

*Get Connected –  
Promoting Nonmotorized Transportation in Sheboygan County*

**By Aaron Brault – Nonmotorized Pilot Program Project Specialist**

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Bike and Walk to Work Week has come and gone and though this is only an opinion, I think I am seeing many more folks out there biking and walking for non-recreational trips! Hopefully, the efforts of our week of events helped spur some of these increases in nonmotorized activity. Although, I have to admit, I am guessing the price of gasoline has also helped our cause. Either way, it is a win for the health of our community, our air quality (which is some of the worst in the State), and ultimately puts less demand on our infrastructure and thus, our pocketbooks.

Bike and Walk to Work Week witnessed many successes. To recap, Representative Petri kicked-off the week with a visit to one of our many nonmotorized breakfast stations we had set up. While there, he had the chance to chat with at least sixty nonmotorized commuters who happened to stop by. At the breakfast stations, commuters were greeted with a free cup of donated coffee and bakery, and at some locations a quick, free bike tune up. On at least two occasions throughout the week the stations proved so successful the coffee and bakery ran dry.

Many of the area's large employers took part. Nemschoff had great participation. By raffling off a free bike and providing a healthy lunch to their participants, they saw over fifteen percent of its local workforce pledge to participate. Some may say fifteen percent is not significant. However, that is about twelve percent better than the daily national average of employees who bike or walk to work.

Kohler Company and Aurora, two of the area's largest employers, had formal competitions to promote the week. Aurora raffled off more than \$500 to employees who participated. American Orthodontics and Curt Joa also showed much interest and support.

The County of Sheboygan, City of Sheboygan, and the Sheboygan Area School District employees challenged one another. Four individual awards were arranged to recognize the longest commute by both a biker and a walker and the most mileage by both a biker and walker. Josef Janicek's Sheboygan South metals class created a traveling trophy that went to the entity that tracked the most mileage per employee. Being a County employee, this is hard to declare, but the City of Sheboygan will hold the trophy this year. All told, the three entities logged over 2,500 nonmotorized miles throughout the week.

Congratulations should go out to all who participated. You helped make our first effort a great success. Also, many thanks go out to Paradigm Coffee House, Field to Fork, Hops Haven, and Exchange Bank Coffee House for their generous donations and efforts throughout the week.

Now, with that said, we encourage those who participated during the week to keep participating. Health-wise, the benefits speak for themselves. Time-wise, most of the County's commuters commute fifteen minutes or less. That corresponds to distances easily traveled by bicycle. Money-wise, the benefits are also obvious. For a good portion of our County's population, I do not think trying biking or walking to work, say at least once a week, is a huge undertaking and/or infeasible.

As an employer, the benefits of promoting biking or walking to work are quite significant as well. One, healthier employees equate to lower healthcare costs. Two, healthier employees equate to more productive employees. Studies show that employees arriving by foot or bike are more alert and more refreshed upon getting to work. Three, parking costs are alleviated. Walking is free and bike parking costs a couple hundred bucks. The average auto surface parking lot costs \$1,500 to build and roughly \$200 to maintain every year. In fact, I do not see any benefit in encouraging your employees to drive to work unless the employee actually uses their car for their work.

Sheboygan County is already a great place to live and work. With all your involvement, we are slowly becoming a leader in nonmotorized transportation thereby bolstering our quality of life, economic success, and overall health creating an even better place to call home.

Hope to see you out there!

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