



PRESS RELEASE
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***City of Bemidji Named a Bronze Bicycle Friendly Community by the
League of American Bicyclists
Award Ceremony to be held on October 22nd***

Across the U.S., bicycling is on the rise -- thanks in part to cities like Bemidji taking steps to make riding safer and more comfortable for all residents. Today, the League of American Bicyclists announced the latest round of Bicycle Friendly Communities (BFC) and the City of Bemidji has been named a Bronze BFC.

"Bemidji is proud to be among the first Minnesota Mississippi River Trail communities to be awarded Bicycle Friendly status. We welcome the international recognition that comes with this award and look forward to the visitors it will help attract and the benefits it will bring to our community and its residents," said Mayor Dave Larson

In celebration of this honor, the City of Bemidji will be holding a Bike Friendly Community Awards Ceremony on October 22, 2012 at Noon at City Hall. Mayor Larson will be presented the BFC Award by long time Bicycle Advocate and Executive Director of the Bike Alliance of Minnesota, Dorian Grilley. Diane Pitman, MD Community bicycle /enthusiastic and advocate as well as the founder of Shifting Gears will also provide comments on the importance of the award and bicycling in Bemidji.

A celebratory bike ride from the Sanford Center- over the newly constructed Paul Bunyan Trail Bridge to City Hall - will be led by Natalie Gille, bicycle advocate and a representative from Bike Alliance of Minnesota. The Community is invited and encouraged to join the ride. Those wishing to join the ride should meet at the Sanford Center parking lot at 11:30am.

Earlier this fall, the Bemidji City Council passed a resolution in support of the development of the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) – a 3000 mile bicycle route originating at the headwaters continuing to Louisiana. "The idea of an 800 mile bike route linking communities that are bicycle friendly for residents as well as visitors has not been done at this level in our country, said Dorian Grilley, executive director of the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota. As more communities join Bemidji, St. Paul and Minneapolis in achieving the bicycle friendly award it should add significantly to the international recognition already enjoyed by the Mississippi."

Finally... Grilley also added, "the Bicycle Alliance of Minnesota is happy to be working with and advising Bemidji on the programs, especially bike safety and education, required to achieve this award and with the city and MnDOT on the authorization of the Mississippi River Trail by the Minnesota Legislature earlier this year."

The BFC program is revolutionizing the way communities evaluate their quality of life, sustainability and transportation networks, while allowing them to benchmark their progress toward improving their bicycle-friendliness. With this impressive round, there are now 242 BFCs in 47 states across America. The Bronze BFC award recognizes Bemidji's commitment to improving conditions for bicycling through investment in bicycling promotion, education programs, infrastructure and pro-bicycling policies.

"We are excited that Bemidji recognizes that simple steps to make biking safe and comfortable pay huge dividends in civic, community and economic development," said League President Andy Clarke. "Bicycling is more than a practical, cost-effective solution to many municipal challenges – it's a way to make Bemidji a place where people don't just live and work, but thrive."

The BFC program provides a roadmap to building a Bicycle Friendly Community and the application itself has become a rigorous and an educational tool in itself. Since its inception, more than 500 distinct communities have applied and the five levels of the award – diamond, platinum, gold, silver and bronze – provide a clear incentive for communities to continuously improve.

To apply or learn more about the free BFC program, visit bikeleague.org/community.

The League of American Bicyclists promotes bicycling for fun, fitness and transportation, and works through advocacy and education for a bicycle-friendly America. The League represents the interests of America's 57 million bicyclists, including its 300,000 members and affiliates. For more information or to support the League, visit www.bikeleague.org.

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