



RUMBLINGS OF 50

Building toward the future

SAARA SNOW

Adventure Cycling's efforts to guide rumble strip policy make a big difference where the rubber meets the road.

→ In 2026, Adventure Cycling will turn 50. It might feel a little early to start passing out party favors, but I like to build strong and steady. That means managing today and planning for tomorrow.

As I more fully step into this role as Executive Director here at Adventure Cycling, I'm thinking about what we want to bring to the world in the next six years and how we're going to do it. I believe in the practice of incremental improvement, and I also appreciate the reality of "punctuated equilibrium," a theory coined by evolutionary biologist Steven Jay Gould to describe moments of breakthrough speciation (or innovation) typically in response to a changing environment.

You are a part of this. In fact, you're the most important part. Your membership increases our influence representing thousands of constituents with a unified message.

Here's a concrete example: advocacy. In addition to great gear and stories of adventure and community, we need safe routes. Rumble strips consistently rank as a top concern in

the member survey, and Adventure Cycling is diving in.

Our "Solutions for Making Rumble Strips Safer for Cyclists" white paper is straightforward on cyclists' needs (we need a safe shoulder space) and dives deep into wonky infrastructure details (design standards for offset, depth, gap, transverse length, parallel width, and more). The audience is roadway planners and policy makers, and your financial support of our advocacy work helps us connect and build trust in order to collaborate and influence major infrastructure policy decisions and outcomes.

This work would not be possible without your generous support. And if you'd like to see it multiplied, we need that support today, to continue our work across the country. Visit adventurecycling.org/donate today to support our ongoing safety work and learn more about our work.

While working in the space of incremental improvement, we'll also be on the lookout for opportunities of breakout innovation. Considering the

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Adventure CYCLIST

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- Provide the premier tools and inspiration for people to travel by bicycle.
 - Expand and integrate bike travel networks for North America.
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 Adventure Cycling Association
 inspires, empowers, and connects
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customers can watch the Tour de France on a flat-screen television while they wait for their bikes to be serviced or built. There's coffee for those who are so inclined. Mechanics use that same television screen to go over a customer's bill, or to connect customers to websites where they can learn about various products that are available for sale.

"We do what's right for the customers and offer premium service all the time," Guillemet said.

Velofix's friendly, social approach requires mechanics who are also people persons, which is not always easy to find.

"It's always a challenge to get great people," Guillemet said. "Our franchise partners have the same challenge. Great mechanics are not in short supply, but the trick is getting the right ones. Not only do you have to be a great mechanic, but you also have to interact well with people."

In the "current model," by which he means the traditional bike shop, Guillemet said those people skills are not always evident.

"Many mechanics don't have to interact with customers, and frankly don't want to," he said.

All this mobile friendliness and repair camaraderie doesn't come cheap. Velofix's Franchise Disclosure Document, dated March 27, 2019, estimated the initial investment to launch your mobile bicycle shop at \$170,200 to \$202,950, which includes a \$25,000 franchise fee, and \$49,000 to \$55,000 for the van.

"What we like to say is put approximately \$65,000 down and you're operational," Guillemet said. "You have the keys and you're rolling around."

As the Ashburn Bicycle Repair blog (ashburnbicyclerepair.com) noted recently, \$200,000 is a lot of money.

"For comparative purposes, for as little as \$31,000, you can open an H&R Block franchise," the Ashburn blog says.

Ashburn Bicycle Repair is an independent mobile bike service provider in Ashburn, Virginia, and many small surrounding communities. Ashburn also offers consulting services for those interested in opening a mobile bike shop. The blog also says that velofix is just about the only game

in town for those looking to get into a franchise for a mobile bike shop.

"For better or for worse, they're the big boys on the block," the blog notes. "Their growth has been constant and sustained. It seems rarely a month goes by without another positive velofix press release and another corporate partnership."

Chris Guillemet wouldn't disagree. His vision is to take the red velofix vans international, although that idea has been shelved for now, according to BRAIN. Guillemet told BRAIN that international growth remains a long-term goal.

Velofix also attracted investment capital from a Montreal-based firm that focuses on the clean energy, transportation, and smart city sectors, according to a May 24, 2019 news release from MacKinnon, Bennett & Company's MKB Partners Fund LP.

The amount of the investment was not disclosed, but MKB Partners said the goal was to help the velofix founders expand the company's footprint within North America, enhance its technology, and scale up its marketing efforts. The fact that velofix was able to attract venture capital at all is a good indication of how the company is viewed in the wider business world.

"When we launched this business, we saw in our hearts there was a need for it, but you don't know how it's going to go," Guillemet said. "At the end of the day, you start a business based on a pain point or frustration. You hope and expect others are feeling the same frustration and pain, but we didn't know in the beginning.

"We were pleasantly surprised." **AC**

Dan D'Ambrosio is a contributing writer for Adventure Cyclist.

this bike," said George Parry, the Niner designer who led the project. "When mountain biking first started, it was just guys out in regular shorts, ripping fire roads. Now cross-country riding is super serious, with everyone kitted out in Lycra. People find a way to split off when it gets too serious. For me, that's what this bike is about — exploring, and doing it with comfort and efficiency."

arc of our history, the growth of our membership, the exciting "speciation" within the bike world (think gravel, touring, mountain, bikepacking, eBikes, urban, epic, overnight, etc.), and the immense looming pressure of our collective response to climate change ... NOW is our time at Adventure Cycling to revisit the strategic plan that we adopted in 2018 and determine the best bets for incremental improvement and where we might be positioned for more rapid change. As Louis Pasteur said, "Chance favors the prepared mind."

As bike travelers, we have rare and collective insight into how to get along with others, appreciate diverse cultures, reflect and learn from experience, connect to our surroundings, and travel with a low carbon footprint. Valuable skills in today's world. Plus, we're an interesting lot that knows how to have a good time with whatever cards, climbs, or company we're dealt.

Which brings me back to thinking about that 50th birthday party, because along with the strategic planning, advocacy, and white papers we put into the world, I want to have fun while I'm doing it. I want to celebrate our community, and I want to get on my bike and ride. And I look forward to seeing you out there too.

Scott Pankratz

Executive Director

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If you're looking for a gravel race bike, this probably isn't it. But if you want a bike that gives you something a hardtail mountain bike or full-suspension XC bike can't — more hand positions, touring bike geometry, braze-ons galore, higher speeds on pavement — the answer is a hard yes. **AC**

Berne Broudy is a Vermont-based writer and photographer. Find her on Twitter @berneab and on Instagram @bernebroudy.