



Survey of Existing Bike to Work Day Programs

Alameda County Bike to Work Day Assessment Project

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Summary of Findings

This report presents a survey of selected existing Bike to Work programs in North America based on interviews with program staff. The results of the survey include successes and lessons learned from each of eight programs, as summarized below.

Programs Surveyed

Based on the relevance of their jurisdiction size, location, and program elements, as well as the ability to interview program staff, Bike to Work programs from the following locations were included in the survey:

- San Luis Obispo County, California
- Silicon Valley, California
- Boulder, Colorado
- Denver, Colorado
- Chicago, Illinois
- Oregon
- Toronto, Ontario
- Victoria, British Columbia

Program Highlights and Successes

The following Bike to Work program elements emerged as unique and innovative strategies currently being implemented:

- Mobile applications for trip-tracking (Silicon Valley/Bay Area)
- Executive and celebrity bike commute challenges (San Luis Obispo, Silicon Valley)
- Robust event calendars (Toronto)
- Commuter stations sponsored by local businesses (Chicago)
- Competition among workplaces (Oregon)
- Media event with a bike/auto/transit race (Victoria)

Further, program staff recommended the following strategies as effective Bike to Work program components:

- Online trip-tracking
- Competition between individuals or groups
- Incentives/rewards for participating
- Promotion through workplaces, social media, and word of mouth
- Regional programs and branding (for cohesive messaging and to fully capture all commuters within a given area)

Lessons Learned

Based on the interviews completed, it is clear that program coordinators need to consider the following options when creating or modifying a Bike to Work program:

- Timeframe: single day vs. week- or month-long programs
- Audience: workplace-based vs. individual- or team-based programs
- Structure: trip-tracking competition vs. informal events
- Incentives: whether or not to use them in the interest of encouraging participation

Based on the eight programs evaluated, the following strategies are not recommended based on a lack of evidence that they are successful in meeting the goals of this type of program:

- Paper-based trip tracking: As program participation grows, this type of tracking is seen as unsustainable for effective program management.
- Single-day programs: These events are effective at generating media attention, but they are expensive relative to their impact.
- Incentives/rewards for all participants: Attractive rewards can be expensive, particularly as program participation grows.
- Local programs that duplicate or compete with elements of a regional program: Participants may be confused, and multiple efforts may fragment workplaces or teams.

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Introduction

The following report presents a survey of selected Bike to Work programs in North America. Alta, with guidance from the client, selected these case studies for their comparability to Alameda County based on jurisdiction size, geographic location, and Bike to Work program involvement and elements. The program descriptions summarize interviews with program coordinators and additional internet research.

The report summarizes Bike to Work programs in the following jurisdictions:

- San Luis Obispo County, California
- Silicon Valley, California
- Boulder, Colorado
- Denver, Colorado
- Chicago, Illinois
- Oregon
- Toronto, Ontario
- Victoria, British Columbia

Following the individual program descriptions is a table that summarizes each program, its notable elements, and coordinator contact information.



PHOTO: SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS

Bike Month's Executive Challenge in San Luis Obispo asks CEOs, executive directors, elected officials, and business owners to pledge to bike to work one day. Their signatures are printed in a high-profile newspaper ad, and the rides are promoted so others can join.

San Luis Obispo County, California Bike Month

<http://rideshare.org/cm/bike/bikemonth2010HOME.html>

Participation: 2,000 in all events; 800 logging trips online

In San Luis Obispo (SLO) County, Bike Month is a “community driven” event. The SLO Council of Governments (SLOCOG) is the fiscal and legal sponsor of the event, as well as the marketer, but many events come from the community. This year, the program included 60 free bike-related events, as well as an online bike-to-work challenge that attracted 71 teams at workplaces, clubs, schools, and churches.

In the future, Kelsie Greer, who coordinates Bike Month and Rideshare for SLOCOG, will solicit even more home-grown events from volunteers to grow the calendar and the program. Greer also works very closely with the SLO County Bicycle Coalition to develop and co-promote Bike Month events.

Other important partners in Bike Month are the City of San Luis Obispo (which makes a financial contribution) and Cal Poly SLO, which co-promotes Bike Month and hosts events on its campus.

Bike Month includes the Executive Challenge, in which CEOs, executive directors, elected officials, and business owners are asked to pledge to bike to work one day in a month, and their signatures are printed in a high-profile newspaper ad. Their rides are sometimes promoted so that others can join them.

A few of the changes that SLOCOG has recently made or plans to make in the future are listed below:

- The **Executive Challenge** used to ask executives to bike one day, any day, during the month. As of 2010, the date for the executive bike ride is specified; executives can then be recruited to bike to work on that date, and the event can be promoted more succinctly than when each executive was commuting on a different day. Greer finds that pushing all of the Executive bike rides to the same day creates more energy and has a bigger impact.



In 2010, San Luis Obispo County featured 60 free “homegrown” bike-related events as part of Bike Month.

- SLOCOG plans to start soliciting events from volunteers earlier in the year to **add even more events to Bike Month** and to further develop each event.
- SLOCOG tried to get local businesses involved, with **bike-themed displays** in their windows. This wasn't well received or successful, so they have shifted their energies elsewhere.
- SLOCOG is **moving away from paper promotion** (posters, flyers, stickers, newspaper ads) and toward on-foot and in-person outreach, online networking, and word-of-mouth promotion.
- The **giveaways** SLOCOG produced (t-shirts, stickers, buttons) have not “flown off the shelves,” so they plan to reduce the amount of money they spend on them in the future.

Silicon Valley, California

Bike to Work Day

<http://bikesiliconvalley.org/btwd>

Participation: unknown, but estimated increase of 12-17% over 2009

In Silicon Valley, the local Bicycle Coalition takes the lead on promoting Bay Area-wide programs (Bike to Work Day, the month-long Team Bike Challenge in May, and the year-long iBike Challenge). The Coalition recruits companies and organizations to host morning Energizer Stations where bike commuters can pick up a free snack, coffee, or goodie bag, and their locations are mapped online. On the evening of Bike to Work Day they host a Bike Away from Work Bash.

The iBikeChallenge was new to the Bay Area in 2010. It allows Team Bike Challenge participants to use their GPS-enabled iPhones to record their bike trips, mileage, calories burned, money saved, pollution prevented, and Challenge points earned. Starting in 2011, the competition was opened up for year-round participation, though without the intense promotion and rewards of the May event.

The Silicon Valley Leadership Group (SVLG, the Silicon Valley's chamber of commerce) organizes the CEO/Celebrity Cycle-to-Work Day Challenge on Bike to Work Day led by SVLG CEO Carl Guardino. According to Bonnie Mace at SVLG, the primary motivators for CEOs to participate in the event are environmental stewardship and workplace health and morale. This year the organizations recruited 31 CEOs, elected officials, and celebrities to participate in the Challenge and to engage their employees in Bike to Work Day.

Boulder, Colorado

Walk and Bike Month; Bike to Work Day

<http://communitycycles.org/bike-month>

Participation: 5,000 online registrants, number of unknown program participants

Boulder is a small city in a large urban area dominated by the city of Denver. In the past, Boulder put on its own Bike to Work Day program and tracked local trips. In recent years, the Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) launched a website for tracking trips and promoting Bike to Work Day across the entire region, including Boulder.

While Boulder uses the DRCOG website for Bike to Work Day, it also emphasizes culture and education through Walk and Bike Month. On Bike to Work Day itself, Boulder encourages bike commuters with 45 breakfast stations, 11 repair stations, and an evening Ice Cream Social and a film festival outdoors, which have been very popular. Also, Boulder encourages locals to register for Bike to Work Day on its own website, with entry into a raffle for a bike as an enticement.

Sue Prant coordinates the Month and Day programs for the non-profit Community Cycles. The City of Boulder contributes about one-third of the budget for the programs, and Community Cycles raises the balance of funds. Other important partners are local cash sponsors (who sometimes also host their own events), the farmers' market (where Sue sets up prize and coupon pick-up stations), and the local merchants that support a Park(ing) Spaces Day parklet in front of their business.

Park(ing) Spaces Day is one of Prant's favorite program elements, because it "turns into a bit of a street fair," and combines festivities and fun with a little bit of advocacy. Community Cycles works with merchants to build a tiny temporary park in a few on-street parking spaces. Over the years these parklets have included bike parking, seating, coffee and cold drinks, plants and fake grass, and even a kiddie pool. This effort has actually led to the installation of some permanent in-street bike parking.



As part of Boulder's Walk and Bike Month activities, local businesses support temporary parks in parking spaces in front of their businesses. Park(ing) Spaces Day parklets have included bike parking, seating, coffee and cold drinks, plants and fake grass, and even a kiddie pool.

Recent or planned changes to the Boulder programs include the following:

- Community Cycles hired a **public relations firm** and a graphic artist to take charge of ad placement and media, instead of staff. This investment frees up staff focus on other areas where they are needed.
- While Boulder's program includes walking and running events, DRCOG recently decided to focus on bicycling for Bike to Work Day and **built the website to support only bike trips to work**. Some people in Boulder would like to broaden the website to include walking and running trips and events on that day. Meanwhile, Boulder has **increased the number of running events** promoted during the month.
- As part of walk and bike month, Boulder used to coordinate a **bike swap meet** at the farmers' market, but for insurance reasons they had to move the location, and it no longer worked as well, so they dropped it.
- Community Cycles would like to transition away from the DRCOG website and one-day event and **build their own website** and local week- or month-long commute challenge. They are currently exploring ways to do this.
- **Walk and Bike Bingo**, in which participants pick up or print out a card and get it stamped by participating merchants, generated good attention and interest for a few years but has recently lost some of its impact. Community Cycles is planning to drop it and spend those resources developing a commuter challenge instead.

Denver, Colorado

Bike to Work Day

<http://www3.drcog.org/BikeToWork>

Participation: 23,000 estimated in all events region-wide

The Denver Regional Council of Government (DRCOG) coordinates Bike to Work Day within the City of Denver and for the entire greater metropolitan region.

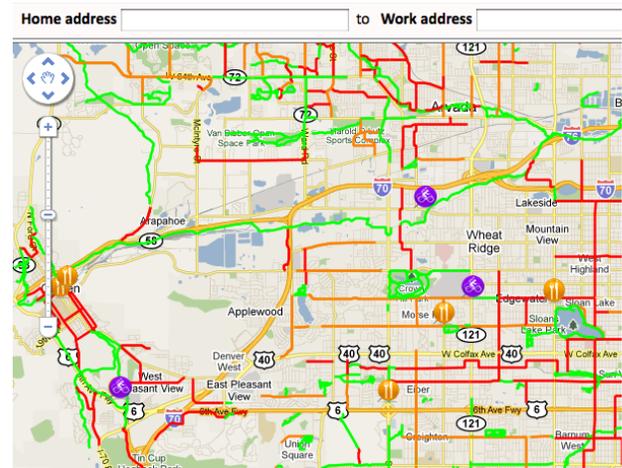
This year, DRCOG launched a new website, which asks participants to register for Bike to Work Day. Once registered, people can post a Breakfast or Bike Home Station location and description (which they host at their own expense), organize a group ride to or from work, and get entered in a raffle. The website includes an integrated trip-planner and bikeway map, with the locations and details for Stations and Group Rides overlaid upon it.

While the number of people who registered online was down this year (probably due to the newness of the website), they had 17,000 registrants, 148 Breakfast Stations, seven Bike Home Stations, and 14 group rides. In total, they estimate that 23,000 people participate in Bike to Work Day in the region (whether or not they register online).

DRCOG provides the regional promotion and website for Bike to Work Day, so its most important partners (besides the sponsors who provide funding) are the local cities and non-profits who co-promote and the individuals and businesses who host Breakfast and Bike Home Stations. In the City of Denver, they work together with the non-profit Bike Denver.

This year, the Governor of Colorado and the Mayor of Denver rode bikes to downtown as part of Bike to Work Day.

Keri Olmstead, the DRCOG Marketing Coordinator who organizes Bike to Work Day (and during the rest of the year works on the Ride Arrangers carpool service), says they are focusing on marketing bicycling as fun and enjoyable. To that end, they have made these recent changes:



The Denver Bike to Work Day website allows participants to post and view Breakfast or Bike Home Station locations and displays an integrated trip-planner and bikeway map with the locations overlaid.

- They have focused Bike to Work Day on only bicycling (in the past any non-drive alone mode was counted) to take advantage of the cultural and recreational attractions of bicycling.
- They have invested in the new website, which is easy to use and visually appealing.
- Based on her marketing research, Olmstead prefers to stay away from paper-based advertising. They also now spend less on giveaways, and do mostly internet, TV, and radio ads (including sponsoring rush hour traffic reports).

Chicago, Illinois

Bike to Work Week Challenge

<http://www.activetrans.org/biketoworkweek>

<http://bikechicago.us>

Participation: 4,826 people logging trips

In early June, workplaces and schools register online for a week-long bike to work competition in Bike to Work Week, organized by the Active Transportation Alliance (ATA). Teams are set up at workplaces, and bike commutes are reported online by the Team Captains.

Bike to Work Week participants and other bike commuters are supported for the first four days at about 30 morning Commuter Stations around the region, where they can pick up coffee and snacks, promotional materials, or a goodie bag with a water bottle, light, or t-shirt in it. Commuter Stations are mapped out on the program website and promoted a few days before with sidewalk chalkings.

On the Thursday evening of Bike Week, ATA throws a Bike Away from Work Bash, and Friday morning is Mayor Daley's Bike to Work Rally. The Mayor's Rally and other summer events are also promoted by the City as part of the summer-long Bike Chicago program.

One of the biggest cash expenses for Bike to Work Week each year is the Awards Luncheon, held at a swanky downtown hotel with good food and an engaging program. All team captains (478 in 2010) are invited (for free), and Bike to Work Week coordinator Melody Geraci believes that it is a worthwhile investment in Team Captains' knowledge, energy, and enthusiasm from year to year.

Some recent and planned changes include:

- A massive expansion of the program, from one week to a year-round online multi-modal trip tracking website (which will also be used for Bike to Work Week). The site will be developed and managed jointly by the ATA and the regional transit agency, and will give the region's employers



Giveaways and promotional items increase involvement in Chicago's Bike to Work Week Challenge program.

a tool for tracking their employees' transportation. Users will be able to earn points by tracking non-driving trips, store them in their online account, and then redeem their points online immediately for coupons, gift certificates, or prizes.

- **Commuter Stations "co-hosted" by a nearby business, non-profit, neighborhood, or community group.** This change has considerably reduced the burden on ATA staff and budgets, expanded the number of Stations offered, and increased the co-hosts' investment in and enthusiasm for the program.
- **Chalking the roadway a few days prior to alert commuters.** They used to put signs at the locations of commuter stations, but found that they blew away or got wet.
- **Giving away promotional items.** One year ATA tried to save some money by not purchasing giveaways (water bottles, t-shirts, lights), and they regretted it. The giveaways are very motivating to many people.

Oregon (statewide)

Bike Commute Challenge

<http://www.bikecommutechallenge.com>

Participation: 10,833 people logging bike trips

For the entire month of September, the Bicycle Transportation Alliance (BTA) runs a friendly competition among Oregon workplaces to determine who can bike to work more. Participants in the Bike Commute Challenge join their workplace team and then log their trips online. People can directly challenge other riders, and teams can also directly challenge other teams. Participants can see their personal and team statistics updated in real time; this generates a lot of enthusiasm over the month.

The Challenge is supported by more than 100 on-site bike commuting workshops, given for free around the region, and by a few social events and a very large awards party where the winning teams are revealed. The BTA and the City of Portland increase their usual offerings of educational events during the Challenge.

The marketing materials, emails, and media releases for the Challenge de-emphasize special gear, athleticism, and traffic fears, and promote bicycling as a mainstream, normal-clothes, enjoyable activity. (To that end, people who live too far from their workplace to bike the whole way are encouraged to drive or take transit part way.)

The BTA does not spend money on giveaways, but does spend cash and sponsorships on prizes for raffles conducted during the month and at the awards party. Winning teams at the end of the month are given plaques that they can hang in their lobbies. The longest-distance commuter is also honored, as is one great Team Coordinator.

Other than the website and full-html email newsletters, the most significant promotional item the BTA uses for the Challenge is the flyer-poster (though printing is funded mostly by the City of Portland). It is mailed out as a small postcard, but unfolds to reveal an informative flyer on one side and an attractive poster on the other. The regional transit agency, local city governments, and local transportation



The team from the State of Oregon office building in Portland celebrates their success. (Photo: Bicycle Transportation Alliance)

management districts have been very helpful, either by sharing their mailing lists with the BTA for the poster mailing, or by promoting the Challenge to their own networks throughout the month.

The BTA recently made plans to make the following changes:

- The program now boasts a new website, which took nearly three years to develop and de-bug. The website tracks bike commutes and then reports **participants' individual and team performance in real time**.
- The coordinator, Stephanie Noll, is hoping to keep the website up-to-date by adding **mobile device and social network compatibility** in the future. She is also hoping to make the website compatible with workplaces' own internal systems.
- This year, Noll tried a less competitive theme for the marketing materials, but is disappointed with how it worked out. Next year she will try to engender **more team rivalry and individual competition** (while keeping it lighthearted).
- A **"Photo of the Day"** (solicited from participants during the month) is posted on the website every workday. This keeps the front of the website visually fresh, gives participants a little brush with fame, inspires team competition, and supplies the BTA with excellent, inspiring photos and stories illustrating the program's success.
- In the future, Noll hopes to develop a marketing plan that reaches even further **beyond the "transportation nerd" community**.
- While introductory bike commute workshops are offered for free at workplaces during the Challenge, Noll invited hosts to make a **\$100 donation** to the BTA when she scheduled their workshop, and most of them have readily accepted.

Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Bike Month

<http://www.toronto.ca/cycling/bikemonth/index.htm>
Participation: unknown

Toronto celebrates Bike Month in June. The kick-off event is the Group Commute, in which 1,500-2,000 people ride from all over the city and coalesce into one big bike commute, ending at City Hall. The City publishes a Bike Month Guide, a calendar listing dozens of cultural, educational, advocacy, and athletic bike events. Toronto's Bike Month resembles New York City's Bike Month, Boulder's Walk + Bike Month, and Portland's Pedalpalooza, except that those three festivals are run by local non-profits (with financial support from their respective cities).

Even though Bike Month is a City program, some of the events within it are advocacy events, either organized by the City to discuss infrastructure needs with residents, or organized by community groups to put pressure on the City to make improvements. For example, the largest event is often Bells on Bloor, a protest ride asking for bike lanes on Bloor St. that attracts thousands. Perhaps in part because Toronto engages in very "democratic" planning with ample community engagement, Bike Month coordinator Christina Bouchard reports that City staff have not (yet) complained about such City-sponsored activism.

They have recently made or are considering making these changes:

- There has been a movement at the City towards **focusing on bike infrastructure and away from programs**. Combined with budget cuts, this meant that in 2010 many fewer Guides were printed and distributed.
- Bouchard wonders if, as local bicycling non-profits (such as the Toronto Cyclists' Union) grow, and as the City moves away from programming, Bike Month may become a non-profit led program.



The kick-off event for Bike Month in Toronto is the Group Commute, in which 1,500-2,000 people ride from all over the city and coalesce into one big bike commute, ending at City Hall.

- Bouchard just couldn't bear to add one more boxy, unflattering t-shirt to her wardrobe, so in 2010 she negotiated an at-cost purchase from American Apparel. The free t-shirts have always been popular (and are a good place for sponsor recognition), but this year she got a lot of positive feedback from participants who wear their shirt more because it is so much nicer.

Victoria, B.C., Canada

Bike to Work Week

<http://www.biketowork.ca/>

Participation: 5,744 people logging bike trips

Bike to Work Week in Victoria is one of the most well-respected programs in North America. It was founded in 1995 as part of Canada's National Environment Week, but it quickly became clear to organizer (and now Victoria City Councillor) John Luton that the national program had too many different messages and wasn't focused enough.

Bike to Work Victoria made a very deliberate decision to focus on marketing bicycling, the same way a company might market a consumable product. They kept the message simple, did not incorporate any advocacy or politics into events or communications, and asked for very simple kinds of participation.

Today the event takes place during one week in April, beginning with a kick-off party. People are encouraged to register online (at the Provincial trip-tracking website) and then log their trips daily. Each day, teams that log trips online are eligible to win prizes. In 2010, 5,744 logged bike trips as part of 643 teams.

One highlight of Bike to Work Week are the Celebration Stations set up along popular bike routes (Victoria has two major, popular, very direct off-street trails that enter downtown) where people can stop for coffee and food, register for prizes, and socialize. This year they set up nine different Stations on the five days of the week, and at peak they counted 1,000 bicyclists an hour passing one of the stations.

Workplace organizing, which is supported by the trip-tracking website, has been crucial to the success of the program. Champions at individual workplaces

can register their team, promote Celebration Stations, organize bike rides with co-workers, and generally create a positive "pyramid scheme." Champions within businesses – whether they are the team captain or not – have helped to build support for bicycling in Victoria's business community.

Another highlight, and effective media stunt, is the Commuter Challenge, which sets up friendly races between people driving and biking to downtown from agreed-upon starting points; the person bicycling generally wins. In 2010, they recruited Ryder Hesjedal (who finished seventh in the Tour de France) to drive; he lost to bicycling newspaper columnist Jack Knox. The Mayor raced the Police Chief, and radio and TV news people raced one another.

Since the program's beginning, the Provincial Government was a very important partner, but over the past year that partnership has unraveled due to funding cuts by the Province. The other group of important partners are local businesses, who donate prizes (about \$30,000 Canadian this year) and provide cash sponsorships in exchange for visibility on event t-shirts and at Celebration Stations, and often on the resulting TV news coverage.

Unlike most other bike to work programs, Victoria has had great success selling t-shirts. The t-shirts are Bike to Work Victoria's single biggest cash investment each year, but they recoup most of their cost with sales (which are strongly promoted on the website).

Program coordinators have recently made or plan to make the following changes:

- The future shape of the program is uncertain because of the **deep funding cuts**, but Luton says they are always looking for new sources of funding and new partners.
- Luton also suggests that they will **continually change and add program elements to keep it fresh** and keep people interested from year to year.
- Bike to Work Victoria tried to organize **big weekend events** and large organized rides, but found those were not worth the investment and dropped them years ago.



PHOTO: BIKE TO WORK VICTORIA

Victoria's Commuter Challenge sets up friendly races between people driving and people bicycling to downtown from specified starting points. In 2010, Victoria recruited Ryder Hesjedal (who finished seventh in the Tour de France) to drive a car; he lost to bicycling newspaper columnist Jack Knox.

Summary Table

City/Location	Program/Event Name	Leading Agency or Organization	Participation	Online trip-tracking?	Master calendar for community events?	Group rides?	Daily commuter stations?	Executive/celebrity event?	Public agency as primary leader?	Contact	Website
Boulder	Walk and Bike Month; Bike to Work Day	City of Boulder, Community Cycles	5,000 registrants	•	•	•	•			Sue Prant, 303-564-9681, bikesue@gmail.com	http://communitycycles.org/bike-month
Chicago	Bike to Work Week	Active Transportation Alliance	478 teams, 4,826 participants	•	•	•	•	•		Melody Geraci, melody@activetrans.org, 312-427-3325 http://bikechicago.us	http://www.activetrans.org/biketoworkweek http://bikechicago.us
Denver	Bike to Work Day	Denver Regional Council of Governments	23,000 (est.)	•	•	•	•	•		Keri Olmstead, btwd@drcog.org, 303-480-6705	http://www3.drcog.org/BikeToWork
San Luis Obispo County	Bike Month	Rideshare/San Luis Obispo Council of Governments	2,000 (est.) in all events, 800 logging trips online (in 2009)	•	•	•	•	•		Kelsie Greer, kgreer@rideshare.org, 805-781-1385	http://rideshare.org/BikeMonth.aspx
Silicon Valley	Bike to Work Day	Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition; S.V. Leadership Group	Increased 12.5-19% over 2009	•	•	•	•	•		Corinne Winter, SVBC, (408) 287-7259, corinne@bikesiliconvalley.org; Bonnie Mace, SVLG, 408-501-7864	http://bikesiliconvalley.org/btwd
Toronto	Bike Month	City of Toronto	Unknown		•	•				Christina Bouchard, cboucha@toronto.ca, 416-338-5090	http://www.toronto.ca/cycling/bikemonth/index.htm
Victoria, BC	Bike to Work Week	Greater Victoria Bike to Work Society	643 workplaces, 5744 individuals	•	•	•	•	•		Christina Southern, Exec. Dir., 250-385-9125; John Luton, City Councilor, 250-592-4753	http://www.biketowork.ca/
Oregon	Bike Commute Challenge	Bicycle Transportation Alliance	1,283 workplaces, 10,883 individuals	•						Stephanie Noll, stephanie@bia4bikes.org, (503) 226-0676 x23	http://www.bikecommutechallenge.com

