200,000 Miles of Bikeways!
This bike trail leads to the pounding surf of the Pacific in Pt. Reyes National Seashore, California

Escaping the din of the big city on a Bikeway along the East Coast
200,000 MILES OF BIKEWAYS TO BECOME A REALITY WITHIN DECADE

For the experienced cyclist, capable of riding long distances, escaping the clutches of the city and finding enjoyable by-roads is not a critical problem. The enthusiast is usually able to satisfy his own requirements, reaping the many benefits bicycle riding offers.

But what about the newcomer, the weekend cyclist, the family with children? Where can they ride? How can they escape the tyranny of the automobile, overcome the evolution of the megalopolis, and enjoy the natural beauty still convenient to our cities?

Bike ways!

The hope and refuge for the majority of American bike riders is a plan for utilization of secondary, lightly traveled streets, designated as “Bikeways,” to be shared by careful bicyclists and considerate drivers.

THE ORIGIN OF THE BIKEWAY

It took the concerted efforts of the American bicycle industry and the blood, sweat and tears of two Floridians, Mr. and Mrs. George Fichter — long-time advocates of regular cycling for exercise and enjoyment in their town of Homestead — to focus the attention of the city fathers, federal and state governments, and the President of the United States, on the crying need for planned cycling facilities.

Back in 1961, the Fichters formed a bicycle club with their friends and neighbors in Homestead, frequently called “The City of Bicycles.” Discouraged by mounting traffic problems, both for motorists and cyclists, the Homestead bike club came up with a practical and highly successful answer to the problem, and they called it a bicycle safety route — secondary roads connecting residential areas with schools, playgrounds, shopping centers, ball parks and other centers of activity. Streets designated as bike safety routes were marked with easy-to-read signs. Club members, supported by the Chamber of Commerce, convinced the city officials of the need for and the feasibility of the project. Working with traffic engineers, they laid out the routes, raised funds for the manufacture and installation of blue and white metal signs. Then they enlisted the help of the police department and board of education before undertaking a city-wide indoctrination and education campaign to acquaint all elements of the community with the program.

Soon, the entire town — city administration, businesses, schools, civic groups — supported their proposal for a system of well-marked bicycle routes where motorists would drive slower and more cautiously. Homestead’s cycling community went to bed dreaming of Utopian streets where they could avoid monoxide fumes and menacing speed demons.

Their campaign climaxed in February 1962, when Homestead dedicated the nation’s first “Bikeway.”

THE BIKEWAY IDEA CATCHES ON

The idea of well-marked streets for bicycles won the support of the citizenry. Police officials responded immediately, forseeing lowered auto speeds on Bikeway streets, and more bicycles replacing autos for shopping and other short hops. Recreation-conscious citizens welcomed the plan which would encourage more people to get back on bikes for fun and fitness. City fathers found in Bikeways an inexpensive new recreational facility to satisfy the leisure-time needs of their citizens.
In fact, reception of Bikeways was so phenomenal that at the end of the first year, thirty-four of them were completed or under construction in thirteen states, with mileage approaching 1,000.

CHICAGO OPENS BIKEWAY

While the success of the Homestead "experiment" came about because of certain built-in assets - more bikes per capita than most towns, many quiet, untrafficked streets, and a small resident population - some skeptics questioned its practicality for larger cities. Obviously Bikeways are best suited to areas with little traffic.

Sprawling Chicago was the first great metropolitan center to test the feasibility of Bikeways. When the Chicago Park District's pioneer Bikeway opened, covering some 15 miles of lakefront paths through Lincoln, Jackson, Grand and Burnham Parks, and more than a mile and a half along the North Shore Channel, it became an immediate success.

Patterned after the success of Chicago's Bikeway, a second Midwest Bikeway was opened in Milwaukee, followed by a third - a 64-mile loop in the suburban community of Waukesha, 30 miles west of Milwaukee.

The Waukesha Bikeway passes the county's most beautiful residential areas, historic sites, hilly and timbered countryside and lakeside. This Bikeway is notable because to enjoy it, adults and their families meet at various points around the loop, riding numbered segments from one point of interest to another. Autos transport the families and their bikes to appointed meeting places.

NEW DIMENSIONS IN THOUGHT

Realizing that what originated as a safety idea had additional applications for opening up whole new areas of recreation and enjoyment for millions of people in towns like Homestead and cities like Chicago, the Bicycle Institute of America, already actively involved in promoting the movement, determined to tell the Bikeways story to as many as would listen.

In Bikeways, the Institute saw an opportunity to create a national awareness within recent outdoor conservation efforts, of the need for designated streets for the enjoyment of cycling, and a national program of scenic bike paths and trails.

Then the Bikeway idea was presented to park executives throughout the country in a survey which the B.I.A. initiated, picking the brains of experts on recreation for ideas on further bike path and trail development. The responses - from more than 500 - were incorporate...
BIKE ROUTE

have had to either walk their bikes across the bridge or risk a twelve dollar fine. Eventually the bridge will connect a Bikeway stretching from Tiburon to Lake Merced. Proposed Bikeways through Indiana, Pennsylvania and West Virginia are being considered. If all goes as planned, the entire Northeastern quarter of the nation will eventually be joined by a system of connecting Bikeways and trails.

STRONG SUPPORT FROM PRESIDENT JOHNSON

The increasing public interest in and use of Bikeways, public demand for more of them, and the unprecedented popularity of recreational cycling for and by adults, brought strong support from President Johnson. In his message to Congress (February 8, 1965) he said: "The forgotten outdoormen of today are those who like to walk, hike, ride horseback or bicycles. For them we must have trails as well as highways."

In a chorus of superlatives, recreation officials, medical men, fitness and physical education experts joined the crusade for Bikeways. Secretary of the Interior Udall, addressing a meeting of nearly 160 senators and congressmen, said: "I believe we need more bike paths and trails to help us offset the tyranny of the automobile," and announced government plans for the construction of 200,000 miles of them in the next decade.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT JUMPS IN TOO

Last year legislation was drafted that would lead to the establishment of a Nationwide System of Trails for the hiker, the cyclist and equestrian. Th legislation provides for the expansion and development of additional trails in Federal, State Park and Forest Areas, as well as in our cities. The legislation would also place several lengthy trails that have natural, scenic or historic significance, such as the Appalachian Continental Divide, Pacific Crest and Potomac Heritage Trails, within the Nation wide System.

BIKEWAY GROWTH CONTINUES

Today, seven years after the Home- stead experiment, the idea of Bikeways and trails set aside for the safety and enjoyment of cyclist is recognized as a dynamic new dimension in community and recreational planning. More than 75 Bikeways are being enjoyed at this moment, and over 100 are on the drafting boards in communities across the nation.

There are Bikeways in Kentucky’s Jefferson County, in Ohio’s Amish farmland, along the banks of the Sacramento River in California, at Indian Creek, Indiana, in mile-high Denver, Colorado and in Manhattan, New York.

Dr. Paul Dudley White, internationally famous cardiologist and bicycle enthusiast, recently said: "We must establish more bike paths and trails throughout the country. I’d like to see everyone on a bike—not just once in a while, but regularly, as a routine. The bicycle should become a superb resource for the whole family to enjoy the beauties of nature, whether in our national parks, along our seacoasts, or simply in our beautiful woods and fields the country over."

PROPOSED NATIONAL TRAILS: Heavy lines show the four national scenic trails