

# Bicycling bright spots in North Dakota

Cathryn Sprynczynatyk

The Fargo-Moorhead metropolitan area recently received accolades from a national magazine for its bicycling infrastructure. Bicycling Magazine named Fargo among "America's Top 50 Bike-Friendly Cities."

The Maah Daah Hey trail and CANDISC tour are staples for North Dakota cycling, but small and large communities around the state have been working to become more bike-friendly.

## Fargo area cycling gains nationwide recognition

Fargo may have received the kudos as one of Bicycling Magazine's "America's Top 50 Bike-Friendly Cities," but according to Justin Kristan, regional bicycle and pedestrian coordinator for the Fargo-Moorhead Metropolitan Council of Governments, the accolades need to be shared.

Metro COG is composed of Fargo, West Fargo and Cass County in North Dakota and Moorhead, Dilworth and Clay County in Minnesota. Kristan's position as bicycle and pedestrian coordinator is one of the aspects lauded by Bicycling Magazine.

The position of bicycling and pedestrian coordinator was created in 2006. In the beginning, Kristan said his work consisted of 75% motorized transportation planning and only 25% non-motorized. It wasn't long before his position became focused solely on non-motorized transportation.

"There was growing awareness between public health, or a person's health, and the opportunities for physical exercise and activities through transportation," Kristan said.

In the past four years, Kristan has worked to incorporate bicycling and pedestrian aspects in corridor, greenway and transit studies. He has worked with the cycling infrastructure of bicycle parking, paths improvements and bike racks on buses.

As Fargo's downtown grew and more

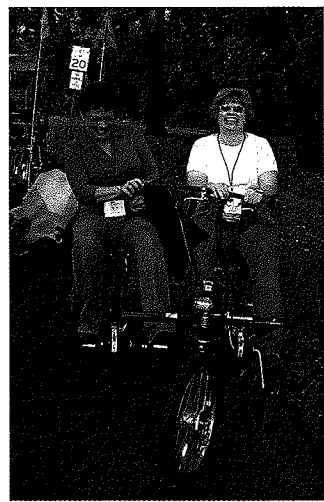
storefronts opened, Metro COG saw a need to get bicyclists off the sidewalk and safely onto the street. To do that, Metro COG enhanced signage and roadway stenciling to inform motorists that cyclists had the right to take the full lane.

"The idea was to make the roadway more attractive to bicycles and more comfortable," Kristan said.

Anecdotally, Kristan said more bicyclists are using the roadway. He said bicyclists can still be seen on the sidewalk, but more and more are on the road.

"[Cyclists] love the shared-use paths along the Red River," Kristan said, "but what we're finding is that those paths are great, they're wonderful, but they don't work in every situation. They don't necessarily work for transportation. They are mostly recreational at this point."

Kristan said much of the growth in bicycling is due to the area universities, but Metro COG is keeping all cyclists in mind: college students, school children, experienced riders and beginners.



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## Minot provides missing links for school children and cyclists

Minot has been the recent recipient of both Transportation Enhancement Program funds and Safe Routes to School funds as it fills in the missing links in its bike system.

The City of Minot already has a substantial recreational trail system in place. According to Lance Meyer, assistant city engineer, the city is now working towards connecting the trails.

"We're using grants as much as we can to connect sidewalk systems and schools," Meyer said.

Minot has been the recipient of several TE grants. Last year, the city finished a project on 21st Ave. NW from a soccer park to North Broadway, a main artery in the city.

"That was a major link in our trail system," Meyer said.

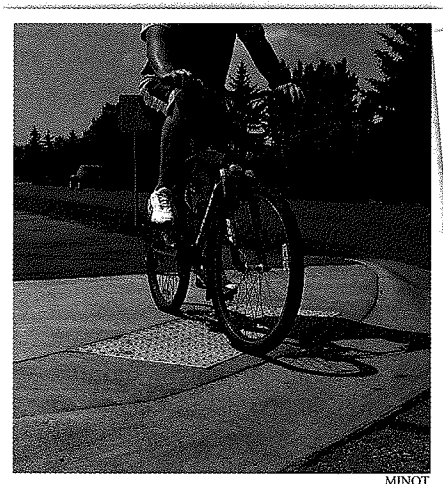
Minot has received TE funds for a shared-use path along 16th Ave. SE which will connect to an existing trail along 13th St. The city is in the design stage for a trail almost a mile long on 13th St. SE from Valley St. to 18th Ave. SE.

"Every link that we put in the chain, our system use keeps going up," Meyer said. "We see people on these trails all the time, especially when the weather gets nice; people really seem to get out and use these trails."

Using grants from the federal Safe Routes to School program, Minot is working to bridge pedestrian and bicycling gaps for school children. Grants from the TE program and Safe Routes to School are making these cycling enhancements possible.

"With so much money tied to maintenance and rehabilitation, it's hard to squeeze money out for enhancements," Meyer said. "It's a really good program."

According to Meyer, most of Minot's new housing and commercial development is in the southeast part of the city. Looking toward the future, Minot plans to extend their trail system to the developing parts of town.



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### Watford City creates cycling ring-around-the-city

Watford City has just been awarded TE funds for their 2011 project to create a cycling trail around the city.

"We're trying to get it so the trail will basically ring the whole city so you can get from place to place," said Lowell Cutshaw, city administrator and engineer for Watford City.

The proposed shared-use path would extend an existing bike path from the city's Tourist Park to the eastern city limit. The park includes a campground, amphitheater, picnic shelter and playground. The proposed trail, which would run along Highway 23, would add 3/4 of a mile.

"We felt there was a demand for it," Cutshaw said. "The existing bike paths that we have get a lot of use from bike traffic, foot traffic, skateboards and rollerblades."



### Bismarck-Mandan looks to expand from recreational bicycling to commuting

Any multi-city metropolitan area will prove that development doesn't end at jurisdictional lines. The Bismarck-Mandan Metropolitan Planning Organization has created 70 miles of multi-use paths throughout five member jurisdictions: Bismarck, Mandan, Lincoln and portions of Burleigh and Morton counties.

The trail system links the University of Mary south of Bismarck to Fort Lincoln State Park outside of Mandan and virtually encircles the communities. In addition, there are 15 to 20 miles of publicly accessible off-road mountain bike and hiking trails. With an extensive recreational system in place, the organization is looking to establish commuter routes according to Ben Ehreth, transportation planner with the Bismarck-Mandan Metropolitan Planning Organization.

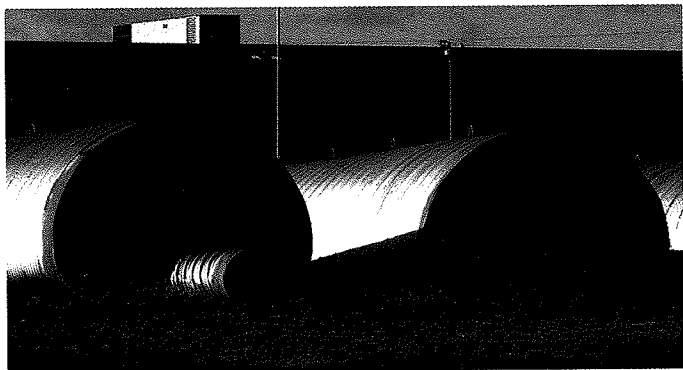
"We want people not only out on biking and walking paths, but using biking as a legitimate form of transportation so they can get to work, church and the grocery store," Ehreth said.

The Metropolitan Planning Organization will be a key force in the transition from recreational bicycle development to commuter bicycle development. Ehreth said that in order to receive federal transportation dollars, cities over 50,000 need to have a Metropolitan Planning Organization in place.

"Most transportation projects don't end at jurisdictional boundaries," Ehreth said.



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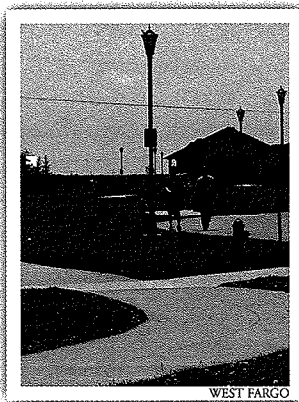
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## West Fargo bridges the gap from schools to housing developments

For some time, the fastest growing area of West Fargo has been isolated when it comes to pedestrian and bike paths. The developments north and south of 40th Ave. had no pedestrian crossing over the Sheyenne River. Instead, cyclists and pedestrians were forced to navigate one of the city's busiest intersections. To compound the problem, there were two schools in the area.

"A lot of people ended up driving their kids to school, or you would see kids walking along the road," said Steven Zimmer, West Fargo senior city planner and member of the

Metro Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee.

The City of West Fargo received TE funds for a path along 40th Ave. designed to reduce the danger to pedestrians and cyclists.

"We applied for this money to be able to take pedestrians along that roadway and have them crossing at specific points so we can monitor those intersections," Zimmer said.

With some safety concerns addressed, West Fargo plans to turn its attention to recreational development. West Fargo plans to work with the City of Fargo to develop a multi-use path along the Sheyenne River Diversion. The proposed path has the potential to link major parks, small camping areas and recreational facilities.



## New Lake Metigoshe path enhances safety and recreation

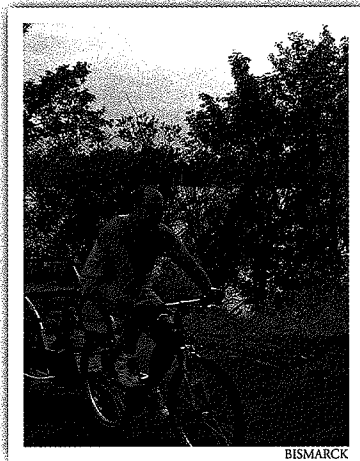
The Lake Metigoshe Improvement Association Board has raised over \$1 million through grant money and their own fundraising to address trail safety concerns. A four-mile loop that runs between two lakes had numerous pedestrians and cyclists dodging high traffic.

"It was kind of an accident waiting to happen," said Dwane Getzlaff, a member of the Lake Metigoshe Improvement Association Board.

Currently, the Lake Metigoshe area has 8.3 miles of bike trail. A project scheduled for completion in May would add three more miles.

"There are about 1,000 cabins around Lake Metigoshe," Getzlaff said. "Our main goal was to get bikers and ladies with strollers off the roadway and onto the trail for safety reasons."

The trail runs through forest service land, along the lake and along the existing roadway. Getzlaff said much of the trail is primitive, but it provides a nature trail for hiking and biking. He said they are considering holding 11-mile, eight-mile or five-mile races with the possibility of a triathlon.



## Linton's small town path gets plenty of use

The City of Linton is another recent recipient putting TE funds to use for cycling. The city's new bike path runs from the city park to a terminus east of town. The walking bike path spans 1.2 miles and crosses Highway 83.

"For a small community it's very nice," said Sharon Jangula, deputy city auditor. "I drive past it every day and see people using it."

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## Cavalier bike path taps into tourism

Cavalier knows its assets. The city is surrounded by scenic, wide-open spaces. It is close to Icelandic State Park and the Pembina Gorge. According to Sharon Hanson, Chamber of Commerce executive director and economic development director, the area is ripe for tourism.

"We're trying to get more into tourism which is the second leading industry in North Dakota," Hanson said. "In order to do that, we need more infrastructure."

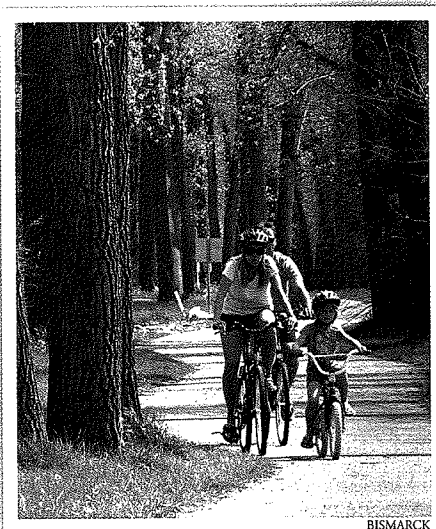
A new trail connecting Cavalier to Icelandic State Park is a step in that direction. The path, which spans six miles, is maintained by the City of Cavalier, Pembina County and Icelandic State Park.

"It's used every day," Hanson said. "There's always somebody on that bike path."

The pay-off for the bike path is evident. After the path was constructed, the Red River International Bike Tour stopped in Cavalier and stayed overnight. The trail benefits those who want to stay in the state park and bike into town.

According to Hanson, improvements to the trail are in the works. She said they would like to enhance the trail with benches, landscaping, flower pots and a resting area.

"In order to attract tourism, we need to have more things available," Hanson said.



## How to apply for a Transportation Enhancement Program grant

Municipalities can often find transportation budgets eaten up by maintenance and rehabilitation. Little money is left for enhancements. The Transportation Enhancement Program, run by the North Dakota Department of Transportation, can help solve this problem.

The TE program, which began in 1991, can provide grants

for bicycle and pedestrian projects, landscaping and historic transportation. Cities and counties can submit applications in 2010 for projects that would begin construction in 2012. The sign-up period begins around Labor Day, and applications are typically due by Thanksgiving. Cities should watch for a letter from the TE Program in August detailing the application process.

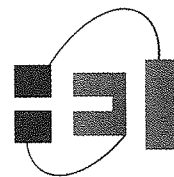
*For more information, contact Bennett Kubischta, Transportation Enhancement Program Manager, at 701-328-3555 or [bkubisch@nd.gov](mailto:bkubisch@nd.gov). More information can be found at [www.dot.nd.gov](http://www.dot.nd.gov). Click on "TE Program" under the "Government" tab.*

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