "bikie" must provide is the lock and chain for his or her own bike.

One of the two-wheel enthusiasts is Dr. Fredrickson, who each day, weather permitting, rides his bike from his home to his office in Bldg. 1. "Besides encouraging our NIH employees to conserve energy, I can't think of a more appropriate organization to take the lead in supporting a form of transportation that provides a health benefit," he said at the NIH biking program meeting.

Presently, Montgomery County plans call for the construction of access areas to NIH from the east side of Cedar Lane and Rockville Pike and on the south side from Battery Lane to NIH by next spring.

Curb and ramp construction is already taking place at all major crossroads at NIH.

After the loop road is completed next spring, NIH plans to install a trail-marked bike lane for NIH employees. The lane will run from Old Georgetown Road to Rockville Pike, along Lincoln Drive, and will include a lane along the Service Roads down South and Center Drives.

"We had to add five each year," says Thomas J. Cook, chief, Maintenance and Landscaping Branch, about the number of additional bike racks that his office has provided on campus during the last 3 years.

He says that there seem to be more bike riders among the scientific community at NIH than among the administrative and support areas. There are over 100 bikies who work at Bldg. 10 and over 80 who use the racks at Bldgs. 36 and 37.

Currently there are no requirements to register bicycles with either the parking office or with the police at NIH.

After the Nov. 7 meeting, 95 employees signed up to organize an NIH Bicycle Commuters Association. The club's first organizational meeting will be in the Billings Auditorium at the National Library of Medicine, on Friday, Dec. 7, from 12 to 1:30 p.m. If you need additional information, call Dr. Harold A. Wooster, 496-4441.