

A Year in Review

Bike Friendly Soo-2017

Bike Friendly Soo (BFS) is now a year old. We first met in Dec. 2016 to discuss forming a group to promote bike infrastructure, bike and pedestrian safety and to ultimately obtain Bicycle Friendly Community status for Sault Ste. Marie.

Bicycle Friendly Community status is given when a community meets the 5 E requirements of the League of American Bicyclists. Those 5 E's are: Engineering, education, enforcement, encouragement, and evaluation.

Leadership of the group consists of Emily Weber, Wayne Barry and I (Roger Blanchard). Over the last year, we have met with virtually any person or group that was interested in Sault Ste. Marie bicycling issues. That included the city manager, Downtown Development Authority director, Rotary Club, Community Services Board, MDOT, the Meijer store manager, Officer Daryl Meyette of the Sault Ste. Marie Police Department, and the manager of the International Bridge. Wayne gave PowerPoint presentations to the Rotary Club and Community Services Board. I believe in all of our meetings and events, we were well received.

The Sault Ste. Marie Police Department has been very supportive of what we're doing and we must give special thanks to Captain Larsen. The Police Department sent Officer Meyette to a bicycle safety training program so he can provide safety training to school groups within Sault Ste. Marie.

We provided bike literature at the LSSU Gear Swap, Sault Ultimate Paddle, Sault Ste. Marie Farmers Market, Sault Arts Festival, Lakerpalooza, Downtown Days, Oktoberfest, and the Arts and Crafts Fair at the junior high. We sold Bike Friendly Soo t-shirts and/or bike streamers at various events that permitted sales. Emily was the creative force for making the streamers.

Pro Sports provided the bike literature and printed the t-shirts. Dave and Kenny have been strong supporters of BFS. Lakerpalooza is an event at LSSU to introduce students to various university, city and regional groups. We provided bicycle information to well over 100 students at the event.

BFS participated in a UP 4 Health event promoted by the Building Healthy Communities Coalition and the SsMART Group at the Farmers Market in June along with a Yoga and Tia Chi demonstration. Also, a stationary trainer was set up and bike streamers sold. The event earned \$1858.00 dollars for repairs and maintenance on the Lynn Trail.

We created a Bike Route Guide for Sault Ste. Marie that was published in late summer. Joann Barry was instrumental in making the maps for the guide and Rich Robinson was instrumental in writing descriptions for the routes and determining route distances. Bike route guides were funded by the Building a Healthier Community Coalition and we're grateful for their support and funding. Guides were distributed to many tourist-related entities in town. We will get them out early in this coming spring for the biking season.

Bike lanes were added to Easterday Ave. by the university and the newly paved 4th Ave. west of the Recycling Center. We have been working with the city manager and Downtown Development Authority director on possible bike lanes on city streets in the future. I think there is a good possibility that bike lanes will be added to multiple streets in town within the next few years.

Along with possible bike lanes on roads within Sault Ste. Marie, the Power Canal Trail will be constructed next summer. Based upon the crowdfunding effort associated with the trail, which brought in over \$60,000, there is strong public support for the trail. BFS got \$1000 together to donate to the Power Canal Trail. I think that will be a tremendous addition to the city.

BFS establishing non-profit status through Chippewa County Community Foundation.

Besides the efforts of Emily, Wayne and I, we were blessed to have a great deal of help from Jen Parks, Mary Jill Leonhardt, Joann Barry, Rich Robinson and Joe Gallagher.

From my perspective, our objective should be to try and make Sault Ste. Marie the most pleasant and livable city possible. Making Sault Ste. Marie bike and pedestrian friendly is an important aspect of making the city pleasant and livable. In the coming year, we will have a Bike Route Guide for the Eastern U.P. We are also planning a Bike Rodeo and at some point, possibly a bicycle safety training program through the League of American Bicyclists. We need to have someone certified through the League's safety training program to obtain Bicycle Friendly Community status.