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Bicycling amenities show the region as youthful, vibrant and bike-friendly

PITTSBURGH— 2004 –The Pittsburgh region is quickly becoming more bike-friendly thanks to many bicycle advocacy groups and non-profit organizations working together to create awareness around the economical and health benefits that cycling brings. These groups are hard at work connecting miles and miles of bicycle trails, creating bicycling programs and activities for the public, helping to design bike trail maps that are made available at no cost, and installing new artistic bicycle racks throughout the city and surrounding neighborhoods to promote bicycling as an alternative means of transportation. The work of these groups is beginning to pay off. How so?

The Southwestern Pennsylvania Commission provided \$290,150 from the Federal Transportation Enhancements program to the Port Authority of Allegheny County's *Rack 'n Roll* program, the program to equip bike racks on buses, for the purchase of about 300 more bike racks. Rack 'n Roll, was launched in 2001 with a grant from the Richard King Mellon Foundation through Sustainable Pittsburgh for 75 bike racks for buses on eight routes. The new federal dollars will equip another quarter to a third of the Port Authority's fleet. Sustainable Pittsburgh will continue to work with the Port Authority to identify bus routes to equip with new racks and new ways to link the *Rack 'n Roll* program to trails and bike stations. The *Rack 'n Roll* program was designed to encourage bicycling as an alternative mode of transportation, providing cyclists' means to traverse roads and highways that otherwise are unfriendly to bicyclists. As more buses are equipped, cyclists use is expected to rise.

Another bike-friendly project of note is the partnership between Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership (PDP) and Bike Pittsburgh, Inc. Initially, the SPROUT fund granted \$9,000 to Bike Pittsburgh to pay for the design and placement of several bike racks. That initiative grew when Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership got involved. The connection was made when during an Urban Cycling Committee meeting, facilitated by Sustainable Pittsburgh, it was learned that the PDP had access to \$50,000 of Federal Transit Administration funds for a capital project. Together, the two organizations combined resources to install 128 new artistic bike racks throughout the city including 115 in downtown Pittsburgh at strategic locations and 20 additional racks are located in neighborhoods throughout the city.

A bicyclist's dream come true is The Great Allegheny Passage-- the "crown jewel" of the Mid-Atlantic rail trails. The Allegheny Trail Alliance is the driving force for the completion of this trail. Cyclists appreciate the river scenery and spectacular mountain gorges while traveling along the Passage. Once completed, the Great Allegheny Passage will connect Pittsburgh, PA to Washington, DC. Of course local and avid bicyclists are thrilled about having the longest multi-purpose rail-trail in the east. People from all over the world are coming to The Great Allegheny Passage and bringing money to spend. Outdoor organizations are designing and promoting attractive bicycle vacation tours along the Passage and cyclists throughout the country and the world are responding, providing economical opportunities for services - bike shops, restaurants, lodging and other amenities - to make the Great Allegheny Passage more enjoyable.

Pedal Pittsburgh, a fund-raising event for the Community Design Center of Pittsburgh, is the region's premier bicycling happening celebrating community design, health & fitness and urban lifestyles. Each May, Pedal Pittsburgh showcases the City of Pittsburgh along with the design landmarks and amenities that make it unique to thousands of cyclists. A ride, not a race, Pedal Pittsburgh offers five courses ranging from 15 to 60 miles to accommodate all ages and riding abilities.

The fact that the region is so bicycle-friendly is because people are causing it to happen. For example, even those who can't get around can still experience some of our beautiful trails by reading about them in the *Pittsburgh Post Gazette*. "**Hitting the Trails**" is a 15-week, hiking and biking series in collaboration with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources that spotlights trails in western Pennsylvania. *Post-Gazette* staff writers Don Hopey, Bob Batz Jr. and Christopher Snowbeck, along with multimedia editor Curt Chandler do the hiking -- some short, some well known and others obscure. The trail stories are written in first person narration with graphic details to allow readers to mentally experience these trails.

If you would like to bicycle along the trails, but you don't own a bike, visit "Free Ride!" and build your own bike. Located in the east end of Pittsburgh, "Free Ride!" is a bicycle-recycling program that encourages ones to build bikes and join in riding tours through multiple neighborhoods with a network of other cyclists.

Many of the organizations and advocacy groups that diligently work to make this region bicycle friendly give real meaning to attracting and retaining creative workers, promoting a healthy and vibrant region and creating the framework for mobility and new economic development opportunities.

Sustainable Pittsburgh is a public policy and advocacy group that affects decision-making in the region that integrates economic prosperity, social equity, and environmental quality. For more information about Sustainable Pittsburgh or the Rack n' Roll or other bicycle programs, please call (412) 258-6646 or visit www.ridegold.com.

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