I’m not the crazy bike lady that everyone in Duluth thinks I am!

That was my first thought as I wheeled my bike to the chock-full bike parking area at the Winter Cycling Congress in early February. We were in the midst of an extraordinary blizzard, yet here at the venue and the businesses nearby were hundreds of bicycles. Everywhere! And in a few hours, these bicycles would carry lots of joyful people through the streets of Minneapolis in a bike parade led by an elementary school bike club. I can’t be crazy if all these people are biking in winter too! I mean, we were being led by a bunch of 4th graders, so how extreme can it be?! The mission of the Winter Cycling Congress (WCC) is to normalize winter biking. Both winter and bicycling can have reputations that involve terms such as crazy and extreme, so put them together and... well... crazy + extreme = too intense for most people. But it shouldn’t be that way, and you shouldn’t need bravery to bike on the street (at any time of year). So how do we see the Winter Cycling Congress’ vision of winter biking as a normal winter activity become reality?

We stop making it about biking! Genius, right? As Timo Peralà, founder of the event, said in his opening remarks, “We don’t have cyclists in Finland. We just have people. A lot of them ride a bike every day. If you say you’re a cyclist, you’ll hear, ‘Oh, do you race or something?’” At the WCC, we heard about some impressive campaigns and events starting up just because they were fun. FUN! It’s about a tasty tour of local restaurants. It’s about visiting historic places with friends right in your own backyard that you never knew the significance of. It’s about making people smile because you have strands of colorful lights on your bike or making people dance on the sidewalk because you’re playing great music as you bike past. These and countless other stories were told at the Congress, and they all demonstrated how something remarkable got started by an ordinary person who maybe had only a handful of people show up in the beginning. But eventually, their idea caught on, and they saw dozens, hundreds and even thousands of people join them on bikes. The resulting changes in their local communities were significant.

I left the conference inspired, so the first thing I did upon my return to Duluth was to start something fun to embrace the awesomeness of winter: an ice skating get-together at the ice rink near downtown to get people out of their cubicles during their lunch breaks. (There were also a lot of inspirational examples at the WCC of communities embracing winter in ways besides bicycling.) Only two friends showed up, and I thought, “Two people! Perfect! We’re on the verge of something magnificent here!” And as we skated around, the 3 of us brewed up some pretty fantastic winter biking ideas for next year...

Go start something fun,

Shawna, the crazy bike lady of Duluth
BikeMN’s 2016 Legislative Priorities
MAKING BICYCLING EASY, SAFE & FUN

by Dorian Grilley, Executive Director

The 2016 Legislative Session began on March 8th this year. BikeMN will have three priorities on its legislative agenda for this short session scheduled to end May 23rd. Like last year, ensuring that funding for bicycling and walking infrastructure and programs is included in any transportation funding package is a top priority. Safe Routes to School funding is also a priority. BikeMN will partner with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to update some of the laws and rules that govern what MnDOT has the authority to and is required to do regarding non-motorized infrastructure.

Governor Mark Dayton and both houses of the legislature agree that Minnesota’s aging transportation system needs help. BikeMN and its many partners—including the Minnesotans for Healthy Kids Coalition, the Minnesota Mayoral Active Transportation Caucus (see next page) and Transportation Forward—are working to ensure that bicycle and pedestrian needs are not left out of a transportation funding package. Senate File 87 (chief author Senator Scott Dibble) was supported last year by the former Move MN campaign. It passed the Minnesota Senate in 2015 with the provision to create the active transportation programs in S.F. 1376 and H.F. 1645.

If the active transportation provisions from S.F. 87 are not moved forward, BikeMN will work to support the dedication of the sales tax paid on bicycles and bike parts—$10 to $15 million each year—to the active transportation programs. The House has already proposed dedicating the sales tax paid on automobile parts, so this may also be a similar avenue to get the programs created and funded. Thanks are due to Senator John Pederson and Representative Kim Norton for bringing the idea to create the active transportation programs in S.F. 2388, which appropriates $6 million from the state bonding bill to Safe Routes to School infrastructure. Governor Dayton will also make a capital investment/bonding bill recommendation to the legislature in mid-March, and we are working to ensure that his recommendation includes Safe Routes to School. Fortunately, MnDOT has recommended that he does. A Senate companion to H.F. 2388 will also be introduced in early March. For now, thanks are due to chief author Representative Jeff Howe and representatives Bob Dettmer, Melissa Hortman and Kim Norton for working to make this a bipartisan statewide effort.

BikeMN’s third priority is to support the recommendations of MnDOT’s Bike Law Task Force. Several BikeMN Members served, along with many other interests, on the task force, which met several times starting in the spring of 2015. The task force made recommendations on how to change the statutes and rules, many of which had not been reviewed or changed since the 1970s. These outdated rules and statutes have resulted in administrative ambiguity and have impeded the incorporation of best practices into bicycle and bicycle facility policy. The task force’s work resulted in the creation of proposed legislation to be presented to the legislature during the 2016 session, as well as recommendations regarding the repeal of administrative rules, changes and additions to the MnDOT Bikeway Facility Design Manual. Bills regarding the task force’s recommendations have not been introduced. BikeMN will keep you posted on these and other issues that are of concern to our mission and vision on our web site at bikemn.org/advocacy.

Red Alert

New Advocacy Tool Launched

One of the mightiest tools an organization has is its voice, but the murmur of our staff can hardly be heard over the din of everything else competing for attention during the legislative session. With the collective voice of BikeMN Members and others behind us, however, we can shout for better bicycling and safer streets. Which is why we’ve built an “action alert” program on our web site.

BikeMN Action will make it easy to contact elected officials, sign bike-minded petitions, and connect with other active transportation advocates. But it won’t just be used at the state level—we’ll be helping our chapter organizations like Duluth Bikes, Pedal Fergus Falls and We Bike Rochester to advocate for better bicycling in their own communities. Learn more and try it out at bikemn.org/action.

If you are interested in helping out at the Summit, please email Executive Director Dorian Grilley at dorian@bikemn.org or call 651-347-0483. BikeMN Action will be doing a phone banking event the week before the Summit. BikeMN Action will be at the Bike Summit on March 30th and will be set up at the Summit Library with the Social Media Library behind it. Be there for bikes—join us for the MN Bike Summit on March 30!

The people of Minnesota need you to be there for bikes. Your presence at the Summit will ensure our elected leaders are informed about bicycling issues and needs in our state. Be there and let our legislators know that their constituents want bicycling and walking to be a part of any transportation funding deal.

Participants will get the inside scoop on the BikeMN 2016 legislative agenda from Capitol experts and guests from all over Minnesota. Those who register in advance will have the opportunity to meet with their legislators after (and sometimes during) the event program to discuss legislative priorities related to bicycling. Talking to your legislator can seem intimidating, but we’ll show you the ropes!

Date: March 30, 2016
Time: Program from 9 a.m. to noon, legislative meetings begin at 10 a.m.
Lunch: Continental breakfast and lunch from Golden’s Deli are included!
Cost: BikeMN Members: $15; Nonmembers: $20, Day-Of: $25
New in 2016: Contribute to our scholarship fund with your registration and ensure everyone has the opportunity to attend.
RSVP: Online registration closes March 27. Register at www.BikeMN.org/Summit

Be there for bikes—join us for the MN Bike Summit on March 30!
Transportation improvements are important for the Marshall region, and pedestrian and bicycle safety are part of the improvement equation.

Mayor Byrnes of Marshall

I am looking forward to meeting and working with my fellow mayors in making Minnesota a safer place to bike and walk, as well as getting our bike trail finished.

Mayor Houger of Center City

Apple Valley is a walkable, bicycle-friendly community that connects people to where they live, work and play. The North Creek Greenway will be an economic engine for promoting bicycling to work, creating new bike-tourism opportunities and attracting active and healthy living.

Mayor Hamann-Roland of Apple Valley

Something exciting is happening in our state. Mayors from Grand Marais to Worthington and many places in between are coming forward in support active transportation—such as biking and walking—in their cities. “So what?” you might ask, “everyone likes biking and walking.” But the truth is that biking and walking are so often taken for granted that they don’t even come to mind when our leaders think of Minnesota’s transportation system—and that needs to change! The ability to hop on your bike or walk on a sidewalk to run your errands, visit a friend or get wherever it is you need to be, are fundamental rights and critical to the health and wellness of a community.

We’ve found some strong advocates in our fight for bicycling and walking infrastructure in our state. Minnesota’s mayors are stepping up and saying that active transportation is important to them and the vitality of their town and are joining the Minnesota Mayoral Active Transportation Caucus. The caucus consists of Greater Minnesota and suburban-based mayors for whom pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure are important transportation components in their communities.

This Caucus was created to advocate for including pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure funding in any transportation funding deal reached by the legislature—now and in the future. Because so often, when people and policymakers refer to investing in transportation, the common interpretation is roads and bridges. While Minnesota needs to repair and improve its network of roads and bridges, the state also needs to invest in improving all modes. The Minnesota Mayoral Active Transportation Caucus will exist for years to come to serve as a bipartisan resource for legislators from both political parties who represent constituencies throughout Greater Minnesota.

The Caucus began as an idea at a meeting between BikeMN and the Minnesotans for Healthy Kids Coalition and gained momentum from there when Mayor Mary Hamann-Roland of Apple Valley, Mayor Hank Ludtke of Frazee, and Mayor Ardell Brede of Rochester signed on as Co-Chairs. Since then we’ve had more than 30 more mayors sign on to support active transportation.

Is your mayor missing from the list? Let us know by emailing info@bikemn.org and we’ll reach out to your Mayor again to remind them of the important work that this group is doing. Want to read more about the Caucus? Visit bikemn.org/caucus for more details and to check out the most up-to-date list of members.

caucus members to date:

Co-Chairs
Mary Hamann-Roland, Apple Valley
Hank Ludtke, Frazee
Ardell Brede, Rochester

Mayoral Members
Rita Albrecht, Bemidji
Mary Wingfield, Birchwood Village
Larry Houger, Center City
Jerry Koch, Coon Rapids
Tyrel Clark, Eyota
Peter Lindstrom, Falcon Heights
Hal Leland, Fergus Falls
Jay Arrowsmith DeCoux, Grand Marais
Dave Smiglewski, Granite Falls
Gary Johnson, Hawley
Molly Cummings, Hopkins
Bob Anderson, International Falls
George Tourville, Inver Grove Heights
Robert Broeder, La Sueur
Donny Chillstrom, Long Lake
Nora Slawik, Maplewood
Bob Byrnes, Marshall
Robert Beussman, New Ulm
Mark Dehen, North Mankato
Thomas Kunz, Owatonna
Tim Meehl, Perham
Corey Theis, Redwood Falls
Andrea Lauer, Royalton
Sandy Martin, Shoreview
Rollin Hall, Wabasha
Jo Emerson, White Bear Lake
Marv Calvin, Willmar
Mike Kuhle, Worthington
As the sole owner of Minneapolis’ Cherry Cycles, Cali Jirsa is trying to change the very idea of what a bike shop can be. Jirsa, who took over the shop in May 2015, “is working to foster inclusivity and kindness in cycling.”

The list of supplementary programs that she is getting off the ground in her first year of business is positively staggering. In addition to the day-to-day work of wrenching on busted bottom brackets and weary brake cables, Cherry Cycles has organized a riding club and racing team that aim to be representative of the population; started planning a community bike repair and resource center for the underserved Northside neighborhood of Minneapolis; and is helping the organization Grease Rag Ride & Wrench transform bike shops to be safer spaces for WTF—women, transgender, and femme—cyclists.

For the mechanically curious, Cherry Cycles has started a framebuilding co-operative. Jirsa recently attended a conference dedicated to custom bike frame building and quickly noticed the lack of women. She asked the organizers how many of the more than 200 frame builders are women. The answer was a paltry 2 percent. Her response: “I need to change that.” Thus, she’s cleared room in Cherry’s basement and procured a full set of the specialized, professional tools used for framebuilding. Now, she’s seeking support to help educate more WTFs and people of color about framebuilding and make this niche corner of the cycling world more equitable.

Some of her work falls even further outside of the traditional bike shop model. Cherry is in the process of launching an artists’ collective and gallery. While part of the impetus behind the collective is simple social and artistic fulfillment, another goal is to increase the representation of diverse people in bicycle-related art.

“Cycling plays such a big role in social change,” said Jirsa, “and vice versa.”

Cherry Cycles became a BikeMN Business member in 2015. Learn more about the Business Membership program at bikemn.org/Business.
Walk! Bike! Fun!

AROUND THE STATE

The BikeMN Education Team has closed the books on another successful fall season of Walk! Bike! Fun! Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Curriculum trainings in Minnesota. They visited six cities and trained 66 educators to use the curriculum! We’ve assembled a neat infographic to summarize the work that happened last fall, as well as the number of kids projected to now be learning this new curriculum in their Physical Education classes.

The team is gearing up to begin spring trainings in five more locations:

- Staples Motley School District
- Mankato Area Public Schools
- Brooklyn Center Community Schools
- Warren/Alvarado/Oslo School District
- White Bear Lake Area Schools

Stay tuned to the BikeMN Facebook page for photos from the on-bike portion of the trainings!

The Walk! Bike! Fun! curriculum was created with the Minnesota Department of Transportation in collaboration with BlueCross BlueShield of Minnesota. If you’re interested in bringing walking and bicycling education to your school, contact Michelle to learn more at michelle@bikemn.org or visit walkbikefun.org.

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**MINNESOTA WALK! BIKE! FUN!**

**FALL EVALUATION SUMMARY**

Our goal is to prepare educators to teach children the skills needed for pedestrian and bicycle safety, as well as to build confidence and help them stay safe, active, and healthy.

**49 Teachers**

- Phy Ed, Health, DAPE
- Science, Classroom Teachers

**17 Educators**

- Public Health and YMCA Staff
- Planners, Transp. Dept., GreenCorps Members, Athletic Directors

**66 Participants**

**Overall Rating**

4.4 of 5

Participants rated the training a 4.4 on a scale of 1-5, “5” being excellent.

Most helpful features of the training:

- “The hands on portion of the training. It gave everyone an opportunity to implement what they learned in the classroom as well as a live demonstration on how to apply the training.”

- “Group bike ride and the opportunity to teach a portion of the on-bike skills.”

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View the complete infographic at bikemn.org/wbibinfo.
We extend our deep gratitude to all the members, donors, volunteers and supporters who make BikeMN a great and effective organization. The lists below represent contributors between November 1, 2015 and February 29, 2016. Names marked with an asterisk are sustaining members.

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