

Insider

For February 4, 2009

By Kim Burger

Wow! I just got back from the fifth annual Bicycle Summit, conducted by the Iowa Bicycle Coalition with assistance from the Iowa Department of Transportation and Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation. Bicycling enthusiasts from around the state gathered to learn about building complete streets that accommodate, even invite pedestrian and cycling traffic in addition to motor vehicles. We also learned about the advantages of designing and locating schools where children can actually walk to them and how this would reduce traffic congestion, pollution, and the childhood obesity epidemic that's ravaging our country.

It was an interesting day. Steve Durrant, a senior landscape architect and planner with Alta Planning + Design in Portland, Oregon, provided the keynote session and showed us the importance and practicality of incorporating non-motorized transportation, urban trails, waterfront redevelopment, and open space planning in our communities. He provided real-life illustrations allowing us to begin to envision our communities in that vein.

We also learned how to plan successful Ride Your Bike to Work events, how the Dickinson Country Trail Association was established by the creative use of 28E agreements, and that Iowa Senators Joe Bolkcom, Bill Dotzler and Matt McCoy introduced the Iowa Bicyclists' Bill of Rights, which outlines the rights *and responsibilities* of bicyclists on the streets and highways, providing penalties for noncompliance on the part of either the cyclist or motorist.

The legendary Gary Fisher, a pioneer in off-road bicycling and famed mountain bike maker headlined the evening gala fundraising event, and the networking that occurred among participants is sure to be a valuable resource as we seek ways to encourage more cycling in our state and cross promote one another as quality destinations.

The annual summit is a great event, but during the other 363 days of the year the Iowa Bicycle Coalition works to promote safe cycling for recreation and for transportation. Its director Mark Wyatt is working with the Cedar Falls Bicycle Task Force to encourage additional bicycling in our community and the organization's website provides tips on cycling safely in high traffic areas, how to properly fit a helmet, even how to organize a safe cycling class. The website also serves up videos showing how to change a tire and how to safely ride on the shoulder of the highway. Membership begins with a nominal \$25 a year, which is a bargain when you consider the resources they provide. I encourage you to visit www.iowabicyclecoalition.org and check it out.