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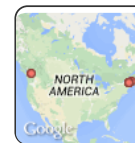
Biking in the Mid-coast

BY BOB BRUCE AND WILL WILKOFF, MD



Last year, Bath received the “Bicycle Friendly Community” designation from the League of American Bicyclists. Bath joined the town of [Brunswick](#), which has held the coveted distinction since 2002, as the only two Bicycle Friendly Communities in the state. Shortly after, Bowdoin College was rewarded for a decade of work by being designated a “Bicycle Friendly University.” These awards are more than just gilt-edged pieces of paper; they hint at one of the Mid-coast region’s bestkept secrets—its vibrant and growing bicycle community.

Where's the story?



5 Points Mentioned

When [Brunswick](#)’s new [Harriet Beecher Stowe School](#) opened, the architects included what they believed would be an adequate number of bicycle racks, yet within months it was clear that they had underestimated the growing popularity of bicycling to school. Merrymeeting Wheelers Bicycle Club, Access Health, and Region Ten

Technical School recently collaborated to add two additional bike racks, but the demand still threatens to outstrip the supply.

Most Mid-coast residents would be surprised to learn that [Brunswick](#) sits at the intersection of four major national bicycle routes. The East Coast Greenway, Adventure Cycling’s popular Northern Tier Transcontinental Route, Adventure Cycling’s Atlantic Coast Route, and U.S. Bicycle Route One all pass through the town. This confluence is unique nationwide. Cyclists with heavily loaded packs, are very likely to have started in [Seattle](#) or Key West on their way to [Bar Harbor](#). Last year the Merrymeeting Wheelers Bicycle Club stenciled wayfinding signs on town roads in Brunswick to help these travelers and others navigate downtown more safely.

While it has been estimated that bicycle tourism brings \$6 million dollars to the state each year, most local cyclists we see on the roads are enjoying much shorter day rides. During the warmer months, Merrymeeting Wheelers organizes weekly rides that begin near the gazebo on the [Brunswick](#) Mall. Participants can choose a ride based on ability and stamina. Women-only, senior, and longer weekend rides are also offered.

Although most of us are content to enjoy the healthy, low-impact exercise, fresh air, and scenic views that bicycling in Maine offers, there is a small but dedicated group of cyclists who are focused on speed. The local competition among these Lycra-clad athletes is keen enough to support an active triathlon club and has produced at least one National Road Race Champion in Hank Pfeifle of [Brunswick](#).

Faced with sharing the roadways with other vehicles that outweigh them by thousands of pounds, all cyclists share the same concerns about safety. While Maine has had a law on the books for several years that aims to protect cyclists, it was only last year that signs reminding drivers to give cyclists at least three feet of clearance began to appear. These signs, designed and funded by the Merrymeeting Wheelers, were first erected in [Brunswick](#) and will soon appear in surrounding communities.

For the past two years, local students have been learning how to walk and bicycle in traffic. Lessons given at [Harriet Beecher Stowe School](#) include education about how to safely cross a busy street, fit a helmet, what types of clothing to wear to be safe, how to check their bike, and rules of the road. [Mt. Ararat Middle School](#) students can attend an After School Bike Club. Also, there are two upcoming Bicycle Rodeos, held in [Brunswick](#) on May 17 and Bath on June 7, that include a practice obstacle course, bike checks, and helmet fittings.



Cycling is fun and healthy, but for some cyclists it is also an economical and environmentally friendly way to commute to work. Next week, May 12-16 is Bike Work to Week. The [Brunswick](#) Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, Access Health, and the Bath Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee are working to encourage more local residents to add bicycling as an option for getting to work.


To celebrate cycling next week, the Merrymeeting Wheelers will offer six different rides of varying skill levels that will depart the [Brunswick](#) Mall gazebo at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, May 14. Also, Access Health will focus on bike safety and commuting tips on its Facebook page (www.facebook.com/accesshealthme).

You do not have to commit to the hardcore, ride-in-the-rain style of some bike commuters. However, when the weather suits you and you can add a little extra time in your schedule, you will arrive at work feeling better about how you have started the day. The Mid-coast is great place to ride. Enjoy it!

BOB BRUCE is a member of Merrymeeting Wheelers Bicycle Club and a Certified Bicycle Instructor with the Bicycle Coalition of Maine and the League of American Bicyclists. DR. WILL WILKOFF is a retired pediatrician, author of four parenting books, avid cyclist, and member of the [Brunswick Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee](#).

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