



Commute by bike? New Montclair bike depot provides safe parking

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Commuters looking to leap frog over a five-year wait for a parking space at the Bay Street train station in Montclair might consider trading in their four-wheeled ride for a two-wheeler.

The township's first 24-space bike parking depot opened Thursday and cycling advocates are looking to it as a model for better bike parking for commuters across the state.

"It gives cyclists a place to safely and securely park their bikes, which is critical for them to have a place to secure their bikes while commuting," said Ralph Monti, president of the Bicycle Touring Club of North Jersey. "It's a safe haven for the bicycling commuter."

Of the club's 1,500 members, Monti said about 10 percent of them are regular bike commuters, including some who regularly bike across the George Washington Bridge from Bergen County.

Future bike depot sites should be located in regular parking lots, bus depots, train stations, colleges and schools, he said.

"This begins the culture of cycling by having this type of facility," Monti said. "I'd like to see other towns do it."

The depot is different than the bike lockers that NJ Transit offers for rent at select train stations, which accommodate about 375 bikes. The depot has multi-level bike parking, lockers for rent and an air pump inside a locked facility. NJ Transit also has outdoor bike racks which accommodate about 2,300 bikes.

"With the existing (outdoor) racks that NJ Transit deploys, bikes are subject to vandalism and being stolen," said Cyndi Steiner, executive director of the New Jersey Bike and Walk Coalition, [which is handling sign-ups for spaces](#) on its website.

That means commuters will either ride a substandard bike they can afford to lose, but which aren't the safest to ride, or they'll drive, she said. Bikes locked to outdoor racks are also out in the weather.

Cycling advocates and township officials are hoping the ease of parking in the depot will attract commuters who now drive a short distance and park or are driven and dropped off.

Montclair's bike depot cost slightly less than \$40,000 to convert from space in the deck intended which was intended for offices, but never built, Steiner said., It's in a location in the deck which can't be used for car parking.

"The first thing is township support and political will," Steiner said. "We went to Montclair with the idea and said, here's a grant, we'll do the rest."

Funding came from grants from Sustainable New Jersey, PSE&G, Partners for Health, and in-kind support from The Pinnacle Companies, a local real estate developer and not from taxpayers, Steiner said.

The best locations to build other bike decks are in parking garages at transit stations, she said Local support and funding are key factors to building other bike depots throughout the state, she said.

Montclair officials said the depot fit in with their concept of a sustainable and healthy community.

"We look at it as a first step to make it easy for the community to not use their cars," said Ray Russell, Montclair Environmental affairs coordinator.

Township officials also said they're interested in expanding depots to the other five train stations in the township.

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