



Aug. 21 meeting to focus on bicycling in Taos

By Matthew van Buren

The Taos News, 8/9/2012

A meeting planned for Aug. 21 will give cyclists a chance to look at how to improve road riding in and around Taos.

According to a Monday (Aug. 6) email from town of Taos Long-Range Planner Matthew Foster, the meeting of the bicycling community will include discussions about the status of the Taos Bicycle Master Plan and “different ways to become a stronger advocate for improving roads for safer and more comfortable cycling in Taos.”

The Taos Town Council adopted the “Bicycle Master Plan” in 2009. That followed the council’s adoption of the “Taos Trails Plan” in 2002. That plan called for a multi-use trail system linking parks, open spaces, commercial centers and residential areas. Cycling is also included in Taos’ “Vision 2020 Master Plan.”

According to a town resolution adopting the Bicycle Master Plan, the document “recommends the development of a network of multi-use trails for recreation and as an alternative to existing transportation systems.” The resolution recognizes the ability of bicycle facilities to “enhance the public safety, economy and public health of the Taos community” while providing transportation and recreation alternatives.

The plan proposes more than 68 miles of bicycle lanes and 14 miles of bike routes, including on town, county and state roads.

Foster said collaboration will be important as Taos works to better accommodate cyclists.

According to the plan, existing bicycle facilities, such as bicycle lanes, signs and parking areas, are inadequate to meet demand for those riding in Taos for recreation or transportation. The plan also sets a goal of Taos being named a Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists.

Among the policies listed in the plan are regularly evaluating and updating it; including bicycle facilities when planning construction projects; participating in regional planning efforts; and installing signs along three proposed loop rides.

It calls for all roadways owned and operated by the town to be constructed to achieve a “Bicycle Level of Service” (BLOS) unless exempted by the Town Council. According to the plan, BLOS is a calculation that looks at factors such as the volume and speed of vehicular traffic, the number of lanes on a roadway and surface conditions.

“There was a lot of public support for (the Bicycle Master Plan), but it kind of died away,” Foster said. “It just needs to be dusted off.”

Taos Cyclery owner Doug Pickett said he would like to help generate interest in Taos’ bicycle plan and get the cycling community on board. He said he has heard from a number of people who say they are too afraid to ride on the roads here.

“Just having space on the right-of-way is really what people want,” he said, though he acknowledged that even sidewalks are lacking in many places.

Pickett said public education is also an important component to cycling safely in Taos. He said riding Taos’ back roads is safer for cyclists and motorists. “ Taos has a very good network of back roads and lowtraffic roads. They’re very good, safe routes,” he said. “It’s letting people know these routes exist.”

The Aug. 21 meeting is scheduled to take place at 6 p.m. at the Taos Ale House, 401 Paseo del Pueblo Norte, across from the Taos Post Office.