

29th Annual Thurston County Bicycle Commuter Contest Final Report: Growing the BCC Toward its Third Decade



***Public Works Officers: Please scroll to last page for an overview, and find bicycle infrastructure comments from BCC participants in the attached Word file.**

Intercity Transit's *Thurston County Bicycle Commuter Contest* and its related events again saw record participation in 2016. It was also a year of trying new things and evolving the BCC to make it easier to get involved, to be more inclusive and more reflective of the values of the majority of participants. Even more plans are afoot for continuing the growth and evolution of the BCC in the years ahead, while preserving the grass-roots legacy and local flavor of the program.

Notable for 2016:

- Grew the Winter BCC for year-round bikers to 198 riders, for the month of February.
- Added a NW Olympia Bike Station for National Bike to Work Day, for a total of 7 stations in 3 cities.
- Increased the number of kid-friendly coupons and prizes.
- Added a school-friendly "mini-BCC" for the first half of May, to better integrate with the school calendar.
- Increased cooperation with Intercity Transit's Youth Education Program, to better engage younger generations.

What's Next for the BCC:

- Launch an online calendar for individual tracking of BCC participation each day (online Mileage Log).
- Continue to grow cooperation with Intercity Transit's Youth Education Program.
- Continue outreach to community groups and businesses to grow Bike to Work Day activities.
- Change the name of the event to Bicycle Commuter Challenge.

The BCC has evolved into a series of six community-wide events, spanning the first half of the year, beginning with the early-season **Winter BCC** in January/February, followed by the **Earth Day Market Ride** in April, **Bike To Work Day "Bike Stations"**, the **Bicycle Commuter Contest** and **School Mini-BCC** in May, and the **Prize Hoopla** in June. All are well-attended and happily anticipated events each year. Using a combination of these events, communication tools, incentives and rewards, the BCC gets new practical cyclists involved and keeps the bicycling community engaged and communicating for nearly half of each year.

2016 BCC by the Numbers:

- 1853 registrations- a 16% increase over 2015, and an all-time record.
- 672 First Time BCC participants (up nearly 10% over 2015).
- 1175 riders returned mileage logs.
- Total miles ridden: 108,017.
- Average miles ridden over the month per rider: 92.
- Total round-trip commutes 14,485.
- Average number of days commuting by bike: 12.
- Nearly 54 tons CO2 prevented from entering the atmosphere.
- 26 schools and colleges, 39 State & Local Agencies, 22 businesses and 2 churches plus Thurston County and the Cities of Olympia and Lacey all fielded teams in the BCC this year, along with 30 independent teams of family members, friends or neighborhoods. Total Teams: 118.
- 51 Sponsors and Supporters contributed coupons and free passes, event support, and over 200 prize items.
- Record participation in the Earth Day Market Ride and National Bike to Work Day Bike Stations- over 200 participants in each event. Over 100 attended the Prize Hoopla.
- 198 people also participated in the "Winter BCC" running during January and February, including International "Winter Bike to Work Day" on February 12.



Situation: Single Occupancy Vehicle travel takes a heavy toll on our environment and infrastructure, and lack of physical activity is a leading cause of many of the health problems common today. Using a bicycle as transportation is a great way to address these issues. Most trips made by car in our area are 5 miles or less. In many cases it can actually be faster to travel those 5 miles by bicycle than by car, with no emissions, plus healthy exercise in the bargain!

Objectives: In keeping with Intercity Transit's mission to support a sustainable, livable, healthy community, the Bicycle Commuter Contest's goals are:

- To encourage people of all ages and abilities to try bicycling for transportation.
- To reward those who make that choice- whether it is every day, or for one day.
- To connect new practical cyclists to available education, resources and support.
- To convey rider feedback to local jurisdictions about bicycling infrastructure needs.
- To engage employers and encourage them to support active transportation choices.
- To connect our local practical cycling community with others around the country, to learn from them, and to set an example for communities that are not as far along as we are.
- To stimulate and support our local economy through partnerships with our sponsors.

Impact: In the eleven years that Intercity Transit has hosted the BCC, its participants have logged over 1.1 million miles on 135,000 practical trips, preventing the release of over 500 tons of CO2 and other pollutants. In its 29 year history, the BCC has recruited an estimated 22,000 citizens and engaged them to try a new transportation mode. As participant testimonials show, many of these peoples' lives have been changed for the better as a result. Our community is also much more "bike friendly" than it was when the BCC started in 1988! The City of Olympia and Intercity Transit have earned "Silver Level" awards as Bike Friendly City and Bike Friendly Business, respectively.

Budget: The BCC runs on a very small budget, which is enhanced by sponsorship contributions. This year the BCC had 51 sponsors and supporters, mostly local businesses who contributed over \$25,000 in cash, services, coupons, gift cards and merchandise for prizes.

Community Involvement: The BCC engages volunteers from the community to help with its events, and this year had over 25 volunteers who put up posters, led neighborhood rides on Earth Day, initiated and staffed Bike To Work Day Bike Stations, and helped out at the Prize Hoopla. The BCC coordinator also attends and supports Bike and Transit Fairs and other events in the community, and at State Agencies and public venues.

BCC Participation Trends Upward, Average Miles and Days Per Rider Down Slightly:

Predictably, as the number of participants in the BCC has risen, so have the total number of miles and commute trips reported, though not always in exact proportion to the number of registrants. Interestingly, the *average* number of miles and trips per rider has remained very nearly flat (with a slight decline) for the 11 years for which we have records. The number of participants has more than doubled since 2006 (889 v. 1853). Total commute trips also more than doubled, from 6000 to 14,485. Total miles ridden rose from 68,634 in

2006, to 108,017 in 2016 (with a record peak of over 120,000 in 2012). Average miles per rider have hovered between 90 and 120, with a slightly declining trend over the last couple of years. Average days per rider have remained almost fixed, fluctuating between 11 and 14 for the past 11 years, with a slight declining trend.

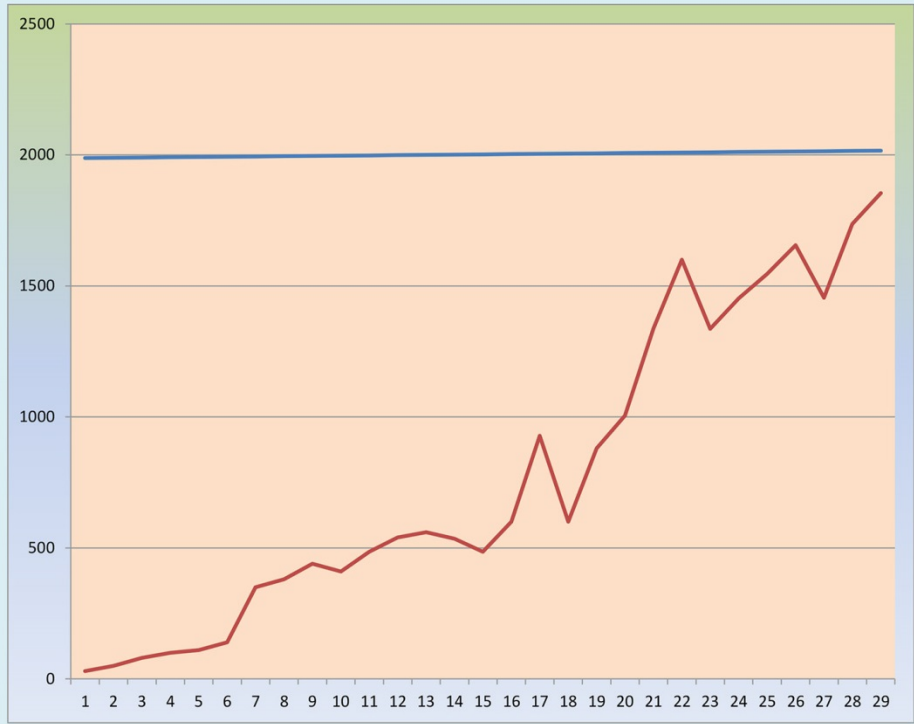
The primary goal of the BCC is to encourage people to try bicycling for transportation. Over the past few years, we have been shifting our emphasis toward recruiting more beginning “practical cyclists”, and away from the competitive model of the past. As a result, fewer riders are logging extremely high mileage during the BCC, bringing the average miles down. More new riders, trying bicycle transportation for the first time, may be less likely to ride as often or as far as their seasoned counterparts, which could bring the averages down for miles and trips per rider.

These metrics may change with the introduction of an online Mileage Log, which should narrow the gap between registrations and Mileage Logs returned. To date, the average miles and days refer only to the participants who returned their log or reported their total miles and days online at the end of May.



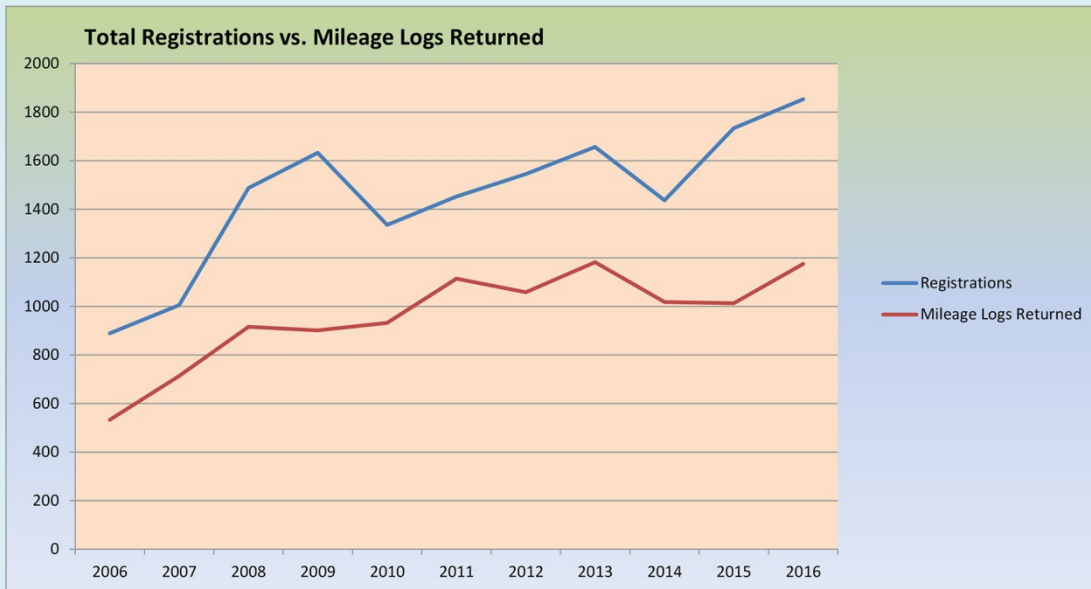
Conclusion: 2016 has been another very successful year for the Bicycle Commuter Contest. Participants reduced pollution and traffic congestion, eased parking problems, saved money, helped the local economy, raised awareness about transportation choices and benefited the health of individuals, our community and our planet.

All-Time Registrations	
Year:	Participants:
1988	30
1989	50
1990	80
1991	100
1992	110
1993	140
1994	350
1995	380
1996	440
1997	410
1998	485
1999	540
2000	560
2001	535
2002	485
2003	600
2004	928
2005	600
2006	880
2007	1005
2008	1338
2009	1600
2010	1336
2011	1452
2012	1545
2013	1655
2014	1455
2015	1736
2016	1854
Total	22679

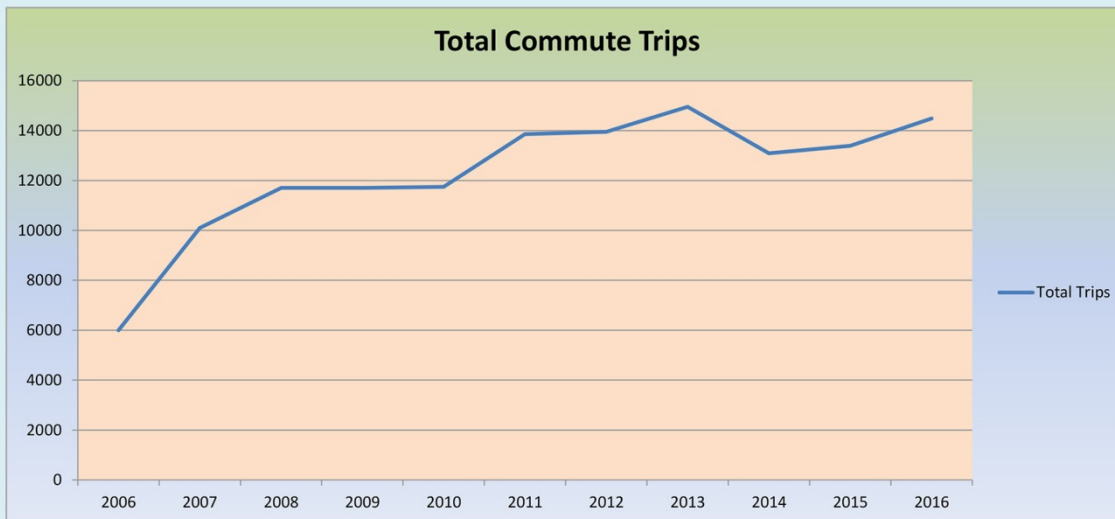


BCC Stats 2006-2016

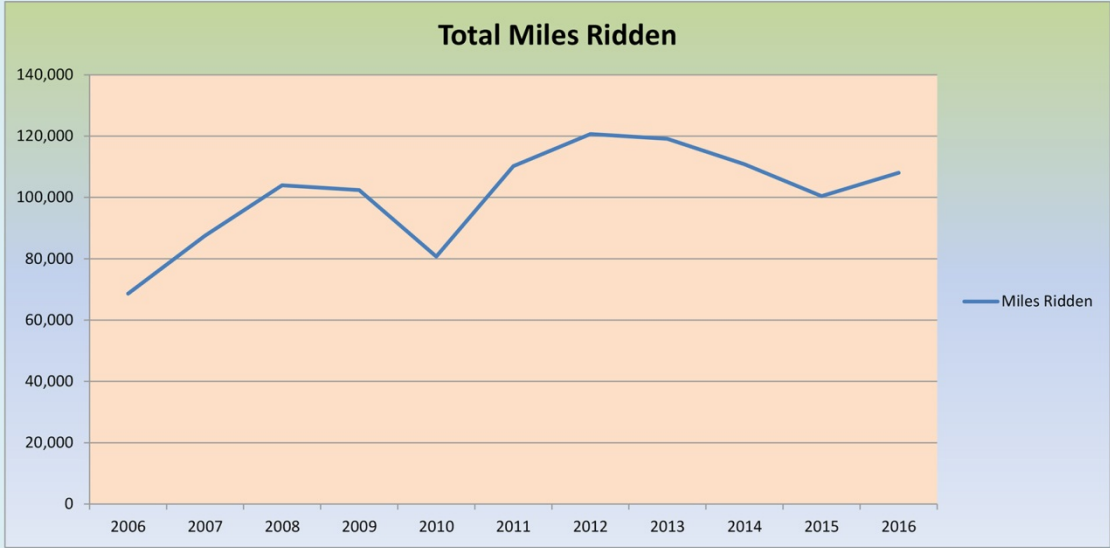
Year:	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Registrations	889	1005	1488	1633	1336	1452	1545	1657	1437	1734	1853
Mileage Logs Returned	533	713	916	901	932	1114	1058	1182	1018	1013	1175



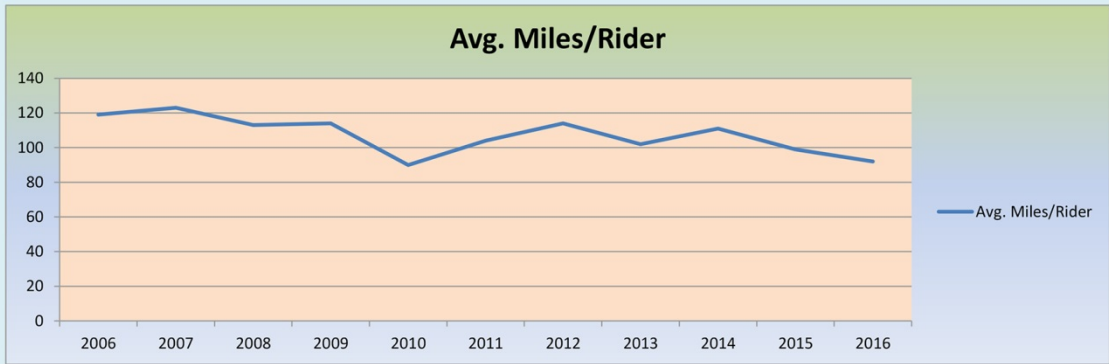
Year:	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Total Trips	6000	10,100	11,700	11,703	11,746	13,856	13,947	14,954	13,093	13,392	14,485



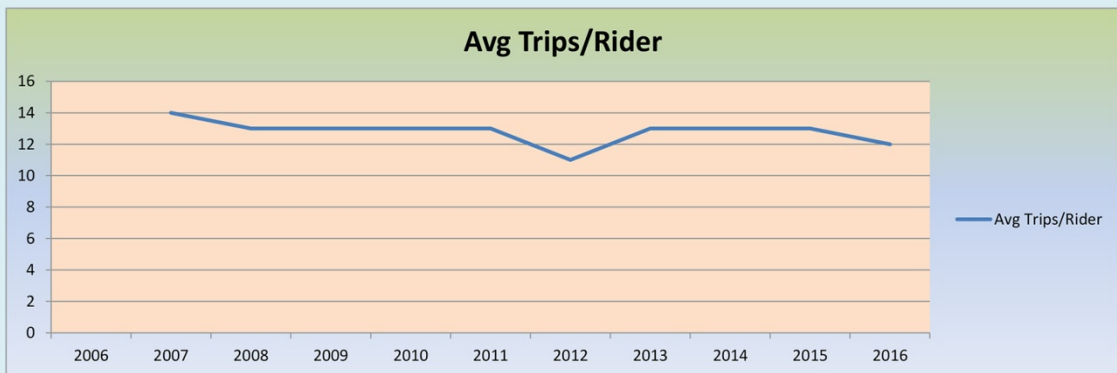
Year:	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Miles Ridden	68,634	87,500	104,000	102,379	80,736	110,184	120,653	119,129	110,859	100,445	108,017



Year:	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Avg. Miles/Rider	119	123	113	114	90	104	114	102	111	99	92



Year:	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Avg Trips/Rider		14	13	13	13	13	11	13	13	13	12



Bicycle Road User Infrastructure Feedback from Bicycle Commuter Contest Participants.

As one of the most vulnerable users of our streets and roads, people riding bicycles are very aware of and sensitive to infrastructure safety issues that concern not only cyclists, but all road users. People on bicycles are like the canary in the coal mine- because we are “closer to the ground” we notice safety hazards before other road users.

Overall, cycling conditions in Thurston County are good, relative to other areas of the country. We have a gradually expanding network of bike lanes and paved multi-use trails, and bike lanes are sometimes added when there is new construction. The cyclists we hear from are very appreciative of the facilities we have, and of any improvements made. However, there are still some very problematic areas for bicyclists to travel in, and we hear about them every year here at the Bicycle Commuter Contest. They are detailed in the attached excel spreadsheet. There is also a fairly short list of requests **for general maintenance of bicycle facilities throughout the Thurston County jurisdictions:**

1. **Year after year, the most frequent and fervent plea we hear from our participants is that bike lanes and road shoulders should be swept more often**, and the sweepers should make sure they are not just sweeping road or verge debris INTO the bike lane. When the roads are sanded in winter, the sand all ends up in the bike lanes, forcing cyclists to ride in the regular lane. In general, bike lanes are only as useful as they are well maintained. Please sweep bike lanes and shoulders often, especially after winter sanding and storm events that leave debris.
2. The effectiveness of bike lanes depends almost entirely on the paint that separates them from the car lanes. In certain places, cars drive over that paint and wear it off. A regular schedule of repainting in problem areas could do a lot to ensure the integrity of the bike lanes.
3. Trim vegetation from road shoulders and bike lanes.

A Short List of the Most Problematic Infrastructure: (we hear multiple reports every year about these locations)

1. Henderson Blvd. bridge over Deschutes River (no room for bikes).
2. Capitol Blvd. in Tumwater (especially near Trosper Rd.), Capitol Way in Olympia (rough, no room for bikes).
3. 4th Ave./Martin Way from Pacific Ave split to Lilly Rd. (bike lanes in dangerous condition).
4. Intersection of 4th, State, and Pacific Avenues is very unfriendly and dangerous for bikes, in all directions.
5. Cooper Pt. Rd at Caton Way (bike lane ends abruptly).
6. Custer Way/2nd Ave/Capitol Blvd area in Tumwater is extremely unfriendly for biking.

Public Works Officers: Please see the attached spreadsheet for detailed comments on other specific problem areas, by jurisdiction. Thank you for your attention to this feedback from Thurston County’s bicycling road system users.

