

Cyclists hit York's streets for Bike in York Week

By *EMILY OPILO Daily Record/Sunday News York Daily Record/Sunday News*

Updated:

ydr.com

Lunch hour isn't just for eating anymore.

A group of nearly a dozen cyclists took to the streets of York at noon Thursday for Ride Over Lunch, a midday workout held as part of Bike In York Week.

The event, which got underway at Lafayette Plaza, took cyclists across town and back using some of the city's most bike-friendly routes: the Heritage Rail Trail County Park, the permanent bike lane on King Street, the Broad Street Greenway and Philadelphia Street, where the newly installed "sharrows" remind drivers to share the road.

The idea of biking at lunch isn't new. Shaun Underkoffler of the city health bureau and Will Clark, transportation planning chief for the county planning commission, have been taking lunchtime rides with small groups since April, and a few employees from the York YMCA have a similar group going, Underkoffler said.

But this is the first time the event has been included in the Bike In York Week schedule, and lunchtime rides will continue for the next few Tuesdays to encourage people to continue to exercise over lunch.

Organizers are hoping that the rides help people support and embrace bicycling as a means of transportation, Underkoffler said.

Beneath Thursday's sunny skies, a small group did just that. Flanked by two York City Police officers on bikes, the cyclists made their way through the city, eliciting many stares from residents and even other cyclists.

Traffic largely yielded for the group, even as the cyclists took up a lane of busy Philadelphia Street, and participants cheered happily when the ride leaders spontaneously decided to extend the ride to Carlisle Avenue.

Cindy Conley, a York Township resident, had to ride just a few blocks from her job at the York County Judicial Center to join the group. Conley and a friend ride to work everyday except in the winter. Some days it's almost as fast as driving because of the traffic, she said.

The lunchtime ride was a nice excuse to get out and enjoy the weather, Conley said.

Jeff Hines, president and CEO of York Water Company, was also among the participants. Hines, a regular cyclist, lives and works in downtown York.

The ride was his first go at the sharrows on Philadelphia Street. They seem to be working, he said.

"Drivers are on notice," Hines said. "But ever since the 4-foot law passed, drivers have been more aware."

York City Police Lt. Erik Kleynen accompanied the riders, giving them a little extra protection against the traffic. Kleynen, who heads up the city's neighborhood patrols, spends a lot of time on his bike for work.

The lunchtime ride and the rest of Bike in York Week has been an opportunity to help city drivers get used to having bikes on the road, he said.

"There's going to be a learning curve for motorists," Kleynen said. "It's good to get people out on bikes and expose (them)."

If you go

Ride Over Lunch is held every Tuesday at noon for the next several weeks. (This week's ride was postponed to Thursday because of weather.) Riders can meet at Lafayette Plaza (across from the York City School District

administration building).

Several loaner bikes, donated by Gung Ho Bikes in Manchester Township, are available from the York City Bureau of Health. Anyone interested in riding can call Shaun Underkoffler, the bureau's community health program coordinator at 854-5090 several days in advance.

What's next

Officials are considering a bike sharing program with the donated bikes, said Will Clark, transportation planning chief for the county planning commission. Kiosks could be set up along Heritage Rail Trail County Park in the downtown and closer to York College, he said.

A lot of people have issues transporting their bikes to places where they can ride them. Bike sharing would help people to overcome that obstacle, Clark said.