

Bike Riding in the Central Motherlode Foothills By Rob Williams

Bicycling is becoming more popular in the Central Motherlode, more tourists, recreational cyclists, commuters demanding safe routes, businesses recognizing the economic opportunity – but our roads and streets remain an obstacle to taking advantage of that. Many of us are coming together next month to address this issue. At the end of this month a group of civic leaders are meeting to form the Calaveras County Active Transportation Commission. This group is comprised of several regional transportation experts, a Calaveras County Planner, the Calaveras Visitors Bureau & Film Commission, local business leaders and cycling representatives. This group is dedicated to making Calaveras County, Central Motherlode and Sierras safe for biking, hiking, and exploring the outdoors.

I think it is time to invest in making bike riding safe for cyclists in Amador, Alpine, Calaveras, Tuolumne and Mariposa Counties. We have beautiful country roads that cyclists enjoy spending hours riding. There are numerous counties and cities that have taken steps to promote cycling for its health and economic benefits to a local economy: Stanislaus, Sonoma, Sierra, Alpine, Napa, Santa Cruz, El Dorado, Sacramento, Lodi and Modesto.

Lisa Boulton, Executive Directorate of the Calaveras Visitors Bureau & Film Commission shares that more tourists to our region are seeking bike riding opportunities, and adding safe routes will increase visitor options for recreation and enjoyment. Locals seeking alternative options to driving their vehicles to work are also likely to use the routes and studies show that today's innovating companies looking to base their operations outside of the Bay Area, are attracted to areas providing just this kind of infrastructure enhancing the quality of life of their employees

In November 2016 the Amador County Transportation Commission (ACTC) surveyed over four hundred people living in Amador and neighboring counties about walking and biking. The ACTC sought input from citizens to update the Amador County Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan. What the survey showed is cyclists don't feel safe riding bikes in Amador County.

I am a member of the Stockton Bike Club, live in Rancho Calaveras and ride my road bike weekly in Amador and Central Motherlode. The results of the Amador Bike Survey are important to me and cyclists who ride bikes in the Central Motherlode and mountain passes in Alpine County.

The Amador Walk and Bike questionnaire addressed the following issues:

- Purpose and preferences of walking and bicycling trips
- Barriers to walking and bicycling
- Locations that residents are currently walking and bicycling

There are over 1000 cyclists in regional bike clubs who ride in the Central Motherlode and Ebbett's Pass. There are three local foothill bike clubs but, most cyclists travel from the Central Valley to ride their bikes. The local and regional bike clubs include: Foothill Cycling Group, Erma's Diner Cycling Group, Golden Chain Cyclists, Stockton Bike Club, Horizon Bike Club M360, the San Joaquin Bike Coalition, Delta Velo Race Team, Central Valley Velo, Stanislaus County Bike Club, Elk Grove Cycling Club, Bear Valley Bike Club, Alta Alpina, and Project

HERO San Joaquin. In addition, an estimated 250 individual cyclists or small groups of friends ride in the Central Motherlode and are not a member of a club.

Additionally, each year there are ten bike events that bring over 4,000 cyclists to the Central Motherlode and Alpine County: Amador Bike and Wine, Peddling Paths to Independence, Party Pardee, Mr. Frogs Ride, Ride4Art, Lodi Tour de Vines, Sierra Century, Rim Fire Century, Ebbett's Pass Century, and popular Death Ride. And, finally each year over 1,000 Northern California Nevada Cycling Association Bike racers come to Milton or Cooperopolis to race bikes on Easter Weekend and in August.

The Amador Walk and Bike Survey reported that over 34% of respondents indicated that they ride bikes on local roads for recreation. And respondents were asked if you don't ride on roads, identify the reasons:

41% 152 Traffic is too fast or heavy
61% 229 Poor bike lanes and paths
63% 235 No shoulder on road

Even with these poor results cyclists from the Motherlode, Central Valley, Sacramento and Bay Area come to ride their bikes in Lone, Plymouth, Lake Comanche, Pardee Reservoir, Ridge Road, Highway 88 and Highway 4, Bear Valley, Ebbetts Pass, Salt Springs Reservoir, and more.

If you have something to say, that's important to you about cycling in Motherlode or Sierra please email Rob Williams, at rob@thecolevideo.com