
Advocacy Column

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Firstly, thank you to Janice, Todd and Sue for the opportunity to fill the role of Advocacy chair for the club. This role is a natural fit for my interest as a cyclist, and hopefully the club's as well. Prior to this I already was working with the Providence Bike Coalition on local issues and welcome the challenge to act at a larger scale and with the support of the members of the NBW. Unfortunately there is only one of me and I cannot effectively know about every opportunity to act as a nudge to our local governments to take cyclists' interests and safety seriously. If you are aware of such an opportunity in your community, or another group which the NBW can act in concert with, please let me know at advocacy@nbwclub.org.

By the time you read this, I will have attended the 10th annual National Bicycle Summit, hosted by the League of American Bicyclists in Washington DC. The primary purpose of this gathering is to make our national legislators aware of bills currently in progress that could benefit their cycling constituents as well as the communities and people who they represent. This year, efforts are focused on the Complete Streets Act of 2009, the transportation funding bill and several others. With jobs and the economy being the primary focus for many, it is even more important than ever to be sure that cyclists are not marginalized and show how funding for cycling can serve to create jobs and improve the economy.

On the local scene, "Frank's Law", a law intended to protect cyclists by providing for penalties for passing cyclists too closely, is still working its way through the RI state legislature. Various cycling organizations are working to improve the wording of the law to improve enforceability, provide stiff penalties and cover all vulnerable road users. Hopefully, the recently-passed ban on texting while driving, in effect since November, has already improved the safety on our roads for pedestrians, motorists and cyclists.

Also locally, the week of May 17 to 21 is Bike to Work week, a week to make cyclists' presence apparent and real for other road users and our local governments. If you have the opportunity to bicycle to work during this week, please do so. Many communities will be holding events on May 21, a Friday, for Bike-to-Work day. In Providence, the Providence Bike Coalition will be acting as host, but no details have been published as yet. Watch <http://bikeprovidence.org> for more information.



NBW booth at Bike-to-Work-Day, May 2009, downtown Providence. Howard Stone advises on bike routes, with the help of the 2009 NBW Guide to Cycling in the Ocean State (RIDOT's bike map). Photo: M Foulkes

Lastly, in conjunction with the Greenways Alliance of Rhode Island, various small organizations have received funding to encourage youth cycling, improve signage on the South County Bicycle Path and assist Recycle-A-Bike's earn-a-bike program with supplies and parts that cannot be recovered from donated bicycles.

Time for our annual reminder on how to ride in a group ...

“On your left” How to pass other riders

Please alert other riders as you are about to pass them. Not only is it the polite thing to do, it's the safest way to pass. If you startle the rider by passing without alerting them you run the risk of them swerving into you. Do not pass on the right (on the inside) of other riders ... we really mean that ... do not pass on the right!

Pass on the left—only on the left—and alert by saying “On your left” or “Passing on your left”.