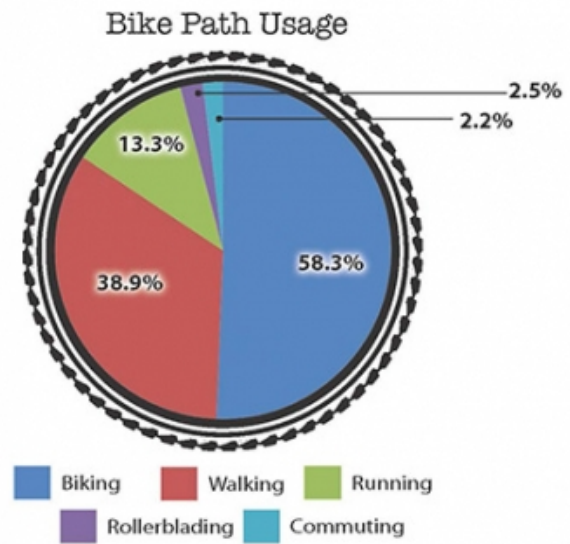


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Biking to Work and Delaware

By Bryon Cahill

COURT HOUSE - The Los Angeles Bicycling Coalition released a study May 12 that reported the number of people biking in Los Angeles is up 7.5 percent since 2011. "But more importantly," the study states, "where new bikeways were added, ridership is up over 100 percent!" Despite the rise in cyclists the area has seen, only 1 percent of commuters use two wheels and a chain to get to work (the national average is 0.6 percent). Though the figures appear low, the number of U.S. commuters who rode a bicycle to work rose over 60 percent in the last decade, according to the Census Bureau. The highest number of biking commuters goes to Portland, Ore. at 6.1 percent.



For those who live and work in Cape May County, the drive to the job is arguably less stressful than in a major city like Los Angeles. But are residents here using the scattered bike paths to get to work? In short, the answer is no, not really. The Herald conducted a Google Survey May 13-19 in which it was learned that a mere 2.2 percent of bike path users surveyed claim to use the current bike paths to commute. Though perhaps not a surprising figure, commuter use indicated still exceeds the national average and, with the projected completion of the Bike Path Connector, that number may slowly begin to rise.

Aside from commuting, the eventual completion of the Bike Path Connector could give the local economy a boost in other ways. "Active transportation activities in New Jersey are estimated to add \$497 million to the economy each year. Bicycling is a large component of that figure," said Cyndi Steiner, executive director of the New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition (NJBWC). Established in 2009, the NJBWC is the statewide advocacy organization for cyclists and pedestrians with members from Ringwood to Cape May.

"Projects like the Cape May Bike Path Connector not only increase recreational activities," Steiner continued. "But they also provide alternative transportation options for those looking to safely travel by bike and leave their cars behind, whether they are residents or tourists. When these options are available for residents and vacationers, they effectively free up dollars that would be spent on transportation and parking, to now be spent on other items. For vacationers, this means increased revenues for local tourist-oriented businesses. These alternatives also ease the burden on the townships of providing enough parking spaces and of mitigating congestion during peak summer vacation periods."

Someday, the bike path will reach all the way to the Cape May-Lewes Ferry terminal. That will allow residents of Cape May County to have yet even more access to Delaware. “Residents (and tourists) will be able to pedal safely to the ferry to Delaware without having to load a car with bikes, and then have to park the car at the ferry landing,” Steiner said. “As this path gets extended, ridership on the ferry will also increase, generating additional revenues for the Delaware River and Bay Authority.”

As appealing as it may be to bicyclists to be able to have a direct route to ride to Delaware, according to the Herald’s Google Survey, 69.6 percent of online responders ‘never’ use the Cape May County bike paths. Perhaps one reason for that is, as of yet, the Bike Path Connector Path remains a work-in-progress.

“It is important to recognize that ridership will increase when this (complete) path comes into operation,” Steiner said. “Current ridership of the roads in the area is not a good indication of what the levels will be once the path is built, since the path will provide a safer option than what is available now.”

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