

## First-Ever Oklahoma Bike Summit Fills to Capacity!

Contributed by Mike Flenniken  
Wednesday, 21 December 2011

If you missed the first ever Oklahoma Bike Summit presented by the Oklahoma Bicycling Coalition (OBC) Friday and Saturday, November 4th and 5th at the Chesapeake Boathouse in Oklahoma City, you missed Oklahoma cycling history in the making!

Not all the learning was in the classroom!

For more than an hour on Friday we made bicyclists out of traffic engineers and city planners! They got to experience what cyclists endure every day and learned from national engineering expert John LaPlante, how to fix the problems.

When it came time to take to bicycles and examine a couple of street intersections on a 5-mile ride, fifty plus bicycles were barely enough for all the city planners and traffic engineers. That is the kind of problem you like to see!

So... What lessons did we learn?

One of the "problem" intersections we examined was the end of the Katy Trail at N.E. 4th and Martin Luther King Blvd. This is where the trail ends abruptly at a crosswalk. Notice the two concrete filled pipe posts that, according to John LaPlante, serve no purpose other than to hurt cyclists. (It's not like a motor vehicle driver is going to accidently mistake the trail for a road! And if a motorist wants to drive (illegally) on the trail, it is a simple matter to go around the posts!

After the bike excursion, the attendees returned to the classroom to discuss what they had experienced and the problems they had witnessed. Using satellite photos of the intersections and principles discussed in the lecture, they designed changes that would improve each location. In many cases, the only change needed was accomplished by changing the painted lane markings! (Something that needs to be redone every time a road is resurfaced anyway.)

Below is a satellite view of the Katy Trail intersection:

Why is it so important to design cycling friendly streets and trails?

Take a close look at this graph:

As suprising as it may seem, a study from Portland, Oregon shows that as ridership increases, the accident rate decreases in a linear relationship. Therefore, one of the best ways to increase safety is to encourage more riders.

I had an "Ah Hah!" moment too!

Until attending this first Oklahoma Bike Summit, I had never been a big proponent of bike lanes and trails. I would have argued that bikes belong in traffic with motorized vehicles and should not be segregated. I still believe in vehicular riding and integration. But, when considering that one of the most effective methods of encouraging new riders is to provide these accommodations (especially bike lanes and bike-friendly street designs) and that more riders means improved safety for all of us, I've changed my mind.

Only a very small (miniscule) portion of cyclists have the training and skills to feel comfortable riding in traffic. Certainly those folks who are just contemplating riding for the first time would be more encouraged to ride if trails and streets were more cycling friendly.

I want to thank Kevin Mussett, Pete Kramer, Arletta Webster, and Mary Cash for all their hard work in organizing this first-ever Oklahoma Bike Summit. This educational project helped change the paradigm for many planners and engineers who can now make a positive difference in Oklahoma's cycling safety.

All of the educators and presenters deserve our gratitude as well. They did an outstanding job.

I especially want to thank all OBC members for driving and supporting OBC's efforts. A single cyclist is virtually powerless but through the first-ever Oklahoma Bike Summit in November, you proved that One United Voice will be heard.

Please also join me in thanking the sponsors whos donations made this event not only possible but a monumental success. Please take a moment to view their logos below (listed alphabetically):

