Exciting news for the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota (BikeMN) and Ramsey County! The McKnight Foundation announced in July that it will be funding the $40,000 one-year grant request we made to their Region & Communities program. The grant will fund enhanced Bicycle Friendly CommunitySM (BFC), Bicycle Friendly BusinessSM (BFB) and Safe Routes to School (SRTS) related work in Saint Paul, Ramsey County and other Ramsey County communities. These additional resources from BikeMN have great potential to assist the existing bicycle planning, infrastructure, and education efforts already happening in this area.

The McKnight Foundation program focuses on building sustainable regional development, homes for all and economically vibrant neighborhoods. BikeMN successfully made the case that safer and more convenient bicycling can make an important contribution in these areas. As with all communities we work with, a comprehensive approach that includes the League of American Bicyclists’ “5 E’s” (five essential elements of a Bicycle Friendly AmericaSM) of Engineering, Education, Evaluation & Planning, Encouragement and Enforcement is understood and implemented—we will also focus on the sixth E of Equity.

BikeMN plans to work on strengthening partnerships with other organizations in Saint Paul and Ramsey County. That will include working closely with the Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition, Saint Paul Women on Bikes, the Major Taylor Bicycle Club of Minnesota and others. We will also endeavor to create bike advocate groups for other communities and develop stronger relationships with businesses, cities and the county.

Key to our work will be a strong and integrated communications plan that gets more people excited about supporting and being involved in bicycle planning and implementation work. Saint Paul is in the process of implementing their bike plan street by street, and it will take a lot of grassroots outreach and involvement to make it happen. Saint Paul has already hit some bumps as they work on plan implementation, such as removing on-street parking to make room for bike lanes. The Ramsey County plan is less specific, but will likely encounter similar challenges as communities develop detailed bike plans and begin implementation. Fortunately, many of the streets in the suburbs are wider and not as heavily used as those in Saint Paul.

This project isn’t going to be an easy one. There are many stakeholders with many goals, but we feel like we have an ace up our sleeve that will give us an edge with this work. Thanks to the Saint Paul Classic Bike Tour, we have already been engaging Saint Paul and Ramsey County bicyclists for more than 20 years, and we will work with those who are (or wish to become) bicycle advocates for their community. They’ll have the opportunity to get involved in the bike plan work being done now and in the future—as well as plug in to other projects with our partners.

Another priority for the grant funds is to work with the City of Saint Paul and Saint Paul Public Schools to create a Safe Routes to School strategic plan that provides direction for all the aforementioned E’s. Then, the individual schools can begin route planning and hopefully consider the implementation of our Walk! Bike! Fun! (WBF) safety curriculum, along with other programs and infrastructure improvements. We have trained very few teachers to use WBF in Ramsey County and hope to change that this school year.

The Metropolitan Council’s Regional Bicycle System Study and their implementation plans will also be important to consider in this process. Big projects will likely need federal Transportation Alternatives funding from the Met Council and their Transportation Advisory Board. BikeMN will also work to replicate 3M’s BFB example that they set at their Maplewood campus. We welcome tips on other corporations, big or small, that might be BFB candidates.

Please stay tuned and watch for the Saint Paul Bicycle Coalition and Saint Paul Women on Bikes at the Saint Paul Classic on September 13. And, be sure to let us know at info@bikemn.org if you are a Ramsey County resident or rider and want to get involved! •
It seems like just yesterday that Congressman Jim Oberstar from northeast Minnesota started talking about Safe Routes to School (SRTS), but it has been more than 10 years. As the lead Democrat on the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, he pushed to have the program authorized as part of the federal SAFETEA-LU transportation bill in August 2005. With strong support from the National Safe Routes Partnership, Obserstar (as chair of the committee from 2007-2011), made sure that the program was well supported and well funded.

To date, more than $1.2 billion has been spent and more than 17,000 schools have benefited from SRTS nationally. Minnesota made its first grants, totaling about $1.7 million, in 2006. Since that time more than $15 million has been granted for about 200 projects and programs in Minnesota. More than 200 SRTS plans have also been completed. Demand for SRTS funding keeps increasing in Minnesota, with a total of almost $9 million being awarded in 2013 and 2014.

Because of this demand, BikeMN reached out to the Minnesotans for Healthy Kids Coalition to develop a strategy to create and fund a state SRTS program and form a Minnesota SRTS Coalition. The Coalition cited the fact that the federal allocations were only enough for the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to fund about 25 percent of SRTS requests. The Coalition also effectively presented statistics and research that more kids walking and biking to school was good for health and academic achievement, and that a disproportionate number of children walking and biking are involved in traffic crashes.

In 2012, the Minnesota Legislature created a state SRTS program and in 2013 they provided $250,000/yr. in funding for non-infrastructure needs such as planning, mapping, education and bike fleets. They doubled funding in 2014. This is now an annual allocation as part of MnDOT’s base budget. In 2014 the legislature provided an additional $1 million for SRTS infrastructure as part of the state bonding bill. SRTS was a big part of the Move Minnesota transportation funding package that did not pass in 2015.

In late 2012, BikeMN partnered with BlueCross BlueShield of Minnesota and began the process of developing the Walk! Bike! Fun! (WBF) safety curriculum for elementary schools. It was released in late 2013, and BikeMN has been training teachers to use the curriculum since then. Many school districts used the curriculum and about 230 teachers have attended the trainings. In recognition of the growing demand for the WBF curriculum, MnDOT awarded a two-year contract to BikeMN in August for continued implementation and teacher training.

In June, MnDOT released a Five-Year Strategic Plan that was developed with the help of their SRTS Steering Committee, Strategic Planning Team and the Toole Design Group consulting team. It provides details for four strategic focus areas in support of the vision that “Minnesota is a state where all students can walk and bicycle on routes that are safe, comfortable and convenient.”

Safe Routes was very special to Congressman Oberstar. So much so that when asked about his favorite accomplishments during his 36 years as a member of Congress during a PBS News Hour interview, he answered, “Safe Routes to School. How often do you get to change the behavior of a generation.” And he meant it as you can see in the photo that is part of this story. I think Mr. Oberstar would have been proud of what Minnesota is doing with his legacy.
Spreading Bike-Love

by Jo Olson, Communications Manager

Minnesotans know that their state is a great place to bike. We’re the second most bicycle-friendly state in the nation for a reason! However, as bike-friendly as our state is, we at BikeMN still see an opportunity for getting even more people pedaling.

From 2007-2014, bicycling has increased by 33 percent in Saint Paul and 73 percent in Minneapolis, based on each city’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Count Reports. However, while bike ridership is increasing in the Twin Cities and across the state, the slowest growth is occurring among older adults age 55+. In fact, in this group there are more people not riding than those who are! As Minnesota strives to become more bicycle friendly, this cannot be ignored.

BikeMN launched a summer-long partnership with AARP Minnesota targeting just this issue. Our goal was to get more of the age 50+ community back on their bikes for recreation, exercise and transportation.

“Since day one Dorian and his team have been open to new ways to engage avid riders as well as 50+ people who have been wanting to get back on their bike but hadn’t yet found the excuse to do so,” said Will Phillips, State Director of AARP Minnesota. “The thing that makes it all work is the synergy in mission. Bike MN’s mission is 100% consistent with AARP’s interest in creating livable communities for people of all ages.”

The partnership between BikeMN and AARP includes a Bike Basics for Boomers education series created by BikeMN and taught by board member Peter Breyfogle, a League Cycling Instructor and AARP member. This four-week series combined in-class and on-bike lessons to help people become comfortable on their bikes again. The course covers bike law, safety practices, bike fit and more.

The course also addressed some basic bicycle maintenance tips and information so riders are able to make minor repairs and adjustments as needed. The Bike Basics for Boomers curriculum is available for all Minnesota League Cycling Instructors and is part of a larger “Basics” series that is customized to specific interest groups (see back page).

In addition to the Basics course, BikeMN held a free on-bike Joy Ride series in July and August. Participants got together each week for a casual ride and worked on building their riding endurance. The group started at 5 miles and worked their way up to 20 miles by the time the series was complete!

To complement these classes, BikeMN and AARP hosted pop-up mini tune-and-ride events at popular biking spots like the Midtown Greenway, Lake Como, Lake Calhoun and more. At these events, we offered minor adjustments and free tire air, as well as answered questions about all-things biking. AARP highlighted their new Livable Communities Index, which gives useful, neighborhood-level, information on things like walkability, access to transportation, air quality, affordable housing and more. (http://livabilityindex.aarp.org).

All and all, we’ve had a busy summer with AARP. “We see these activities and this partnership as a way to grow confidence for older adults,” said Dorian Grilley, executive director of BikeMN, “and hopefully get more riding their bikes more often!”

As part of the partnership, AARP members will also receive a special discount when they register for the Saint Paul Classic Bicycle Tour, which takes place September 13, 2015! Visit BikeClassic.org to learn more. •

Biking is a great way to stay active, but it should be safe. That’s why we’re offering courses on bike safety specifically designed for anyone who has drifted away from biking in their adult life.

Dorian Grilley, Executive Director of BikeMN
At just more than 2,000 inhabitants, central Minnesota’s Crosby is one of our state’s best-kept bicycling secrets. The city also recently snagged a Bronze-level Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) ranking! Earning BFC status is a nationally recognized high five. The program is administered by the League of American Bicyclists and commends towns, cities, counties and metropolitan areas for taking concrete steps toward making bicycling more safe, more visible and more fun in their communities. There are now more than 1 million Minnesotans who call a BFC their home.

The crown jewel of the Crosby area is the Cuyuna Lakes Mountain Bike Trails system. The trails, which curl around pristine mine pit lakes and craggy rock formations, stretch for more than 25 miles and boast the largest “pump track” in the United States. While the Cuyuna area is a draw for cyclists from all over the region, Crosby is also fostering a local scene with its popular mountain bike club and high school mountain bike team.

But Crosby isn’t just for those who prefer getting off the beaten path. The Cuyuna Lakes State Trail explores about eight miles of historic wilderness on paved trails, and the city government recently approved a bike lane to reach the trail from the scenic downtown plaza. While you’re in town, get ready for a longer ride at the public tune-up and bike wash stations.

Crosby’s bike shop, Cycle Path & Paddle, offers repair classes for youth. The community organized its first Open Streets-style event this summer, but if you missed it, zip up your parka and roll into town in February for the Whiteout Fat Bike Festival.

Is there more to come for Crosby? You betcha! The city and local school district are working together to implement Safe Routes to School programs and infrastructure.

Congratulations to the bike advocates and residents of Crosby for creating an awesome place to ride. Learn about becoming a BFC and about other BFCs in Minnesota at bikemn.org/BFC.
Photo: Teacher training in Plymouth.

by Michelle Breidenbach, 
Safe Routes to School Education Coordinator

Another season of Walk! Bike! Fun! (WBF) Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Curriculum trainings is underway and coming to a city near you! The last school year was a busy one. With 11 trainings from September 2014 through June 2015, 153 teachers and community educators were trained to teach the curriculum and impact over 15,000 students in Minnesota.

Stacie Marsolik, a physical education teacher at Fond du Lac Ojibwe School in Cloquet told me, “Walk! Bike! Fun! is one of the best curricula I have ever used with the kids, I will definitely use it again and again.” That’s exactly the kind of feedback that I love to get!

As Dorian mentioned in his article on page two, we’re very excited that we received our third contract with Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to continue the curriculum trainings across the state. This contract will help us to ensure that more children learn life-long skills for health and happiness. Seven trainings are being organized across Minnesota, from Blackduck in the north to Austin in the south. Physical education and health teachers, along with community youth educators are invited and will receive a free copy of the curriculum and technical assistance to help them get it going in their classrooms.

Many schools, community organizations and youth organizations have enjoyed access to the BikeMN fleet of Bike Fridays during bike rodeos or physical education classes. Along with the option of the BikeMN bike fleet, the Walk! Bike! Fun! program offers bookmarks, posters and stickers to use for education. The message of these materials complements the concepts of the curriculum—and kids love them! We often find that they are sharing them with friends as well.

Kids are enjoying this curriculum so much that even their parents have been taking notice. A parent from Marcy Open School in Minneapolis contacted the school’s physical education teacher, Tamara Cowan, to say that her son told her that the curriculum was the “funnest” thing he’s ever done in school because they got to ride bikes!

Mark your calendar! International Walk to School Day is coming up on Wednesday, October 7, and is a great time to get involved within your school district to encourage more walking and biking. Visit http://bit.ly/1NuBYGD to view educational resources like safety tip posters, bookmarks and stickers. Order requests can be made at http://bit.ly/1hWLPsW.

Stay tuned to BikeMN’s Facebook and e-newsletter for more International Walk to School Day resources that you can customize for your school!
MEET BIKE MN MEMBER BOB FRIED

I’m a member because BikeMN raises awareness of bicycling through advocacy and education of all road users.

by Will Wizlo, Membership and Web Specialist

Crashes happen so fast and recovery takes such a long time. This was true for BikeMN Member Bob Fried, who set out for a bike ride one October morning in 2007 and woke up from a coma nearly four weeks later. There were no witnesses of the crash, but it’s likely a car came around a corner in his Edina neighborhood and the driver didn’t see him on his bicycle.

Bob spent the next months relearning things most of us take for granted: how to eat, talk, breathe. He was diagnosed with a traumatic brain injury. In addition to broken bones, Bob brought home terrible symptoms of vertigo from the hospital.

Before the crash, Bob worked in computer programming and directed a chamber orchestra, playing viola for the ensemble too. Additionally, he was active with the Bike Edina taskforce and early implementation of the Safe Routes to School program. After the crash, he could barely keep from falling over.

Luckily, Bob discovered he could stave off the vertigo with activities that exercise his sense of balance—like bicycling. He worked his way up from a hospital bed to a stationary bike to rides on the Cedar Lake Trail. Now, he tries to ride 75 miles every week! This past winter he bought his first fat bike to take advantage of the therapeutic aspects of cycling even after the snow flies.

Bob became a BikeMN Member in 2009. Learn more about BikeMN Membership at bikemn.org/JoinRenew.

membership IS EASY (AND COOL)

Make a donation to BikeMN, Minnesota’s only statewide bicycle advocacy organization, and a week later an envelope will arrive in your mailbox with a brand new BikeMN member card. This membership will allow you to ride BikeMN rides for less, get a discount on classes, enjoy deals at bike shops and businesses around the state, get sweet thank-you gifts and most importantly—be heard! With a BikeMN membership you have a bike-partisan voice at the State Capitol for all your bicycle-related political ideas and questions.

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Please make your check payable to Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota and mail to Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota, PO Box 5078, Saint Paul, MN 55101 or donate at www.bikemn.org/JoinRenew.
thank you
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Would you like to add your name to this list? Find a donation form on page six of this newsletter or donate safely and securely online at www.bikemn.org/JoinRenew. Consider supporting bicycling all year round with a sustaining monthly contribution!
The Education Team at BikeMN is excited to unveil a brand new suite of introductory safe-cycling classes called “Bike Basics.” These short courses are intended to provide cyclists, particularly those with less experience, with the core information and skills to be able to ride safely and with confidence. The suite of courses includes six core classes which are tailored for different audiences, along with seven optional modules. This curriculum was created in response to demand from both cyclists and instructors for condensed classes.

The concept of offering education tailored to certain types of riders originated and was first done at BikeMN two years ago, when Natalie Gille was approached by a group in Grand Marais. They were interested in promoting safe cycling education for a group of women riders. Working collaboratively, Natalie planned and taught “Bike Basics for Babes.” Based on the success and positive feedback from this class, we began to explore how this could be replicated for other communities and groups of interested cyclists. During this time we were also receiving feedback from partners and League Cycling Instructors (LCIs) that there was widespread interest in bike education offered as short classes that emphasized essential skills and information.

This process eventually encouraged us to develop core classes for five groups—women, students, older adults, families and businesses—plus one for all types of riders without a specific focus. Each of the classes addresses essential information related to safe cycling and includes a discussion customized to the group, such as safely riding with a baby in Bike Basics for Families. In addition to these six core classes, the Bike Basics suite includes these seven optional content modules that can be added to any of the core classes as desired: Commuting, Night Riding, Winter Riding, Group Riding, Fix-A-Flat, ABC Quick Check + Riding Skills, and ABC Quick Check + Group Ride. We expect this will allow LCIs the flexibility to match the interests and needs of the audience to relevant content in a friendly format.

The Bike Basics curriculum was officially unveiled at the 2015 BikeMN LCI Annual Meeting, which was held at the Midtown Bike Center in Minneapolis on August 22. Those in attendance received training in planning for these new classes, accessing all of the associated resources and teaching the content. The course materials and resources will subsequently be made available for all active instructors in the state. With this exciting new tool, we are confident that we can continue to make Minnesota a place where cycling is a safe, easy, fun, and cool choice for everyone!