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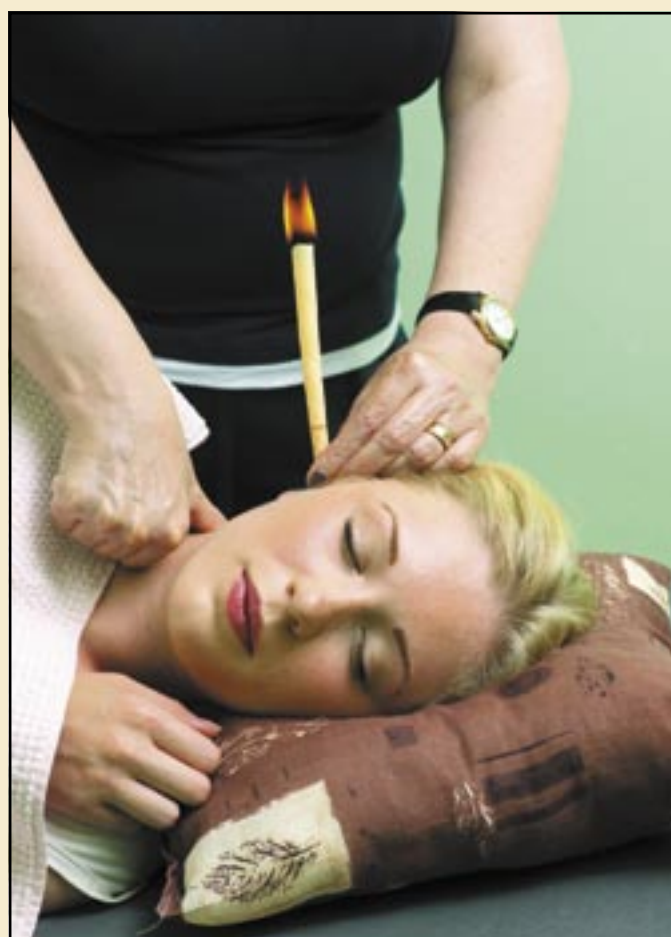
Rochester

City to Become More Bike-Friendly



Advocating for good health in the Finger Lakes

Learn more about the Finger Lakes Health Systems Agency (FLHSA). Page 22



Ear Candling

Ear candling has been criticized by the medical community but candling practitioners say method is effective



Faith-filled man's life is back on track, after cancer momentarily derailed it

Douglas Allen of Pittsford had a near death experience at age 17 when his car did a tailspin on the New York State Thruway. Now nearly 40 years later, he has survived another close call with death.

Rochester About to Become a More Bike-Friendly City

By Amy Cavalier

City is putting its bicycle master plan into gear, which could create more than 50 miles of bike lanes and shared-use lanes by the end of the year

If you've been considering ditching your car and hopping on your bike for that next trip to the public market or work, you're in luck.

The City of Rochester completed a bicycle master plan in January and some of the recommended upgrades have already been put into place.

More than 16 directional miles of bike lanes and shared use lanes, and more bike parking will be installed by the end of 2011, according to Erik Frisch, the transportation specialist with the City of Rochester charged with heading up the bicycle master plan efforts. That total could reach upwards of 50 to 60 miles by the end of next year with an infusion of some \$350,000 of federal transportation support, he adds.

With rising gas prices and more awareness of the environment, people are looking at other options for getting around.

"We not only see it as good for the economy, traffic congestion, public health and air quality, but also for economic competitiveness," said Frisch.

It's a part of the larger picture to

revitalize the economy. According to Rochester's bicycle master plan, improved bicycling conditions provide mobility for people who do not have cars, thereby increasing access to jobs, education and health care. And cities that promote bicycling tend to retain youth, attract young families, and increase social capital.

In 2009, Rochester and Monroe County received an "honorable mention" from the League of American Bicyclists' "Bicycle Friendly Communities" program. The goal is to achieve full bicycle friendly community status from the group, Frisch said.

The city had to identify what was missing, Richard Desarra said in an article on Bikeradar.com. Desarra is a road and trail advocate who works with the Rochester Bicycling Club. He submitted the report to the league, which resulted in the honorable mention.

"They wanted to see more bicycle facilities, programs and amenities," Desarra said. "It was basically that we were missing more of what we were already doing. We didn't have bike lanes, and they wanted to see bike lanes and more shoulder space."

In 2007, Rochester was awarded \$261,000 in federal transportation funding from the Transportation Im-

provement Program (TIP) for on-street bicycle improvements. More recently, Rochester secured \$87,000 in federal stimulus monies for bicycle infrastructure through an energy efficiency and conservation block grant.

Last year, the city designated \$80,000 for a bicycle master plan with two goals in mind — to earn the designation of being a bicycle friendly community, and to determine how to spend the funding which it had been awarded. The report, prepared by Sprinkle Consulting, in association with EDR Companies, and SRF & Associates, took stock of the existing conditions and street networks for bicyclists in the city.

A project advisory committee, consisting of members from Rochester, Monroe County and New York State Department of Transportation, Genesee Transportation Council, the University of Rochester, and representatives from the cycling community, studied about 150 miles of city roadways. Streets were ranked for their bicycle-friendliness based on criteria such as wide shoulders, designated bike lanes, traffic volume and speed, pavement surface condition, and the presence of on street parking. Based on an analysis of the city's "bicycle level of service," Rochester received a D for its current roadway conditions.

"We found that generally, we were sort of middle-of-the-road," said Frisch. "That's pretty much on par for what you would expect in older northern cities. It's not that we were worse than our peers, but we have a lot of room to improve."

Rochester already has a very strong off-street network for bikers in the region, such as the Genesee River and Erie Canal trails. Where it is lacking is in infrastructure allowing bikers to get from one destination to another. According to the study, the highest demand destinations are the University of Rochester Medical Center, the public market, downtown Rochester, schools, and grocery stores.

Areas in need of improvement were prioritized based on a number of factors, including existing bicycling conditions, public input, proximity to high demand destinations, crash history, and transportation equity.

"Oftentimes, lower income neighborhoods are not well represented in these kinds of processes, not to mention that lower income people are more likely to be using bikes as their means of transportation, not necessarily by choice, so it's important to make sure we're balancing these investments in all parts of the city," said Frisch.

Based on income data from the U.S.

More Rochestarians biking to work

Do you ever feel like you spend too much time stuck in traffic or too much money at the gas pumps? Well, Rochestarians Jason Myatt and Doug Neilson have traded in four wheels for two in the daily rat race, and they aren't alone.

According to data from the US Census Bureau's 2009 American Community Survey, 1.4 percent of commuters in the City of Rochester regularly rode their bike to work. That's more than double the rate for Monroe County as a whole, and nearly triple the rate for the entire Rochester metropolitan area. These same figures also indicate that the number of commuters who choose to bicycle to work is growing at a fast clip in the city, county, and region.

Jason Myatt, 40

By bike, the three-mile commute from Jason Myatt's Rockingham Street home to his job at the Laboratory for Laser Energetics at the University of Rochester takes about 15 to 30 minutes, depending on the time of year and traffic. While some people may think that's an unusual or extreme method of transportation, the native Englishman thinks otherwise.

"I think bicycling is more conventional than taking a car," he said. "The car is a recent thing. People have biked for a long time."

Before moving to Rochester 10 years ago, Myatt spent time living in England, Canada and Paris where he relied on his bike and public transportation.

Monday through Friday, Myatt doesn't have to worry about paying parking fees or scouring the lots on the University of Rochester campus for a spot. He doesn't have to deal with traffic jams or worry about the cost of gas. In fact, Myatt said, bicycle commuting is downright enjoyable.

"I don't find it relaxing driving in a car," he said. "It's not fun, whereas, I don't feel that way about the bicycle. I look forward to getting on it."

The 40-year-old has only owned one car in his entire life. That's the vehicle he and his wife Marga Devam share. They have a 2-year-old daughter, Ariane.

While there are some physical benefits to bike commuting, Myatt said he gets more mental health benefits from it.

"I'm not going very far, so it's kind of minimal, but I would say doing something for a half-hour every day does something, especially when you consider the alternative — sitting in a car to go home and sit on the couch," he said. "I often find it humorous that people pay money to go to a gym and ride a stationary bike."

Myatt rides a touring bike, which

is similar to a road bike, but a bit heavier. He has fenders to deal with rainy days, and he changes the tires depending on the season. He has a rack on the back of the bike, and two bags which attach to it, in which he carries a change of clothes, a few books and lunch.

He dresses for the weather. Winds can slow him down, but that's only on rare occasions, and he often finds himself passing cars when the weather is really bad in the winter.

Riding a bike to work is not something everyone has the option to do. Myatt said he's able to commute by bike because his route encompasses residential areas in his South Wedge neighborhood to the university.

If you've never cycled to work before, or you've only ridden your bike on the sidewalk, the road and cars can be an intimidating place. Some people are under the misconception that you are supposed to ride your bike on the opposite side of the road, into oncoming traffic, Myatt said.



Jason Myatt doing some recreational riding around Highland Park with his 2-year-old daughter Ariane in tow. He bikes to work at the University of Rochester every day. "I don't find it relaxing driving in a car," he said. "It's not fun, whereas, I don't feel that way about the bicycle. I look forward to getting on it."

Census, lower income areas were given a higher score on the priority list. Areas targeted for improvement demonstrate low levels of bicycle service, high volumes of traffic, and are streets that aren't slated for improvements, such as repaving or re-striping, in the next five years.

In some cases, Frisch said, the city has been able to incorporate bicycle traffic improvements into large-scale reconstruction projects and annual resurfacing plans, such as on East Avenue, from Alexander to Culver. As part of a recent project, wide shoulders were added for use for parking on

nights and weekends and bicyclists by day.

"These improvements are very cost effective ways of improving and enhancing bicycling as a mode of transportation," said Frisch. "It could be just as simple as putting new paint out there. There are some streets that we don't even have to move existing lanes, just put down a new marking because we have the width to do it."

The analysis indicates that more than 60 lane miles of the city's street network represent potential opportunities for re-striping.

One of the largest issues identi-

fied in the plan was the need for more public education. Frisch said the city is working on a campaign, in collaboration with area foundations and companies, to provide education outreach about rules of the road for both bicyclists and drivers.

"It's a two-way street, and educating both bicyclists and motorists is important," he adds.

In addition, the federal monies will be spent on more covered bike parking, downtown and eventually in neighborhood business districts, and more bike racks on the street.

The city's zoning code already requires certain bike-friendly improvements as part of any new construction projects. Commercial developments of a certain size have to provide a certain number of bike parking spaces for every certain number of parking spaces, Frisch said.

"We're already doing it, but we could strengthen it and make it a bit clearer," he added.

There are currently bike lockers in all city-owned garages, available through the city parking office, but there's a waiting list to purchase a key to use one of them. The city is also in the midst of installing free bike parking in all of its garages to supplement the lockers.

The region's efforts are already garnering some attention. Rochester ranked 50th on "Bicycling" magazine's 2011 list of "Top 50 Bike-Friendly Cities," among cities with a population of 100,000 or more.

"It's been one of the more fun projects to work on, very rewarding," Frisch said of the bicycle master plan. "People are pretty excited about it, it's new, and I think it will have more benefits for the city than people realize."

For more information about the Rochester bicycle master plan, visit www.Cityofrochester.gov/bikeplan/.

Gov. Cuomo to sign legislation to make state streets more pedestrian, cyclist-friendly

Gov. Andrew Cuomo said on Aug. 16 that he plans to sign state-wide complete streets legislation. The law, crafted in partnership with the state Department of Transportation, would "require state and local transportation agencies to consider "complete streets" designs that factor in non-car uses of streets and sidewalks, according to the Cuomo's announcement.

"New York's roadways should safely accommodate all pedestrians, motorists and cyclists, and this legislation will help communities across the state achieve this objective," Governor Cuomo said in a press release.

According to The National Complete Streets Coalition, 24 states, Puerto Rico and Washington, D.C. have already passed some type of complete



streets legislation.

According to Governor Cuomo's office, the New York law would "facilitate improved joint use of roadways by all users, including pedestrians, motorists, and bicyclists as well as promote a cleaner, greener transportation system with reduced traffic congestion and the resultant air pollution." Examples of those non-car design elements were listed in the announcement.

The legislation was sponsored Assemblyman David Gantt, D-Rochester, and Sen. Charles Fuschillo Jr., R-Long Island.

"With this legislation, future state and local transportation projects will be planned in a way that is more mindful of all users of our roadways," Gantt said in the statement.

"That's the most efficient way to get killed as a cyclist," he said.

Bicyclists should follow the direction of traffic, and must learn to be aggressive when riding in the road with traffic. Myatt said some drivers don't think bicycles belong on the road.

"I would say about once every two months I may have something happen that's a little unnerving, which to be honest, is less than I've had in a car," said Myatt.

Fear and lack of education are the biggest reasons Myatt believes more people don't use their bicycles as a transportation method.

"Sometimes when it's a bit nasty outside people will think you're crazy, but I have to tell you, it really isn't a big deal," he said. "I don't even think twice in the morning before I go to work."

Doug Neilson, 63

Five years ago, Doug Neilson parked his car and started biking to work. He began in the summer; then it got to be fall, and winter, and in the driveway the car remained. Finally, after a year, Neilson gave his vehicle to a friend and he hasn't owned one since.

Gone are the days of car insurance, car payments



Five years ago, Doug Neilson parked his car and started biking to work. He began in the summer; then it got to be fall, and winter, and in the driveway the car remained. Finally, after a year, Neilson gave his vehicle to a friend and he hasn't owned one since.

and expensive trips to the mechanic. Neilson does own about a half-a-dozen bikes, so he does spend some money on transportation, but it's definitely a net savings.

"Cars are one of the poorest investments," he said. "I hate to even call them that. You drive them off the car lot and you lose \$10,000."

Neilson goes grocery shopping on his bike, out for coffee on his bike, and to visit friends.

"I do everything on my bike," he said.

Neilson, 63, lives in the Cobb's Hill area of Rochester and commutes by bike each day to work at Sound Source, a musical instrument store on Norris Drive. It's a quick two-mile ride that takes him through Cobb's Hill Park. It takes about 12 minutes.

"Rochester is so easy to get around on bike compared to a lot of places," he said. "It's a small city; there are not a lot of big hills. I think fall, summer, winter, spring, it's one of the best ways to get around."

For winter riding, Neilson said, he uses studded tires and a bicycle that's not "too great" since it will get

rusty, just like a car, from the salt used to clear the roadways. Neilson doesn't have to dress up for work, so if it's cold, he'll throw on some layers, and if it's warm, he'll shed them. If it rains, he wears a rain coat, and the fenders on his bike keep the splash down.

"I have it so easy," he said. "It doesn't take much time, I don't rush, and I barely even work up a sweat most of the time."

Neilson is eager to see improvements in the city to make bike commuting more convenient. He provided feedback in the City of Rochester's bicycle master plan, which was adopted this year and has already started being implemented.

One of the biggest issues with bicycle commuting is driver education. "Drivers in cars are so busy doing everything but driving these days," he said. "In their cocoons, with their windows rolled up, they're not paying attention to anything outside of them."

Obviously bike commuting is not for everyone, Neilson admits, but he wishes more people would consider taking a bike to head 100 yards down the street to the corner store, rather than hopping in their car.

"Try to tie it into things you usually do," he said. "Maybe it's going to the library or the corner store for milk. I think it would be great if people would leave their cars at home and do their business however they can — buses, biking, walking. It would make a major difference."

Bicycle-friendly Improvements to Be Completed in 2011 in Rochester

- Shared-use lanes on sections of Latta Road in Charlotte, West Broad Street, Franklin Street, Pleasant Street, Joseph Avenue, University Avenue and Driving Park Avenue.

- Exclusive bike lanes on portions of South Avenue, Lyell Avenue, Atlantic Avenue, St. Paul Street, Ames Street, Central Avenue and University Avenue.

- Bicycle parking shelters on Court Street near Exchange Boulevard, Chestnut Street at Court Street, and the Public Market.

- Bike repair stands at five locations around the City (to be determined).

- Bike racks are being installed in business districts upon request.