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Cover Photo: Riders cross over Snake River on the bike/ped bridge in Wilson, Wyoming in the 2021 Lotoja Classic, just a few miles from the finish. Find your photo online at snakeriverphoto.com
Photo by Nigel May, Snake River Photo

ROAD RACING

The Race Across the West - Moxy and Grit Tackles the 930 Mile Race



Bob and Doug seconds away from the start in Oceanside. Photo by Steven Bernsen



Doug Fujii riding at sunrise in southeastern Utah on one of many long stretches of road with spectacular views in the 2021 Race Across the West. Photo by Vin Wolff

need to go ride a segment now but I'm too tired - which I think is a mild form of PTSD. You decide. For me, I don't know if I will do this race again, but I am so glad my friend and teammate Doug Fujii gave me the opportunity to do it once.

The Race Across the West (RAW) is the baby sibling to The Race Across America (RAAM), which is the marquee race for ultra-endurance road cyclists. The two races run concurrently. RAW has solo, two-person, and four-person categories. From the RAW website: "Race Across the West was started in 2008 to offer a race longer than 500 miles and to help bridge the mileage gap to RAAM. It has since evolved into an epic race in its own right... It follows the first 930 miles of the RAAM course, from Oceanside, CA to Durango, CO...RAW leaves the beach in Oceanside, climbs the Coastal Range and the drops into the scorching desert. After crossing the deserts of California and Arizona, racers begin a gradual climb into the mountains surrounding Flagstaff, AZ and eventually into the Rocky Mountains. The race finishes at Fort Lewis College in the cycling mecca of Durango, CO."

The 2021 Race Across the West timing coincided with a record-setting heat wave in the southwestern United States. The kind of heat most cyclists would never consider riding in. To prepare for this, I had a singular day of heat training - I rode out to Stevens Canyon in the SF Bay Area one day and my little Wahoo Bolt said it was over 100. Then the day before the race we practiced a racer transition where I would meet Doug after his unsupported first 23+ miles of the race. Just climbing the

Continued on page 4

By Bob Cormon

People ask me "why do you do things like this?" Most likely by the time I finish writing this neither you nor I will be any closer to that answer. Except maybe the answer is in the little stories within the story,

the things we will take with us long after we forget what our finishing time was or what place we came in. Is this all worth the massive toll on my body that now, a week after finishing, is just starting to subside? The feelings of no energy, the pain everywhere, the night sweats, the feeling upon waking at home that I

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Race Across the West - Continued from page 3

hill at that location, the temperatures were already well over 100. So, the next day during the actual race start when I had the exact same hill start it was no surprise to see the same temperatures. That was just the beginning. We weren't even close to the desert yet.

Our strategy for this race was different than when Doug did it with a different teammate two years earlier. This time, we were still using two support vehicles, but instead of one vehicle following the riders and the other running errands and being available for crew rests, we would have a vehicle assigned to each of the riders so there would be no loss of time during transitions in direct follow periods, where a vehicle has to be behind the rider in order for that rider to move. Direct follow is during the night and in certain areas during the day. We were just not fast enough as a team to lose two to



Bob Corman riding west of Hesperus, CO after recovering from his major bonk during the 2021 Race Across the West. Photo by Chris Dunn



Doug Fujii pushes on with little sleep in southeastern Utah near the Colorado border on the morning of the last day of the 2021 Race Across the West. Photo by Laura Hill Temmerman

three hours in transitions if we had only one direct follow vehicle. To make this strategy work, we brought in a third crew a day into the race to spell the first two crews. All of this complicated coordination worked in large part due to our amazing crew

chief Laura and the super flexible and tireless crew! The fact that we ended up not finishing in the official time was because together Doug and I were not fast enough. The crew was always exceptional. The heat was beyond anything I had ever experienced. Whether we would

have made the 68 hours for the 930 miles and 50k+ feet without the heat, who knows. But you don't control the circumstances of a race.

The second major climb I was on was steep with temperatures over 110. To add to the misery, my bike was having shifting issues, one of which I fixed myself while riding and the other when I got off. Bob 2, Bike 0. Amazing. There would be two more issues. Final tally: Bob (and Vin) 4, Bike 0.

During the first day is the famous descent into Borrego Springs called the Glass Elevator. I knew Doug wanted to do this and I wasn't going to argue to do it. He had a vendetta with this race and the whole reason we were doing it was because he wanted so badly to have another crack at it after having stopped short of the finish line in 2019 with another teammate. If he wanted to descend the Glass Elevator, go for it. Which made it all the more shocking when a couple of miles from the start of the descent Doug told my crew to get me ready for "the hill." Say what? Now I am not afraid of any descent but so many people had told me not to do this for fear of my safety that I was starting to think I shouldn't do it myself. But let's gooooo! And go I did! Wow. It's called the Glass Elevator because you can see the desert spread out before you for tens (hundreds??) of miles while descending. I didn't try to hammer the descent as safety first always. But it was fun, except, as I descended, it got hotter and hotter to the point I was wondering if I would soon be able to hold on to the brakes or anything else. It felt like my legs were getting sunburned, but the sun really wasn't out. At the base of the descent, it was close to 120 degrees. Oh well. What's a few extra degrees between friends? I filed away in the back of my mind that I owed Doug a descent or two. I did give him the super long descent into Durango at the end but that turned out to be, as Doug put it in one of his lengthier pronouncements, "long." Not exactly the same as the elevator.

A lot of the race is a blur, which explains how we finished. We just kept doing what we had to do. Every 20 minutes, or 15 if it was super-hot,

or 30 if there was no place to transition or someone needed extra time, we kept switching riders and moving forward. It was all about moving forward. This is a 24 hour/3-day race – there is no stopping if you want to finish. I spent a few hours in three different hotels but over three nights I think I slept less than a total of three hours. During these times that we took longer breaks,



Doug Fujii encountering wild horses near the Utah-Colorado border during the 2021 Race Across the West. Photo by Vin Wolff

whether in a bed or in the vehicle, it meant that the other rider was riding a longer period of time while very tired. It was pointed out to me that these longer ride segments in and of themselves would have made a good weekend ride at home, but we were doing them exhausted, and in the heat or on a climb and with hours and days of riding in our legs (and minds).

One of the times that I remember fondly (haha!) was having taken a rest in a hotel in Camp Verde, Arizona with the intention of sleeping about two hours. After an hour or so Laura shook me awake and said you need to get back out there, that Doug was about to start the climb out of Camp Verde and he is done. Can you do it? I remember saying something first like "What, where am I? Do I have a choice? I have to do it, so I am going to do it." So, we caught up to him at the base of the climb, which I believe goes from something like 3000 feet to over 7000 feet and driving (too far) ahead of him to find a race legal transition spot. This is where I first met our third crew, which was my son Casey and friend Chris. Casey promptly informed me that



Bob Corman and Doug Fujii still smiling west of Hesperus, CO during the 2021 Race Across the West. Photo by Vin Wolff

this climb was similar in elevation gain and length to the biggest climb in the Bay Area, Mount Hamilton, so good morning at 1AM, Bob, why don't you just climb Hamilton at elevation and at 85 degrees still and oh, by the way, have a good time. Which I did. At 9AM that morning, I remember telling my friend Vin that I had already climbed over 5000 feet that day and he said "today?" And Laura said while laughing "how do you think we got to this elevation?" An amusing moment that is really not significant other than that I will always remember it.

Our team was named Moxy and Grit, borrowed with permission from Sonya Looney's company* because we liked what the name represents. Yes, Moxy is spelled "wrong" on purpose for creative and availabil-

ity purposes, but you get the idea. I think one has to have both attributes to compete in this race, whether you are a solo (are they crazy???), 2X like us, or 4X. The events of the last day of the race exemplify what having those attributes mean. Doug was tearing his body apart trying to keep us under the time limit and once again doing a night pull while I tried to get some sleep. Eventually I took over and when we reached the transition area where he would ride again, he was literally out of it. Had no idea where he was. Was standing five yards in front of his vehicle (he needed to be AT his vehicle) and clueless as to what was happening. This is no joke, and we knew he needed to rest big time. Luckily my 20 minutes of sleep in an Alfred Hitchcock hotel in Mexican Hat, Utah had given me some amazing energy, and when I took over and started riding, I said to myself "I have magical legs." I mean holy crap, I could do anything. How did this happen? My follow car noticed this as I sped up rollers and showed speed I hadn't shown maybe at all in the race. I told myself to reign it in or I would end up completely wasted like my teammate. I did try to

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Doug Fujii, with ice on his head and ever present water bottle nearby, studying the route between pulls near Peebles Valley, AZ in the 2021 Race Across the West. Photo by Laura Hill Temmerman

keep it in check but later we would learn that I might have reigned in my speed and power, but I forgot to drink and eat enough – which had devastating consequences. I had been asked to do an hour pull and when we tried to transition it was clear that Doug needed to sleep more so I said I am good to go. I mean I thought I could ride the rest of the race if I needed to. That’s how good I felt. Magical legs. So, I rode another hour and a half and gave Doug the time he needed to sleep and be revived.

We resumed our 20-minute pulls and were soon on a rather desolate road in Utah near the Colorado border. I will remember several things about this section: holy cow the rollers were steep, the whole section climbs about 1300 feet very

sneakily, I kept looking for a porta potty somewhere/anywhere!, and I was not feeling as good anymore. This is where everything started to catch up with me: the days of lack of sleep, the constant crazy heat, going hard that morning and not paying as much attention as I should have to constantly drinking and eating. I just felt like I was going really slow and was pretty much done with my pulls after 8 minutes and wondered how 20 minutes had not gone by. Uh oh.

Fast forward to Cortez, Colorado and the heat was getting more intense and I had nothing. Laura brought me an iced latte and food. I didn’t want the food. Craig, a former paramedic, was putting ice on my head and neck, and making me drink. Also checking my skin



Doug Fujii riding at sunrise in southeastern Utah on one of many long stretches of road with spectacular views in the 2021 Race Across the West. Photo by Vin Wolff

temp as I was afraid I was having heat stroke (I wasn’t). I started out on one relatively flat section and would go maybe 50 yards at maybe 5 mph, and then I would stop. Then I would try again...and stop. Finally, I reached for my phone to say I couldn’t ride...but I didn’t have my phone. In my not-all-there state I had left it in the vehicle. Now what? The crew quickly figured out something was wrong and came back (with Doug) to get me. Back in the car for me. I think I am done. I am devastated. Doug came back to the car to check on me and told me to go back to a motel and rest so I could help finish, and Laura was asking Casey to come to this location and “assess your dad.” He told her without seeing me that I am not going back to the hotel. Then he showed up – with another latte – yay! – and says “Dad, you will regret forever going back to the hotel and not finishing. Put your head on the cooler next to you and rest.” I hear all this through my fog/self-pity and comply. At some point, I burst into tears fearing that I have let everyone down, especially Doug who asked me to be on the team so he could finish. Not feeling good about crying but I think it helped.

Next, Jordan, Craig’s crew partner in crime, and the person with the most experience crewing for Doug, points to a quarter mile steep pitch in front of us, and says, “Bob, try it.” “I can’t do that.” “Try it. I will pick you up at the sign a couple of hundred yards ahead if you really can’t do it.” I get on the bike very tentatively. I push down on the pedals and they actually move. I slowly make my way up the hill and vaguely remember the team – all three cars worth – standing by the side of the road and cheering for me. I make it. I am back. 100% credit goes to my crew who would not let me fail...and especially Craig who just nursed me back with ice, massages, drinks, and food.

During this time, Doug had done almost all of the 17 miles of the first of the two climbs to the summit before the Durango descent, and I now finished it off and had an amazing descent to the base of the last five-mile climb. We took a couple of turns, then I took a minute to show Doug the rest of the route and explained that I would take the rest of the five mile climb and then I wanted him to finish it off and get the entire descent, which he more than deserved.

This was his “long” descent and my crew took me into Durango to wait at the base of the rather steep

ing ease, although there was nothing easy about it. They smiled a lot. They encouraged. And at the finish line, where the inflatable banner was lying on the ground with no race folks to meet us, while Doug and I climbed they improvised a finish line complete with the chute and banner and cheered for us and I hope for themselves too as we crossed the finish line together (without crashing into each other). This will always be a highlight for me.

I have been involved with some amazing events over the years – 24-hour events, Furnace and Silver State 508’s, Hoodoo 500. I rode through 50 mph headwinds in Death Valley in the 2009 508. That was pretty epic. I am not sure anything will ever top that.

But this is also as epic as it gets. A week later I am finally recovering.

The RAW website says we are DNF. We are not a DNF. We never stopped trying or racing. We were battling another team in our age group, and we beat them. We are RAW finishers, although not official. This group of eight people got two of us through 930 miles and 50k feet of the most intense heat one could imagine, through some roads with 6-inch rideable shoulders and lots of traffic, through rider implosions and crazy logistics.



The amazing Moxy and Grit team at the at the 2021 Race Across the West finish line in Durango, CO. Photo by Casey Corman

mile-ish climb into the finish line. I met up with Doug there and together we climbed this mean little hill to the finish line.

Now let me tell you something about our crew. I wouldn’t have replaced a single person. They did everything right and nothing wrong. They were always supportive and took leadership roles where they needed to. The logistics were incredibly complex, and they managed the planned and unplanned with seem-

I did a short ride yesterday with my daughter-in-law Martine and my friend Neal. It actually felt good. I can sort of sit on the saddle again. I can feel a little power coming back into my skinny little legs.

*Moxy & Grit was started by Professional Mountain Biker Sonya Looney, and its ethos is about inspiring athletes to push a little harder in life, go for the things they are passionate about, and have fun while doing it! The socks and apparel are bold, funny, and sometimes even include expletives to have that special something to take on big adventures and make others smile!

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NUTRITION

Nutrition: It's All About Choices



Are you getting 6-10 servings of fruits and veggies each day? Photo and salad by Dave Iltis

By Breanne Nalder Harward, MS, RDN

Are You Eating as Well as You Think?

This is a question I ask athletes quite often as I want to get them thinking about their diet and whether or not they know how well or poor they may be eating. The most accurate way to recall your food choices is by filling out a food log, which provides an overview of when and what you're eating and usually changes the way you think about your diet. Most athletes don't keep a food journal so they're not aware of what their diet may look like over a 24-hour period. Granted, keeping track of everything that goes into your gullet is time consuming and can be a nuisance, although it's totally worth it when you want to truly hone in on your nutrition and fine tune your diet to improve your physical performance. After reading the article, you can figure out where you are nutritionally and be in great shape with regards to your performance and body composition goals.

Let's Start with Some Basic Questions

- Do you eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner?
- Do you have snacks between meals?
- Do you eat 6-10 servings of Fruits and Veggies?
- How much water do you consume daily?
- Do you consume sport products before, during, and after rides?
- Do you know your caloric burn vs. intake?
- What are your percentage of macronutrients on average (carbohydrates/fats/proteins)?

10 Guidelines to Eating Healthy

To reach your nutrition goals and get your diet to where it can maximize your health and riding performance, follow these basic guidelines. They may be simple, but the effects go a long way if you adopt them into lifestyle patterns.

1. Eat every 3-4 hours – this has been proven scientifically to lower body fat, improve energy levels, and improve strength and performance. Furthermore, eating more frequently throughout the day keeps your blood more sugar stable if choosing the correct carbohydrates. Consistent eating also helps support a healthy metabolism.

2. Eat Breakfast everyday – if you're not eating breakfast, you're not reaching your potential for top athletic performance. Skipping breakfast can trigger the body to slow its metabolism in order to preserve energy, which increases your risk for losing strength and eventually gaining weight. Eating breakfast revs your metabolism, supplies fuel to the brain, and supplies energy to working muscles. It only takes a few minutes to make a PB and J sandwich or to concoct a smoothie before you leave the house.

3. Consume 6-10 servings of Fruits and Vegetables – keep your immune system healthy and lower your risk for getting sick, improve healing of injuries, and reduce the soreness of your muscles with high nutrient dense foods. I always say, find a way to add color to every meal and snack!

4. Healthy Snacking between meals – high quality snacks between meals keeps your gas tank close to fuel where you won't run out of gas. For example, if your last meal is at noon and you ride after work around 5 pm, a 3:30 pm snack is essential to get you through your workout and minimize fatigue. Skipping snacks could increase hunger, cause you to have a disappointing ride (the notorious "bonk"), and likely lead to over-eating at dinner and late into the night, which may increase your body fat. Always remember, you want to consume energy when your body will burn it, otherwise it will be stored as fat!

5. For general hydration, drink at least half your body weight in ounces of fluid (i.e., if you weigh 130 pounds, then drink 65 ounces) per day – hydration is critical in keeping energy levels normal, as the first sign of fatigue is usually related to dehydration, with another 2 bottles during exercise, at least one of which should be an electrolyte mix. For athletes, half your body weight is a good start but when training, you want to increase your fluid intake to match your losses. For every pound

you lose during a ride, you want to drink 2-3 cups of fluid to replace the fluid lost. Be sure to include electrolytes into this equation, they are crucial to proper hydration balance. See my earlier article in the archives on hydration or contact me directly to discuss electrolyte needs for YOUR body.

6. Consume a Post Workout Shake (3-4:1 Carbohydrate:Protein) within 30 minutes of completing your workout – research has proven over and over again that consuming a combination of carbohydrates and protein immediately after your workout will improve muscle recovery and increase your ability to ride strong the following day. A mix of 20 grams of protein along with 60-80 grams of carbohydrate is the ideal ratio of carbs to protein to maximize protein synthesis. Liquid is preferred over solid food as it is absorbed faster, but a solid meal will suffice.

7. Consume Lean Protein at All Meals – Protein has several benefits for endurance athletes such as: boost metabolism, keep you full longer, helps maintain a healthy weight, boost the immune system, and again improve muscle recovery after workouts. The type of protein should vary so you are sure to get a variety of amino acids throughout the day. A good rule of thumb is to incorporate a plant-based protein each meal (such as beans, nuts, seeds) and limit yourself to 1 animal protein per day (if you eat meat/eggs).

8. Consume Whole Grain Carbohydrates to Fuel Up – I say this in every article some way or another: Carbs are the gasoline for your tank! On the bike we shoot for easy to digest carbs (rice products, sport chews and electrolyte drinks), while off the bike we aim for whole grains, which contain a rich source of fiber to keep blood sugar stable, which in turn keeps energy level high. Examples are 100% whole wheat bread, oatmeal, whole grain cereal, sweet potatoes, fresh fruit, vegetables, quinoa, legumes, lentils, and beans.

9. Take a Multivitamin Daily – If your diet is not where it needs to be, especially if you're not consuming nutrient dense foods like fruits, veg-

gies, and whole grains, a multivitamin can function as an insurance policy to supplement your diet with what you're not getting from food.

10. Take an Omega 3 Fish Oil Supplement – Omega 3 Fish Oil acts as a natural anti-inflammatory agent to help reduce swelling, improve healing, minimize muscle soreness, and improve overall recovery after intense exercise.

Take Things One Pedal Stroke at a Time

The overall goal in adapting your lifestyle to improve your cycling performance and your overall health is to be realistic. It's important that you attack things one at a time so that you aren't attempting to make a bunch of changes all at once. Research shows that athletes are much more successful at adjusting their diet or controlling weight when goals are measurable, attainable, and positive. This is where tracking food and accountability come into play. There are numerous apps out there that can be used to food journal, though it can be hard to navigate if you aren't confident on what your calorie and macro needs are for your body. This is where working with a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist can help you get past the guessing game or the "he said/she said" strategy of trying all the different diets out there. Let's get you in to measure your metabolism and get you on a plan that is appropriate for your body and goals. Because riding better, faster, stronger, enjoying your food and feeling good while doing it is what it's all about!

Breanne Nalder Harward, MS, RDN, earned a BS in Biology and Sociology from Westminster College and went on to receive a Master of Science degree in Nutrition and Sports Dietetics from the University of Utah. She is licensed as a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN) and is the nutrition coach at PLAN7 Endurance Coaching. You can find more info on her at plan7coaching.com or follow her on Instagram @breezysaycheezy.

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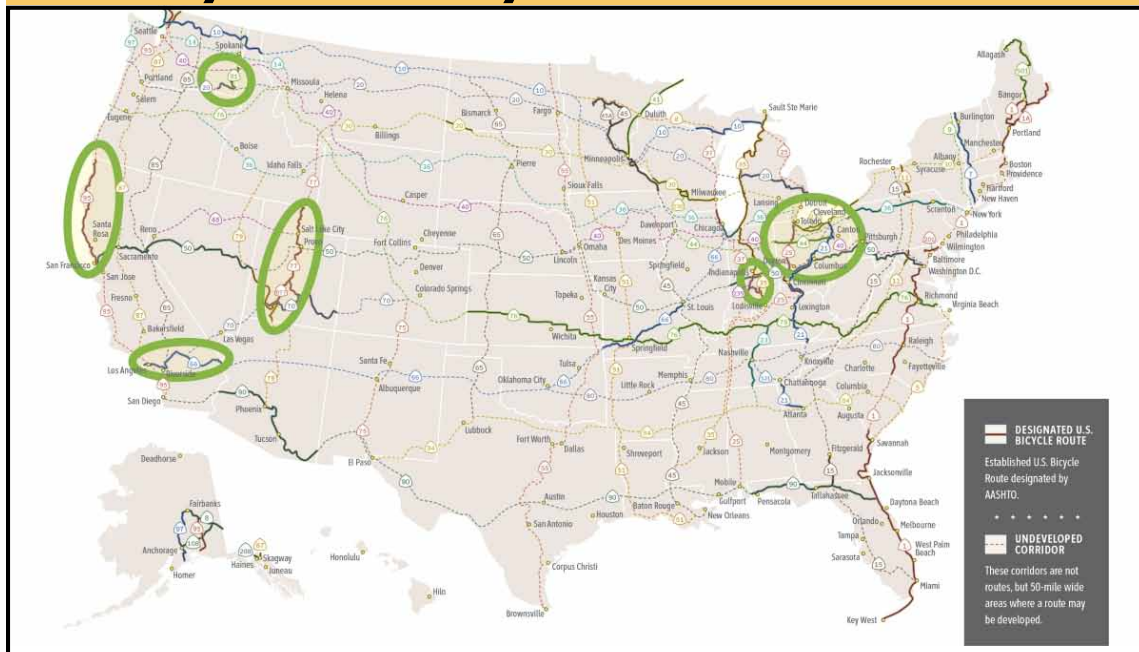
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BICYCLE TOURING

U.S. Bicycle Route System Adds 2,903 Miles of New Routes in 5 States



The 2021 US Bike Route System with new routes circled. Courtesy Adventure Cycling

18 New Routes in California, Indiana, Ohio, Utah, and Washington State Represent Largest Addition to USBRS to Date

MISSOULA, Montana (Aug. 9, 2021) — Adventure Cycling

Association announced the designation of 18 new U.S. Bicycle Routes in five states, adding 2,903 miles to the U.S. Bicycle Route System (USBRS). The new routes in California, Indiana, Ohio, Utah, and Washington State represent the

largest addition to the USBRS to date in terms of both the number of designations and their total mileage. Two other routes in California and Florida also have been realigned to improve the cycling experience.

The new routes offer a variety of scenic cycling opportunities from the Midwest to the Northwest and the Southwest. In California, follow the Pacific Coast from Oregon to San Francisco or cross the state from the high desert to Los Angeles. In Indiana, ride from Indianapolis to Bloomington and beyond. In

Ohio, connect Cleveland, Toledo, Cincinnati, and more. In Utah, go from the foot of the Wasatch Front to Salt Lake City and the painted cliffs and pinnacles near the Arizona border. And in Washington State, ride the rolling Palouse and into the Snake River Canyon.

“Twice each year, state departments of transportation play a significant role in the expansion of the U.S. Bicycle Route System by designating new routes,” said Jim Tymon, Executive Director of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). “This summer, we are not only witnessing the highest number of designations in any single period to date, but we are also seeing why making improvements to existing routes when possible is important. In Northern California, for example, officials realigned U.S. Bicycle Route 50 to take advantage of a new paved path that is making cycling in the region safer and better than ever before.”

The USBRS is a developing national network of officially recognized, numbered, and signed bicycle routes, with the goal of 50,000 miles of routes linking every state in the country. USBRS-designated routes help promote tourism, enhance rider experience and safety, and assist in building out and planning other transportation facilities. All U.S. Bicycle Routes are designated by

state departments of transportation and approved by AASHTO.

With the new designations, the USBRS now has 17,734 miles of routes in 31 states and Washington, DC. At least 40 states are currently developing U.S. Bicycle Routes.

Digital maps for all designated U.S. Bicycle Routes are available to the public for free on the Adventure Cycling Association website.

In Utah, the routes, now boost the state’s total USBRS to around 960 miles of streets, highways and trails for rider use throughout the state. Newly designated bicycle routes 77, 677, 877, 79 and 679 now connect riders from Idaho to Arizona in this developing national network of bicycle routes.

“These routes allow commuters, bicycle tourists and leisure cyclists a unique way to travel safely across Utah’s beautiful and diverse landscape,” UDOT Active Transportation Manager Heidi Goedhart said. “As more and more Utahns take advantage of active transportation, we expect to see less traffic congestion, greater economic development, and healthier citizens—three wins for communities everywhere.”

As part of Utah’s new route system, there are 105 miles of continuous safe and separated cycling trails located along the urbanized Wasatch Front. The route also takes riders along beautiful rivers, parkways and vistas. Not only do these designations help bring bicycle tourism to Utah, but the benefits are also seen locally by assisting in building out and planning other active transportation facilities.

Adventure Cycling Association, a nonprofit organization that provides national coordination for the USBRS, partners with AASHTO to ensure states have the resources and expertise needed for successful route designation.

“With this addition of nearly 3,000 miles, the U.S. Bicycle Route System continues to pick up momentum — and the growth of the system benefits every person who has, is, or will be traveling by bike,” said Scott Pankratz, Executive Director of Adventure Cycling. “Adventure Cycling Association applauds our state department of transportation partners, who understand the role bike travel plays in our national infrastructure, supporting health and wellness, transforming communities, and increasing economic activity across the country.”

For more information, see www.adventurecycling.org/routes-and-maps/us-bicycle-route-system/

Drivers Pay Attention to Painted Bike Lanes

It helps to paint bike lanes. When motorists see the paint, they’ll give cyclists more room, says what purports to be the largest study of the issue. Australian researchers put cameras and distance sensors on 162 cyclists in two cities, recording 46,769 incidents where motorists passed them. Even when controlling for the width of the road, the drivers gave more room when they saw the paint.

See https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352464214_Are_bicycle_lanes_effective_The_relationship_between_passing_distance_and_road_characteristics.

-Charles Pelow

Bike Lanes Encourage Riding to Work

If you build it, they will come. New bicycle lanes will encourage people to bike to work, but more in suburbs than in the city. That’s what researchers from two Canadian universities found after surveys in 17 neighborhoods in the Toronto area.

People who biked to work at least once a week reported riding more often when new lanes became available. A greater percentage of city dwellers already biked to work before tracks were added, so there was less potential to increase bike commuting.

See Do New Urban and Suburban Cycling Facilities Encourage More Bicycling?: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/352056320_Do_new_urban_and_suburban_cycling_facilities_encourage_more_bicycling.

-Charles Pekom

Sustainability is Important to Bike Share Users

Focus on ecological benefits if you want to promote bikeshare. At least it worked in Taiwan. Researchers at three Taiwanese universities reported that people prone to ride concern themselves with sustainability in transportation, at least in Taipei City, Taiwan’s capital. “Our findings suggest authorities may promote bike sharing by enhancing user perceptions of the system’s green value, increase trust in this form of green transportation, and thus foster higher levels of loyalty resulting in continued use of shared bicycles,” the authors report.

Users not only want to live sustainably; they are more likely to trust companies that promote the notion and are more likely to stick with a system that promotes environmental values. See https://www.researchgate.net/publication/353767661_Investigating_re-use_intentions_for_shared_bicycles_A_loyalty_phase_perspective.

-Charles Pelow

App Would Allow Cyclists to Time Red Lights

One day, you may be able to mount your cellphone on your handlebar with an app that can tell you to adjust your pace so you don’t get caught at red lights. Researchers at the University of Oregon have developed FasTrack that works in bike corridors on and near campus. They are currently working on expanding the app so it will work in the outside world. It can time traffic lights within one second with 85 percent accuracy.

So far, the app works for timed traffic lights. Now the researchers are trying to expand it so it will consider lights that have to be changed by activation (sensor or pushing a button). Thus far, results haven’t been as successful, only reaching 78 percent accuracy. The app will tell you if you have to slow down or speed up to maintain a “green wave.”

The researchers plan to look at more roads in Portland, OR to see if they can adjust for date, time, season and possible weather. The system wouldn’t work with older traffic signal systems. No word yet on when it will be available outside Oregon.

See https://nitc.trec.pdx.edu/research/project/1299/Green_Waves_Machine_Learning_and_Predictive_Analytics_Making_Streets_Better_for_People_on_Bike_&_Scooter.

-Charles Pekom

Bikeshare and Transit Use

The COVID pandemic can’t be blamed for all the decline in public transit use. Other factors caused a 14-15 percent drop in bus and rail riding between 2012 and 2018 before anyone ever got sick from the virus. Availability of bikeshare and increased bike facilities played a very minor role, causing one percent of the decline at most.

So concludes Recent Decline in Public Transportation Ridership: Analysis, Causes, and Responses (<https://www.nap.edu/download/26320>), a new study from the Transportation Research Board. The board attributes most of the decline to increased fares, decreased gas prices and ride-hailing programs such as Uber and Lyft, as well as telecommuting, online shopping, etc.

Possible solutions to the public transit drop would include increased partnerships with bike/scooter sharing providers to make it easier to get to and from public transit. Bikeshare can actually increase rail ridership at outlying stations though it decreased it in central cities mainly on some bus lines.

-Charles Pekom



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BIKE FIT**Cycling Posture - Improving Form and Function**

Alan's bike posture before a bike fit. Photo by John Higgins



Alan's bike posture after a bike fit. Photo by John Higgins

By John Higgins

In the past decade, “advanced bike fitting” has been driven by a focus on the cyclist’s position, which has been enabled by digital tools like the Retul system that can dynamically measure joint angles and range of motion. Posture has often been overlooked, as it is not easily measured and quantified.

Typing “cycling posture” into a search engine yields many thousands of results. However, a perusal of the results shows significant conflation between “posture” and “position”. A clear distinction is rarely made between the two. A similar result comes from searching the biomechanical scientific literature. There are thousands of results for “cycling” + “posture” but only 8 articles for “cycling posture”. Adding “bike fit” to the search criteria yielded a scant 4 results from the past 10 years, and again posture was conflated with position.

What is “posture”?

Posture is how we align and hold our body to counter the relentless force of gravity. Regardless of whether we are standing, walking, running, sleeping, or cycling, the influence of gravity is ever present. The central focus of posture is the alignment of the pelvis and spine, which together provide the foundation for the movement of the upper and lower extremities.

What is “position”?

Position considers the arrangement and movement of the upper and lower limbs in relation to the spine, and each other. Body position is commonly defined by joint angle measures, and indirectly documented by bike set up measures. A cyclist may exhibit the same position as defined by joint angles, but significantly different posture with implications for metabolic efficiency, sustainable comfort, and performance.

Both posture and position interact to affect how you look on a bike, and how you function. Although position is very important, posture has a higher priority and therefore needs to be observed, assessed and corrected – as appropriate for that cyclist – before fine tuning the position.

Optimal posture in cycling involves mild lumbar and thoracic

flexion with mild cervical extension. No section should be at end of range, and there should be no excessive directional changes at any segment that could result in disc compression or nerve entrapment. Indicators of suboptimal posture could include: a vertical or near vertical pelvis and lumbar angle (posterior pelvic tilt), excessive flexion in segments of the lumbar or thoracic spine (thoracic kyphosis, or hunched back), excessive extension in the cervical spine (cervical lordosis or kinked neck), rounded or hunched shoulders (protracted or elevated scapula), or a forward head position. A number of these conditions may be present concurrently.

Posture and Technique in Sports

In any athletic and sporting endeavor, the serious participant will seek and benefit from skills coaching that includes the best movement patterns and the postural training necessary to excel at their sport. From ball sports to ballet and golf to gymnastics, participants are educated, trained, and coached in how to use their bodies. How many cyclists, cycling coaches, or bike fitters place emphasis on first principles of aligning the body on the bicycle to contend with the relentless tug of gravity? In cycling the emphasis has been first and foremost on fitness: cardiovascular, muscular endurance, and strength in order to sustain force delivery to the pedals. A cycling coach may additionally offer guidance on hydration and nutrition; handling skills including cornering, climbing and descending; and race strategy. A bike fitter may be focused on improving contact point comfort to relieve aches and pains, and to prevent repetitive use injuries. Aerodynamic efficiency gets considerable attention in triathlon and for time trials. Posture gets scant attention, but awareness of postural alignment establishes the context and parameters for which all other aspects are anchored.

Contributors to Suboptimal Posture

•Body and postural awareness on behalf of the cyclist. The vast majority of cyclists are unaware of how they look and function on a bicycle, other than the metrics

provided from their cycle computer. With the exception of some high-performance programs, the culture of cycling has not embraced skills-based feedback and coaching, other than the skill of getting faster by getting fitter. Many cyclists do not know how they should be situated on a bicycle, and how to align and use their body to best effect for comfort and performance.

• Equipment Choice. Many cyclists present with poor posture due to subconscious compensations for unsuitable equipment choices. The saddle is a frequent culprit and is a critical piece of equipment as many postural compensations result from a poorly supported pelvis. However, the list is extensive and also includes seat post setback, crank length, stem length and angle, handlebar width, and most fundamentally the underlying frame geometry and size.

• Bike Fit Position. This refers primarily to saddle position (height, setback, angle) and handlebar position (reach and drop) that is deemed suitable for the cyclist. A person can present with a good position as defined by normative joint angles, and yet exhibit signs of suboptimal posture and suffer the consequences of that. If a fit position is determined and set up without considering posture, the rider is being locked into a position of ongoing postural compensation.

• Foot-Pedal Interface. An important subset of both equipment choice and the bike fit position is the choice of cycling shoe and related internal foot support, and external cleat position and modifications. Dysfunction in the stability of the feet on the pedals can have kinetic chain ripple effects up to the pelvis and spine.

• Pre-Existing Conditions. These include leg length differences, spinal conditions (scoliosis, spondylitis, stenosis, disc compression, fractures, and fusions), overuse injuries, and carryover effects from prior accidents or surgeries. Any of these may produce postural compensations as the body seeks the line of least resistance to operate the bicycle.

Benefits of Optimal Posture

A cyclist’s posture on a bicycle may be viewed as qualitatively optimal or suboptimal. Their posture will be either helping or hindering overall comfort and performance through the following attributes:

• Balance. A key role of optimal posture is to align the body to function and perform well in the presence of gravity. Hence, having the rider’s center of mass balanced over the primary fulcrum point of the bicycle will help optimize muscle recruitment and handling responsiveness. If the rider’s center of mass is balanced over the bike, then small postural changes can be more easily deployed for the demands of different riding situations, like climbing, sprinting, cornering and descending.

• Airway and breathing. Optimal posture contributes to the maintenance of an open (vs restricted) airway to enable full use of the lungs. A sub-optimal posture will restrict the airway, limit the mobility of the ribcage, and inhibit the action of the diaphragm. Effective gas exchange is necessary to fuel the muscles to drive the pedals.

• Muscle recruitment. Postural alignment informs body position which affects muscle recruitment. We are looking for a balance of anterior and posterior muscle activity from the hips and lower limbs to drive the pedals, while minimizing unnecessary or compensatory upper body muscle recruitment.

• Neural transmission. Optimal spinal alignment minimizes the risk of nerve impingement to both the upper and lower limbs, supporting full neural activity which is needed for maximal muscle fiber recruitment and sensory feedback.

• Efficient Energy Use. The summation of the above factors will reduce the amount of energy used in maintaining postural compensations, extending the time taken to reach a state of fatigue. Poor posture likely hastens the onset of fatigue for any given fitness level.

• Ongoing Participation. For injured or older cyclists with disc compression or herniation, spondylosis, spinal stenosis, and cervical or lumbar fractures or fusions, the ability to maintain optimal posture while riding is critical to being able to continue riding pain-free and without further aggravation to their condition. What is optimal for cycling will depend on the condition and the individual.

For Cyclists

Let’s assume that posture could be considered “form”. We could debate if form follows function or

if function follows form. I’ll suggest that the two are interrelated and that poor form (suboptimal posture) indicates compromised function on the bicycle. Improving your form could improve your function, and improving your function will improve your form. Do you know how good your form is? Could it be better? Ask for some input from riding friends, coach, or fitter. It is easier to identify suboptimal posture than it is to identify optimal posture. Video is a great tool for showing you both your posture and your position. Once a cyclist can see themselves riding, they are often quick to get the concept and intuitively recognize poor form from good form.

Once you can link how you look to how you feel on the bike, practice keeping your spine long and neutral by raising just off the saddle, sticking your butt back to tilt your pelvis forward, and extend gently forward with the top of your sternum, then lowering back onto the saddle. You want to set up an active athletic engagement, not a “hard to maintain” strain. If you find you then roll your hips back away from the nose of the saddle for more comfort, it maybe time for a different saddle. Pelvic support and comfort are critical to aligning your spine, engaging your core, and supporting your lower back.

Aches, pains, numbness and fidgeting around can indicator that your form and function could be improved. This begins with awareness of your current posture, techniques to bring mindful intent to your posture, possibly equipment changes to support good posture, and maybe changes to the saddle and handlebar position to fine tune the riding position. There is more skill to riding a bike than you think. Better skills = better riding!

This article is an edited extract from a paper presented to the International Bike Fitting Institute in 2020, to complete a mentorship program and as a requirement for additional professional recognition.

John Higgins is a professional bike fitter and purveyor of unique and boutique bicycles and fit-related components and accessories in Salt Lake City. More info on bikefitr.com

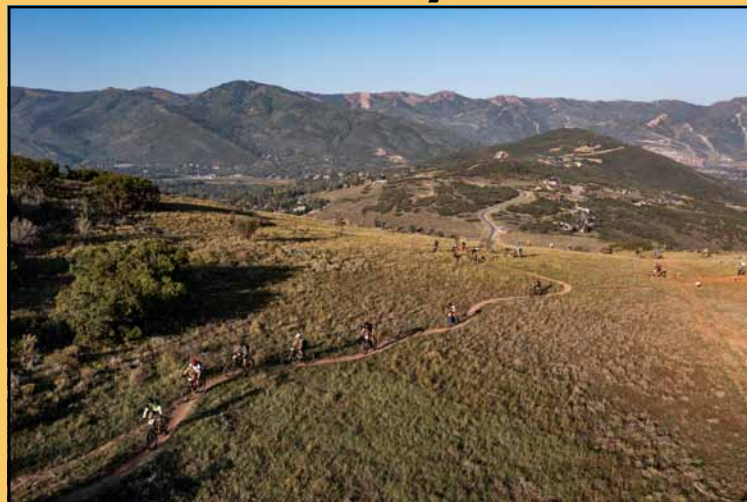
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MOUNTAIN BIKE RACING

Dong and Visnick Take Top Spots at 2021 Park City Point 2 Point



Evelyn Dong topped the women's pro field in the 2021 Park City Point 2 Point. Photo by Jay Dash, jaydashphotography.com

A stream of riders in the 2021 Park City Point 2 Point. Photo by Jay Dash, jaydashphotography.com

By Shannon Boffeli

After taking the 2020 season off due to Covid, Utah's most-anticipated mountain bike race each year returned for its 13th edition. Taking in over 75 miles of Park City, Utah's, world renowned singlettrack and 10,000 vertical feet of climbing, the Point 2 Point is known as one of the hardest single-day mountain bike races in the country.

This year riders from across the country came to the destination town of Park City to be challenged by technical trails, grueling climbs, breakneck descents, and moose.

Rains on Friday helped clear out some of the smoke that has plagued the west throughout the summer and provided endless hero dirt for the riders to enjoy their P2P experience.

As the race kicked off just after sunrise it was clear both elite fields were ready to push the pace early.

Two-time winner Evelyn Dong (Juliana/SRAM/No Tubes) took the early lead pushing what challenger, Melissa Rollins (Team Twenty24) described as, 'cross-county Olympic speeds.' Dong was joined early on by Caedran Harvey with Rollins not far behind.

The punishing early pace broke up the women's field and saw



A rider pops a wheelie across the finish line in the 2021 Park City Point 2 Point. Photo by Jay Dash, jaydashphotography.com



Tanner Visnick on his way to winning the 2021 Park City Point 2 Point. Photo by Jay Dash, jaydashphotography.com

A rider with a hot air balloon overhead. Photo by Jay Dash, jaydashphotography.com

Evelyn Dong establish a solid gap that continued to grow throughout the day. The Juliana rider rode clear throughout the day and not even getting stung by a bee on the lip would slow the lone leader.

At mile 55, Dong passed through the crowds at the Park City Mountain feed zone taking in the cheers from hundreds of local fans lifting her spirits to finish the final 20 miles showing strong form.

Behind the leader Melissa Rollins had moved into second place after Harvey got off course in the mid-mountain section of the course.

Rollins was followed by the hard-charging Virginian Andrea Dvorak (Cutaway), who is battle-tested in all forms of endurance cycling.

No one would be catching Evelyn Dong on the day as she finished the race with a smashing time of 7:30:18, well inside the top-20 of the 350 men and women in the race.

Rollins' final push to the finish was temporarily delayed as a mother and baby moose took up residence on the trail. The 25-year-old Rollins was forced to bushwhack her way around the pair before getting back on course and finishing her day at just over 8 hours.

Despite encountering the late moose challenge, Rollins managed to stay over 20 minutes clear on third-place rider Dvorak who finished at 8:24:55.

Chelsea Bolton finished fourth in the open women's field but took top honors for best quote of the day for her comment after finishing the punishing Steps trail climb exclaiming, "Before today, I've only ever gone up that trail by mistake!"

Courtney Boyd (Wattie Ink) rounded out the women's podium in fifth place with a time of 8:47:14

The open men's race got off to a similarly rapid pace with relative youngsters Truman Glasgow (Rouleur Devo) and Tanner Visnick (POC) pushing hard early accompanied briefly by Australian Lachlan Morton (EF Foundation) who was

Continued on page 20



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ESSAY

Whose Bed Have Your Boots Been Under?

Whose bed have your boots been under? Early morning Zen. Photo by Lukas Brinkerhoff

By Lukas Brinkerhoff

He was an older gentleman.

Recognizing that that designation is bit of a moving target and one that has become older and older with my personal age, I would say he was in his early 50s. He was fit. He looked like he had spent most of his life quite active. His grey hair was cut short and neat and gave him the air of a manager, or at least the leader of something, probably someone who took orders from superiors regularly, but who also passed those orders along to underlings. The setting was a bike shop, so I feel pretty confident in assuming he had spent most of his life riding, probably gran fondos and the occasional race with little to show for it other than the lack of a beer gut.

“Do you sell a lot of these?” He asked.

“Yea, it’s about 50-50 these days.” I responded.

“I’m sure I’ll have one at some point, but I’m not that old yet. Besides doesn’t it feel like cheating?”

It was a conversation that gets repeated regularly in any bike shop selling eBikes. It was probably one of a dozen I personally experienced in this given week. And as such, I gave the canned response, “You get out of it what you want.”

He continued his browsing or what is also known as “gathering” and left the shop.

I watched as he got in his car and made his way out of the parking lot under the power of fossil fuels. Who’s cheating whom?

In an era of unprecedented ease, which of all the varying levels of mechanical advantage is cheating and which ones are not? When the bicycle was first invented, the problem it was solving was human transport. The bicycle is easier and faster than walking or running giving cyclists an advantage over the biologically available forms. Is the bicycle cheating? What about gears? Bicycles were first fixed, single speed versions due to the technology available at the time. Where do you draw the line?

There’s a hill about halfway up the Zen trail. We affectionately (and by we, I mean me) refer to as SOB Hill. By most standards, it’s not rideable. In fact, if you were to head up Zen for the first time and get to this hill, you would most likely not even realize it was there. Instead, you would just take one of the many cheater lines that go around.

It starts with a lead in that by its own merits is a challenge. It’s uphill and right before the crux, there are a dozen or so boulders that will suck any momentum right out of your wheels once you hit them. The crux is a ridiculously steep pitch of sandstone. If you can get to the sandstone still on your bike with enough forward motion to continue, getting up the sandstone is the challenge that stops almost every person willing to give it a go.

If you make it to the sandstone and are able to continue upward, the slickrock requires a Homeric effort to overcome. The grade is steep enough that balancing on one’s bike alone is a challenge. Combine that

with the need to maintain forward motion through the narrow strip of rock that is the line, and you have yourself a real obstacle. It is best overcome by maintaining as much momentum as possible through the boulder field and then a lunge forward. With a little luck that lunge gets both wheels on the rock and on the line and then it is a question of strength and balance. Too much power and you will lose traction spinning out. Not enough power and you will stop dead in your tracks. Both have the possibility of a forced dismount off the side of a giant rock.

We had passed them on the climb up to SOB Hill. My guess that it was one of their first times on Zen as they were struggling not only with the grade of the trail but also with the technical aspects of the rock. Stopping at the Jacker Stacker for a couple of laps before moving on to the aforementioned hill had given them just enough time to catch back up to us.

I jam down on the right pedal to get my momentum started and then repeat with the left leg. I get as much speed as possible going into the boulder field. Out the other side, an unintentional scream escapes from my lungs as I put everything I have into the cranks. The bike lunges forward. My front wheel is in my face and I come to a near standstill. My left leg goes down and the momentum continues forward. One last pedal stroke through the skinny section puts my front wheel at the top of the crux and I throw the rest of the bike upward to finish it out.

The other riders we had passed stand a little confused by what they have just seen and ask my riding buddy, “Is he on an eBike?”

“Nah, kind of the opposite,” he responds, “He doesn’t even have

gears.”

Walking versus biking versus driving. The latter is universally accepted. No one says they feel like they are cheating when they jump in the car for a quick spin to the mailbox. And yet, it is the most passive of the three forms of transportation. Despite the herculean effort required to mass produce cars and extract the fossil fuels necessary for that quick spin, pushing down on the accelerator is incredibly easy.

This brings us full circle back to eBikes. Yes, they are easier than pedaling an analog bike, but they are still more work than driving. If you view that incredible, electric motor strapped into the bottom bracket as simply a technological advancement, then it isn’t much different than adding gears to the bicycle or when the freewheel became a thing. Let’s not even get started on suspension, dropper posts and disc brakes. It all depends on where you draw the line.

Who’s cheating on whom?

I ride singlespeed despite my advanced age as well as an eBike and a couple of cars. From where I stand, every time we allow ourselves to use a motor instead of our own power, we have given up a piece of our humanity. There is a tipping point when we begin to lose our ability to do things by opting out of doing them ourselves. Which is to say that driving a car or riding an eBike or using the elevator is only cheating you. And yet, it’s so easy and yes, sometimes even downright fun.

So, whose bed have your boots been under?

Lukas Brinkerhoff blogs about mountain biking and life at mooseknuckleralliance.org.

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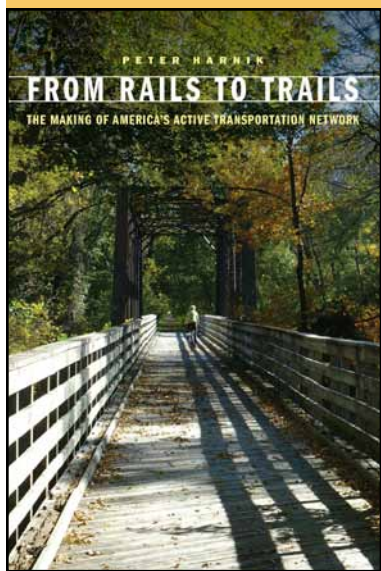


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BOOK REVIEW

Book Review: From Rails to Trails



By Charles Pekow

Everything you'll need to know – and then some-- about the rail-to-trail movement can be found in a new tome. And the author, Peter Harnik, should know more about the history than anyone. He, as much as anybody, has sparked and led the cause since its beginning as a national movement and we can thank him for the many converted railroad lines we now enjoy riding – and the many more sure to come.

Harnik cofounded the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy back in 1986, the organization that initially focused exclusively on converting abandoned railroads into recreational paths. (Note: I've known Harnik for decades and collaborated with him on some projects years ago.)

In *From Rails to Trails: The Making of America's Active Transportation Network*, Harnik tells the story of the movement, describing the legislative battles in Washington to get federal funding, and many state and local fights and the coping with non-believers and reluctant railroads. The book is not difficult to read.

It is, however, East Coast oriented as Harnik lives on the East Coast and describes many firsthand experiences. The unfortunate part for Mountain West folks is that it's the one region in the country that gets very little play and Harnik discusses projects closer to the nation's capital, with examples from Pennsylvania, Ohio, New York and so on, but not much out west.

But he gives a good overview, starting with the history of railroads and how these lines that connect towns by train unwittingly became ideal corridors for new means of transit between the communities. They tended to avoid steep hills and heavy traffic crossings whenever possible and include overpasses and bridges that work just as well for bicyclists and hikers since they became available with the 20th Century decline of rail transit, caused by everything from the rise of the auto to the Great

Depression.

Harnik then takes us on a history of the bicycle and how it became practical and popular, and its ups (during World War II when auto production declined) and downs (post-war when the automobile caught on). We get a detailed history of the decline of the railroad, an essential part of the story but the reader gets tired of example after example.

Once we get the needed background, Harnik gives us a history of the rail-trail, starting with the prototypes before the concept caught on; such as the Illinois Prairie Path, Stony Valley Trail in Pennsylvania and the short Cathedral Aisle in South Carolina dating as far back as 1939. Then Harnik takes on a chronology of all the legislative battles it took to get crucial federal support. We read about some unsung heroes, including congressional staff member Tom Allison who worked behind the scenes to get legislation passed. (Then again, we never hear about congressional staffers who toil anonymously in favor of their bosses who need the publicity, but that's another matter.)

The first major federal funding for the movement came in the form of \$25 million included in bigger railroad legislation, a common legislative tactic. As the book says, "there had been the 1968 National Trails System Act, but in comparison to canals, railroads, and roadways, trails had seemed laughingly unqualified for funding."

As you'd expect, many Republicans opposed funding trails. The book sometimes gets bogged down in minutia about legislation, though.

But we learn the valuable lesson from the book on how much goes into the making of a rail-trail, even when the abandoned corridor lies there for the taking. But we learn of the victorious struggles, such as against the utility in Virginia initially reluctant to acquiesce to the Washington & Old Dominion Trail in Northern Virginia, now a well-used trail impossible to object to. (The electric company eventually saw the value.) A Baltimore County executive tried (but failed) to stop the Torrey Brown Rail Trail which runs from Cockeysville north of Baltimore to the Pennsylvania state line. Of course, the movement lost many battles, including the proposed Trail of Two Cities between Omaha and Lincoln Nebraska when other real estate interests outbid trail advocates.

And of course, many battles had to be fought in court and a chapter tells us of the significant legal decisions. Landowners wanted to expand their farms or backyards or didn't want people running and riding past their backyard. Some cases were won; some lost. But the movement

won a major victory with a ruling that a corridor used for "public travel" didn't just mean trains. But other courts ruled that railroads could choose how to dispose of their real estate.

The book can't be considered a "how-to", but it does explain how Harnik's conservancy (of which I am a charter member) built a political base. He didn't claim to start the movement but the conservancy nationalized it, starting by looking to see what was already going on around the nation. It found trail conversion needed a triangle: "a formal plan of action, a public agency agreeing to own the facility, and an advocacy organization pushing for approval." A chapter explains how to build a base – bicyclists alone probably won't do it though they often spearhead the drive; add other trail users, conservationists, etc. Doing so may require compromise – cyclists and equestrians have to learn to share.

There are all sorts of ways to turn skeptics around and deal with

unique situations. The book will get you thinking about these matters. When a Wisconsin farmer complained about having to move cattle across the trail, the commission in charge agreed to include a special gate – and now watching the cows cross has become an attraction for trail users. Sometimes a philanthropist will buy the real estate if no government has the cash on hand. Different government agencies use different rules. Some concern themselves mainly with transportation; others with recreation. Tunnels and bridges are needed to get from here to there but present their own set of problems with structure, safety, vandalism, etc.

From Rails to Trails takes you in historical order through the necessary preconditions and prehistory of the rail-to-trail movement, the railroad, the bicycle, etc. The book shows how the movement formed and all entities you have to fight: legislatures, courts, communities, governments, and all the places trails can be built: urban, suburbs, rural,

tunnel, etc.

Most trails replaced railroad tracks with pavement, suitable for all bikes, but some trails remain gravel. By and large, trails are flat and connect communities; they're not built for mountain biking.

If you want to start or expand a trail in your community (or between yours and another), you need to read this book. If you're already advocating for trails, you can pick up plenty of hints on what will work. Perhaps a subsequent book on bike advocacy can include examples from the Mountain West. And anyone who reads the book will have to come away with some appreciation for how the trails they ride got there.

From Rails to Trails: The Making of America's Active Transportation Network, 240-page paperback or e-book, \$19.95, University of Nebraska Press, <https://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/nebraska/9781496222060/>.

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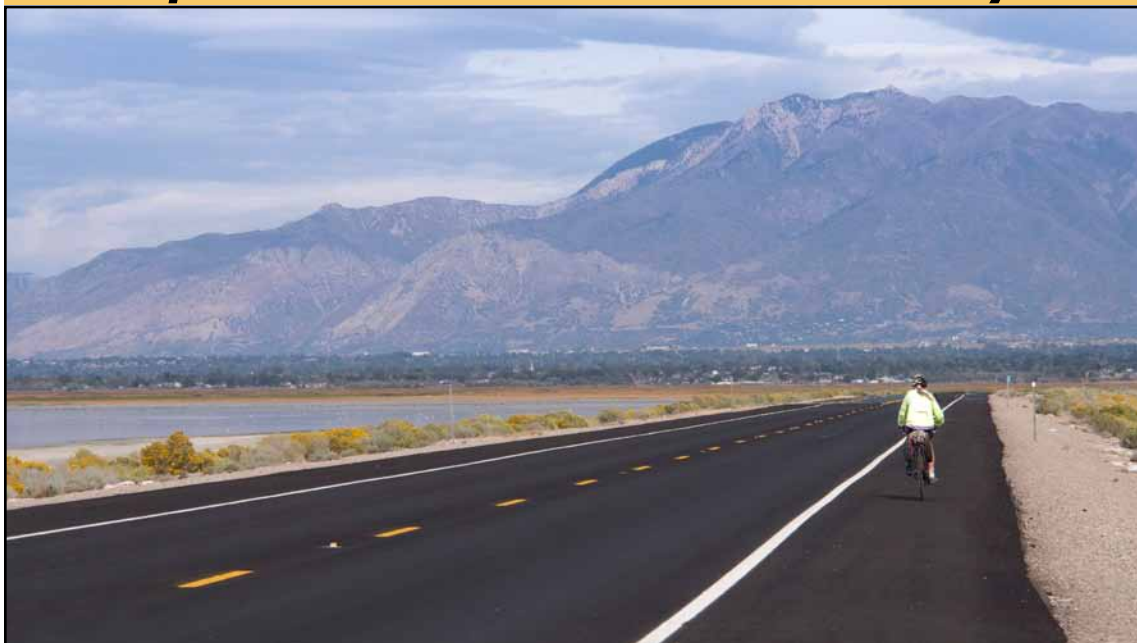




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ROAD RIDING

Antelope Island: A Californian's Utah Bicycle Adventure in the Time of COVID



Jacquette returning across the causeway with Mt. Ogden and the Wasatch range ahead. Photo by Howard Shafer

By Howard Shafer

We did not go to Utah during COVID-19 in order to bicycle, although once there, it would have been foolish of us not to. No, we went because dental implants are much more expensive in our California paradise than in Utah, and the difference easily paid for the trip with some left over. We weighed the cost savings versus the menace of travel in the days of the corona virus and went. We arrived in Utah during the week of Adventure Cycling's Bike Your Park Day, so of course we were going to bicycle. The only question was to which park would we bike?

Utah is known for its many spectacular national and state parks, but most are located in central and southern Utah, whereas we would be up north near Ogden. And we were looking for a day trip, not a week-long tour, because overnights on the road just increase the COVID risks. We focused on Antelope Island State Park, the largest of the Great Salt Lake islands, and, we were told, a haven for bicyclists and other large

mammals.

That is why, at 9 am on the morning of September 26, 2020, wearing masks in celebration of the pandemic, we unloaded our bicycles from our Subaru in front of the well-manicured lawn of an attractive, two-story, Mormon home in the town of Hooper, Utah where my niece, her husband, and their five children live. Hooper is one of several expanding towns spreading out in the flatlands between the Wasatch Mountains and the Great Salt Lake. The oldest son, having just turned sixteen, let us admire his very own driver's license, while his younger brother who was leaving for a class where he would learn to shoot a shotgun, carried a weapon, which was practically as long as he was tall. Such a class that would have been very unlikely in Silicon Valley, California. We visited on the family's lawn because going into their home would have presented a COVID risk to the family that it didn't need.

After our hellos, we removed our masks and bicycled south through old farms and new housing on straight, secondary high-

ways with narrow shoulders. We passed rows of newly half-built, five-bedroom houses plus the occasional old farm featuring the narrow, two-story, original yellow brick construction of nineteenth century, Mormon pioneer homes. Sometimes, we passed homes flying black-and-white versions of American flags with one stripe blue instead of black. These flags, we were told, assert that "Blue Lives Matter," referring to the dangers the police experience in carrying out their duties, a very commendable concern. We were more familiar with the "Black Lives Matter" banners on northern California lawns (where droughts are doing their best to relieve us of these lawns), which address a very different concern. Admittedly, we Californians are hardly in a position to lecture.

Antelope Island is reached via a seven-mile-long causeway across Farmington Bay from the east side of the Great Salt Lake. We dutifully donned our masks to go through the tollbooth and were charged three dollars per bicycle. On our way again, we followed a highway with



Howard's niece and her family in Hooper eat start of ride. Photo by Howard Shafer



Antelope Island Park entrance with warning about bison. Jacquette Ward pays the entrance fee. Photo by Howard Shafer



There are lots of bison on Antelope Island. Photo by Howard Shafer

wide bike lanes bordered by salt flats and salt water.

Across the water to the north, partially obscured by Fremont Island, we saw the barren hills of

Promontory Point, where, in 1869 the Central Pacific Railroad from California met and was joined via a golden spike to the Union Pacific Railroad from the East, thus com-

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Jacquette tries a buffalo burger. Photo by Howard Shafer



On our return, we stopped at the eBike rental. Photo by Howard Shafer

pleting the first intercontinental railroad. You can go to the Golden Spike National Historic Park and watch re-enactments of the Golden Spike ceremony complete with beautiful replicas of the two engines that took part in the original ceremonies: the Central Pacific's Jupiter and the Union Pacific's No. 119.

To the south, across the causeway, under a dome of gray sky, Antelope Island rose out of water so shallow, it sometimes dries up entirely. That gray sky had us worried. Would it rain? Our part of California does not allow rain in September. In fact, the city of Cupertino (the world headquarters of Apple Computer) is rumored to have once passed an ordinance that tried to permanently outlaw rain.

The trip to Antelope Island appeared immensely popular with cyclists. Many riders passed us on their morning workouts while we tourists stopped to take photos of the stark yet grand vistas on either side. Those cyclists would have passed us anyway. Their lungs were used to this 4000-foot plus elevation. We live close enough to sea level that global warming might someday bring San Francisco Bay water to lap at our feet. The first things we saw as we neared Antelope Island were

the Antelope eBikes rental office, a marina with no boats (after all, it was the cold end of September), and on a low hill behind them both, the park visitor center.

Tice Child, who did not wear a mask (a surprise for us Californians but not so rare in Utah at that time) and who with his wife runs Antelope eBikes said that both his rentals and his guided tours were wildly popular and had been featured on several TV programs. He rents several models of fat-tire Bakcou eBikes as well as the Evolve e-Longboard. We encountered his eBikes several times on the roads and trails we rode. I myself have often entertained less than complimentary thoughts when passed by an eBike. After all, I reason, I'm building muscles, strengthening my heart, and reducing global warming all while travelling under my own steam. Someone told me that eBikes are like crack to bicyclists. Once you start, you can't quit. If it's that bad, I tell myself, I'll never get addicted because I'll never start. I'll just say No!

On the other hand, one well-known mountain bike photographer known professionally as Photo-John (Google him and see his fantastic mountain biking and skiing photographs) who just happens to be my

son insists that eBikes introduce bicycling to people who would not otherwise ever bicycle, and that even seasoned cyclists often find they ride farther and end up with more exercise on eBikes. He claims that an eBike would not be amiss in helping him lug his thirty-five pounds of camera equipment up single-track trails, and who am I to argue with that? Moreover, I'm told, if people got on eBikes instead of into cars, it would reduce global warming a lot more than my piddling effort.

Antelope Island's forty-two square miles are separated into the North Island and the South Island by a tall chain-link fence that crosses the island from east to west. The South Island is ninety percent of the island. It has one paved road that follows the east coast to a preserved ranch halfway down the island. This ranch was originally started by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, which brought cattle to the island. The cattle are long gone, but the South Island is home to bison, pronghorns, deer, bighorn sheep, and other fauna, which roam freely. Descendants of the twelve bison introduced in 1893 have since become so numerous, they must be culled. Cyclists who have not yet been culled also roam freely on the South Island and remain free to enjoy its many wonderful trails. Since we were not on mountain bikes, we saved this single-track experience for another time.

The North Island has the visitors' center and one restaurant, the Island Buffalo Grill. We put on our masks and ordered a buffalo burger from a window. It was handed to us across a table blocking the doorway. We had to share it standing up because all outdoor tables had been removed. C'est la COVID. Nevertheless, the buffalo burger was delicious.

The North Island also has swimming beaches and a couple of treeless campgrounds. The beaches are a long way out, across deep, loose sand and hardpan salt. We saw nobody swimming, but if it had been warmer, we might have tried ourselves. In the 1940s and 1950s, postcards with a small bag of real Great Salt Lake salt stapled to one corner showed people floating high on their backs while reading newspapers. We bicycled every road on the North Island including some white, salt-encrusted, bone-rattling washboards. The best views came after the short climb to Buffalo Point with its magnificent mountain panoramas to the south, long strands of Great Salt Lake beach to the east, and sweeping vistas of blue water and distant islands stretching toward Nevada to the west. Below Buffalo Point lay a valley dotted with hikers, horseback riders, and bison.

The visitor center also had nice views. There, after donning masks, passing inspection at the door, and being warned to stay six feet away from others, we learned about island flora and fauna, local geology, and how the Great Salt Lake's predecessor, Lake Bonneville, had once submerged most of western Utah as well as parts of Idaho and Nevada.

We hated to leave the park and resolved to someday come back and tour some of that single-track on the South Island. On our way back to



The bike path replaces narrow, shoulder less roads with scenic and bucolic views. Photo by Howard Shafer



Promontory Point can be seen across the water to the north. Photo by Howard Shafer



The adventurers near the Antelope Island Marina. Jacquette likes Howard's COVID-19 hair. Photo by Howard Shafer

Hooper, while fighting winds on the causeway, we stopped to rest and watch seagulls, ducks, cormorants, and shorebirds. After the causeway, we discovered the paved Syracuse Bike Trail overlooking a very bucolic countryside that allowed us to bypass some of those long, straight, secondary highways we had travelled in the morning. Then, after we had negotiated a few dead-end roads, we arrived back at my niece's home. We had bicycled only 42 miles, but we had completed a successful Bike Your Park Day adventure. After we

donned our masks one last time, my niece presented us with two, decorative, Utah pumpkin trophies from her garden, while we gave her a pint of olives from our California olive tree, and her son showed us the bruise the shotgun had made on his shoulder.

Whether you are from California or Utah, if you have never been to Antelope Island, we recommend you go. You will not be disappointed. However, it will be preferable if you can manage your visit when the coronavirus no longer stalks the land.



Jacquette Ward riding one of the washboard roads on Antelope Island. Photo by Howard Shafer

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ROAD RIDING

Autumn Century: A Utah Jewel - 101 Miles of Scenic Byway Adventure

4 Riders on UT HWY 65 just west of the summit (between East Canyon Reservoir and Little Dell Reservoir). This is part of the Autumn Century route. Photo by David Collins

By David Collins

Dear Utah,

With all due respect to Smalls, you're killing me, with your mountains and forests, national parks and public lands, famous resorts and secret hideaways, histories and pre-histories, trails and dirt roads and miles of paved roads begging for attention and inviting every road cyclist to roll right down main streets and into the backroads and byways of the beehive state. They say you sport the greatest snow on earth, but before the snows take over the show each year, autumn colors dapple your Wasatch. Thanks for all your cycling venues and especially for this memorable self-supported road cycling century ride bursting with colors of the season every fall.

Snowbasin to Salt Lake City

Riding the Wasatch Back: Excursions and explorations are part of the fun of unsupported bicycle touring at your own pace. Mileage estimates are approximate and may vary depending on your tracking system and whims of the ride. Be sure to tell someone your plans and allow them to track your location using a smartphone or other device.

Solo or unsupported distance cycling often presents potentially dangerous situations related to terrain, weather, equipment, traffic, navigation and mental awareness. Even experienced cyclists must plan

carefully and use wise judgment to successfully mitigate inherent risks of the sport or terminate a ride before it turns injurious or deadly. If you are new to the sport or have never ridden a bicycle more than 100 miles in a single day, learn the ropes with a seasoned buddy or local cycling club before strapping on this ride.

Make sure to check maps, plan your route and check local road conditions before you go. As with any ride, be aware of your surroundings and of roadway traffic.

Time to fill water bottles, stuff gear bags, click in and start pedaling a colorful Autumn Century.

Route

Snowbasin to Huntsville via Trapper's Loop Rd. (state highway 167), circling Pineview reservoir and returning to Trapper's Loop southbound to Mountain Green, left on West Old Highway Rd. to Morgan, south on State Street (which turns into E. 100 W.), right on South Morgan Valley Drive to Stoddard, right on W. Stoddard Ln, right again on West Old Highway Rd. (you just made a loop around part of Morgan Valley), back to Morgan, south on State Street again, but this time, take the road all the way to East Canyon dam, turn left at the dam and circle the reservoir via state highway 65 all the way over the mountain pass and to just past Little Dell Reservoir, right on N. Emigration Canyon Road to Hogle Zoo and This is The Place

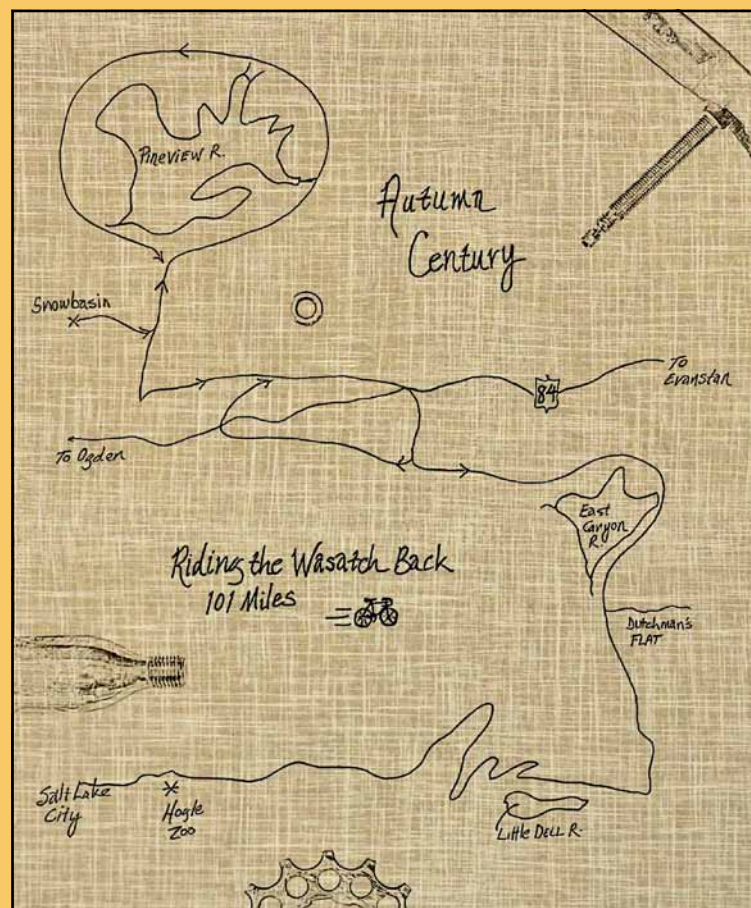
Heritage Park in Salt Lake City. Sound complicated? Checkout the nearby map sketch and you'll see it's not too bad once you get the gist of the route.

Terrain:

All paved. Three mountain passes; canyons; valleys; agricultural zones and winding/bending undulated miles throughout. Although there are cycling (Share the Road) signs posted along the way, many segments have narrow (or no) paved shoulders and sharp curves.

What to See:

Snowbasin Resort, site of the 2002 Winter Olympics downhill event; historic Ogden Valley with three mountain villages: Huntsville, Eden and Liberty; three mountain reservoirs: Pineview, East Canyon and Little Dell; rolling hills over Trapper's Loop; East Canyon Resort; Bauchmann Station, also known as East Canyon Station, Carson House and Dutchman's Flat old west Pony Express site (look for the historical marker a few hundred yards down the first left-turn dirt road past East Canyon Resort); TJ Cattle Company Cooperative Wildlife Management Unit slightly beyond East Canyon Reservoir; encounters with two historical old west trails: Pony Express and Mormon Pioneer; numerous canyons and diversions throughout; This is the Place Heritage Park at the end of the ride (across the street from the Zoo) including several historical displays highlighting exploration and settlement including pioneers, trappers, explorers, and the Pony Express.



Snowbasin Century Map by David Collins

Selfies and Photo Ops:

Moose statue in Snowbasin Resort's welcome plaza; views of Ogden Valley from Trapper's Loop; Ogden Valley barn murals; Compass Rose Lodge in Huntsville, a few blocks detour (complete with astro-observation dome) and nearby Shooting Star Saloon, which claims to be Utah's oldest bar; historic Eden General Store, home of Carlos and Harley's Cantina; lakeside pull-outs around Pineview Reservoir; Trapper's Loop summit; historic pioneer cabin museum in Morgan; ruins of historic Porterville church meetinghouse; lakeside views of East Canyon Reservoir; Mormon Trail and Pony Express signage; Dutchman's Flat landmark sign, see above; distant view of Salt Lake Valley as the road crests over the last alpine summit; lakeside views of Little Dell Reservoir, chicanes up and down climbs throughout; This is the Place Heritage Park statues; Hogle Zoo sign.

Wildlife:

Elk, deer, mountain lions, bobcats, black bears, turkeys, golden eagles, osprey and other raptures, lizards, snakes, foxes, coyotes, porcupines, mink and possums.

Best Post-Ride Eats:

Ruth's Diner in the mouth of immigration canyon just before ride's end. Ninety one years ago, Ruth, a cabaret singer, opened her diner. Good food has been served in her name ever since. If you ride this route in reverse, eat your post-ride dinner at Snowbasin instead (be sure to check their schedule since it varies) but eat your first meal at Ruth's – they make a mean breakfast, highlighted by their Mile High Biscuits

– mercy. Anyway, Ruth's evening beverage menu pairs well with her dinners, so choose a few drinks and tuck into the Grilled Idaho Red Trout – it's cajun delightful and topped with a skewer of shrimp and a memorable lemon cream sauce. Or get their 12 oz ribeye, a classic plate of recovery protein done just the way you order it. Polish things off with some Chocolate Malt Pudding, made from scratch and topped proper with fresh whipped cream.

Still Have Legs, lungs and Sunlight?

Take a brisk dip in Causey Reservoir's chilly waters, about a 20 mile round trip detour. Motorized boats are not permitted, so it's pretty laid back. Except for a few paddleboarders kayakers or folks dropping a fishing line, there's usually not much going on. You can find the short access road by turning east on E 1900 N just as you round the north end of Pineview Reservoir and pedaling east about 10 miles. Keep your eye out for wild turkeys, there are a rafter or two of them as you approach the canyon.

Notes:

1. Some of the route between East Canyon and Little Dell Reservoir is closed during the winter. 2. Be weather aware, riding conditions can swiftly change.

3. Bring your best legs, total ascent is 5459 feet (if you ride the route in reverse, the total ascent is 6758 feet).

David Collins is a cycling enthusiast and amateur randonneur. Follow him on Instagram @rockypumpkin.

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ADVOCACY

Trails are Common Ground Launches to Improve Trail Etiquette and Inclusivity

By David Wiens and Andre Shoumatoff

Mountain bikers have joined forces with equestrians, hikers, trail runners, and motorized users to create an exciting new campaign and program for increasing quality of experience for all. The program and campaign is called Trails are Common Ground. It's now slated to likely become the largest single widespread trail etiquette campaign, included with a new, standardized national trails management system, brought to us by a new unified partnership of these various groups.

As we all know, trail use was dramatically increasing prior to Covid, then the pandemic hit, and all of a sudden we had massive numbers of new and formerly-active people getting back onto the trails. This sudden and unprecedented interest accentuated the challenges of trail management and lack of support for trail managers from a national level, as well as the considerable need for a new, standardized, well-marketed trail etiquette program oriented to all users. Likewise, the landscape of user types has also changed. Handicapped users are now recreating on dirt trails with electric motors, plus the need for addressing the correct implementation new technologies like the rise of popularity of pedal-assist mountain bikes and types of motorized technologies has only further-exacerbated the issue.

Recognizing this, IMBA, the International Mountain Bike Association, stepped up to create (and is now administering) this program with, and on behalf of the leaders from a variety of different user types and several organizations championing diversity and inclusion. The groups have been meeting since spring and the campaign launched in August, and is currently slated to run in perpetuity. IMBA donated several hundred thousand dollars to get the program off the ground, and dozens of other organizations and businesses have verbally committed to additional support and funding to help make the program truly effective.

Leading the messaging for Trail are Common Ground is an effort to make trails and trail systems welcoming and safe for all people.



St. George, Utah resident, Keith Bitgue, descending the top section of Blow Hard Trail with Cedar Breaks National Monument in the background. Photo by John Shafer, photo-john.net

Everyone should be able to benefit from fitness and trail-based recreation and removing some of the barriers to participation is long overdue. But most notably, people of color have been underrepresented on trails and the Trails are Common Ground effort, with the help of several groups focused on DE&I, aim to help develop racial inclusivity in a landscape that has traditionally been overwhelmingly white.

Hitting closer to home for existing users, encouraging a new general of positive interactions among trail users will also only improve everyone's experience on the trails. TACG has created a new, well-funded campaign run by several professional marketing agencies, to push a new, widespread ethos of kindness when using trails. If use of trails can be lead with kindness and respect for others, regardless of who they are and how they choose to enjoy trails, user conflict will be avoided and quality experiences for everyone should increase. Likewise, committing to simply being aware of the surroundings and others while using trails will make a big difference, not unlike when we get behind the wheel of our cars.

An awareness mindset, even though we may be out to unwind, can help us all get along better. Trails are Common Ground will ask trail users to obtain knowledge specific to their chosen method of enjoying trails and will create this material to allow a solid understanding about what to expect from, and how to interact with users of trail.

Likewise, mountain bikers new and experienced, can also benefit

from having a strong base of knowledge, particularly because we're not only consistently the fastest users but we're often relatively quiet. One of the primary concerns often brought up about mountain bikers is our sudden appearance at speed, both from behind and head on. TACG will develop and implement a new system of etiquette for mountain bikers so we can have less impact as most-dangerous users of non-motorized trails.

The same process of acquiring knowledge --- both specific to them and what to expect from other types of trails users -- applies to hikers, trail runners, equestrians and motorized singletrack users. Trail users of all kinds operating from a solid base of knowledge and increasing experience, combined with a wider-spread approach kindness, awareness, and inclusivity will enhance everyone's experience on trails and TACG will create this.

Finally, phase II of Trail are Common Ground, launching early next year, will be a new, standardized system for developing and managing trails for trail managers. This is both to increase efficiency and to develop new, universal standard for both managers and users so we're

all on the same page and less on our own. These new systems, designed to help addressing areas conflict and to help with solutions such as wider use of directional trails, will enhance user experience, reduce the opportunities for conflict and increase the effective carrying capacity of trails and trail systems. There are growing numbers of these innovative systems currently on the landscape and the Trails are Common Ground movement, along with land managers, trail professionals, advocacy organizations and other stakeholders continue to innovate the planning, design and construction of trail systems that will be distributed through TACG.

For more information go to www.trailsarecommonground.org, and feel free to follow the Instagram and Facebook accounts for updates as the program grows to full fruition. You're also welcome to contact us through a manner of channels if TACG is something you or your organization would like to become a supporter or participant in. TACG is already working with the Utah Office of Outdoor Recreation and plans to be an active participant in its Utah Trails Forum program.

Inclusivity on the Trails

We can all do our part in making the trails places of Respect, Inclusivity, Safety, and Enjoyment for everyone. Whatever our chosen recreation activity on any given day, let's keep these things in mind:

- For the best trail experience possible, we need to explore and embrace guidelines for local trails. What to ride and where and do-so legally and with respect.

- All trail users should yield to equestrians. For other right-of-way protocol, when in doubt, yield (with a smile). Mountain bike specifics are below.

- Let's be sure to be accepting, inclusive, and welcoming of all types of people however they choose

to recreate, including their backgrounds, identity, ability, and speed.

- Let's also be sure to be respectful of the history and customs of the original stewards of our land and consider supporting efforts to help protect our landscape.

Mountain Bike Trail Etiquette 101 / Recap

- Yield to foot travelers, equestrians, and others when appropriate. When riding downhill, we yield to uphill cyclists and other traffic. We should also be cognizant of what users with disabilities may need.

- Consider that multi-direction, multi-user trails should be treated with extra consideration of risk of impact, so we should ride slower and with additional caution.

- Let's be sure to ride in control at all times so not to put the safety of others in jeopardy. This means we need to slow down for blind corners, particularly on multi directional trails.

- We need to be aware of the risks and consequences associated with riding closed trails, or trails that aren't open for our type of riding. For example, mountain bikers should not ride trails for hikers and those on eBikes should only ride on trails approved for eBikes. Ignoring these rules can jeopardize our access now and in the future.

- When attempting to pass, it's important to announce our presence with a bell or our voice, particularly when encountering users from behind. It is important to be patient and pass with kindness and respect.

David Wiens is the Executive Director of IMBA. Andre Shoumatoff is a consultant in Utah helping with the program.

BLM Taking Comments on Moab's Klondike Bluffs MTB Area

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) wants to take better care of the Klondike Bluffs Mountain Bike Focus Area and adjacent land in Grand County, UT. It is taking public comment on proposed rules to ban camping outside designated campgrounds, prohibit cutting and taking wood, and require people to use restrooms or port-o-potties. Yes, people have been leaving waste on the ground, which is degrading it.

The BLM noticed an increased use of the area, so it wants more controls. Comments are due Oct. 8. <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2021-08-18/html/2021-17704.htm>

-Charles Pekow



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2019 EVENT CALENDARS
INSIDE!

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Park City Point 2 Point - Continued from page 9

fresh off a podium finish at the 6-day Breck Epic and his Alt Tour De France effort where he rode the entire Tour De France course solo.

Morton suffered an early flat before exciting the Round Valley section of the course. This left Glasgow and Visnick out front, a strategy that Visnick had envisioned. "Going out hard early is typically my move," the 24-year-old Visnick said. "Unless I'm marking another rider and don't know the course well, I prefer to be in front setting my own pace on the climbs and descents."

Despite throwing down early speed, Visnick was unable to shed

Glasgow who worked his way into the lead by the top of Deer Valley resort. The 21-year-old Glasgow stayed clear on the following descents and through the tortuous John's trail where a mother and baby moose forced some brief detours.

At 50+ miles in both riders descended into the Park City Mountain feed zone just seconds apart.

Morton was slowly working his way through the field jumping into 5th place by the Steps trail climb and taking over 4th before making his way into the feed zone.

In front the racing was all out with less than a minute between the two leaders and Tanner Visnick now

being out front, barely.

Despite being young, Visnick is no stranger to distance events having already won the Gunnison Growler, Emerald Epic, and Big Sky Biggie in 2021. After a quick stop at the final feed zone, Visnick used his endurance experience to hold onto a 20 second gap over his challenger needing to essentially sprint the final 5 miles of downhill to cross the line with just 39 seconds in hand.

After almost six and a half hours of racing Truman Glasgow finished less than a minute behind the leader.

Lachlan Morton worked his way up to third place by the finish, passing another youngster, Cameron Larson (Summit Devo Team), in the final miles of the race.

Larson took fourth in what was his longest-ever mountain bike race effort.

Fifth went to Danny Van Wagoner with a time of 6:45:29.

Race Notes

In a tradition unique to the Park City Point 2 Point, a special award is given to the final racer to finish each year's event; in special recognition of their perseverance making it to the finish line.

This year's red lantern award went to Kristine Thompson, who finished, in the dark, with a time of 13:58:44. The longest-ever finishing

time for the P2P.

For the first time three riders on the men's podium were former NICA (National Interscholastic Cycling Association) racers. Truman Glasgow and Cameron Larson both raced in the Utah league, while race winner Tanner Visnick raced in

Steamboat Springs, Colorado.

Instead of tapering the weekend before the Park City Point 2 Point, race winner Tanner Visnick, was getting married in Bozeman, Montana. Congratulations Tanner!

Full Results: thecppp.com



Organizer Jay Burke (left) celebrates at the finish with a participant. 2021 Park City Point 2 Point. Photo by Jay Dash, jaydashphotography.com

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GRAVEL

The Cimarron Challenge - A Personal Story of the New Mexico Gravel Race



At the start of the Cimarron Challenge 2021 Gravel Race. Photo by Don Scheese

By Don Scheese

"And...in Colfax County, they tell the apocryphal story of a cowboy cook who, checking his bean pot and finding the beans still hard, exclaimed, 'Simmer on!'"

Robert Julyan, *The Place Names of New Mexico*

Almanzo 100. Trans Iowa. Unbound Gravel. Land Run (now The Mid-South). Rebecca's Private Idaho. Crusher in the Tushar. Grinduro. Gravel Worlds. These are some of the earliest, and most well-known, gravel races in the USA. As gravel racing has become increasingly popular the past decade or so, more and more gravel grinding events are springing up all over the country, and indeed the world.

The Cimarron Challenge, held in late August in northeastern New Mexico, has taken place every year (except for last year during the pandemic) since 2018. It offers two distances, 68 and 78 miles, requiring between 3800-5000' of elevation gain, and traverses a variety of terrain on Forest Service gravel roads, more primitive jeep roads, and some singletrack. Except for the first couple miles out of Cimarron, the route follows unpaved roads.

The town itself has some fascinating Western history. Founded in 1841, it soon became a principal stop on the Taos branch of the Santa Fe Trail. It was a natural gathering place for merchants, emigrants, ranchers, miners, traders, and eventually, outlaws, and from 1872 to 1882, when it served as the seat of Colfax County, it became known far and wide as the cowboy capital of northern New Mexico. Today you

can walk on a path through the town paralleling Highway 64 and see photos and read about some of the most legendary figures of the nineteenth century West, among them Kit Carson, whose ranch, Rayado, is located nearby.

Over the past 15 years I've taken part in many different gravel races in several states, and having done 3 Cimarron Challenges (all on the 68-mile route) I can say without hesitation that this gravel ride has become my favorite. It's beautiful, wild, and well-supported & well-organized. The Cimarron Challenge should be more widely known.

Some 40+ riders line up at 7 am in downtown on August 21, ready to take on the challenge. After a breakfast burrito, coffee and orange juice provided by the most-gracious hosts Colin and Erin of Blue Dragonfly Brewery & Bed & Breakfast, everyone is anxious to start. (There is also a pre-ride pasta dinner the night before, as well as a post-ride feast included as part of one's entry fee.) Weather conditions are ideal: 60 degrees with a cool northerly breeze. Since temperatures can easily rise into the 90s at this time of year, I'm hoping for a cooler day with the forecast calling for highs in the 80s.

This is a timed event, with every rider having a chip device attached to their bike seatpost. After the official start, we ride at a leisurely pace out of town with a local police escort, then make a left turn on Highway 64 north for a mile or two until we turn left again onto what becomes unpaved road for the next 60 miles. The route crosses private land grant property, areas of the Carson National Forest, as well as the turf of the Philmont Scout Ranch, which is headquartered near-



Heading up Cerrososo Canyon in the Cimarron Challenge 2021 Gravel Race. Photo by Don Scheese

by. (Each summer the Scout Ranch hosts some 20,000 Boy Scouts who camp & hike on the expansive property.)

The route gradually ascends through pinyon-juniper forest, from 6400' in Cimarron to a high point of 8600' (over 9000' at Windy Gap if doing the longer route). The first 30 miles or so climb up and out of Cerrososo Canyon, after the Spanish word 'cerro,' which means hills, and indeed there are plenty of them as we wend our way on relatively good hard-packed gravel through rimrock-lined defiles. Aside from a few of the race's volunteers driving to their respective posts at several different aid stations, there is virtually no vehicle traffic—one of the many pleasures of gravel grinding, especially in sparsely populated northeastern New Mexico. Every now and then there is an 8-10% short punchy climb, and as one of the slower riders I quickly lose sight of the real

racers participating in the event. No matter: I love gravel riding for the solitude and wildness and am better able to appreciate the beauty and quiet of my surroundings with no other riders around to distract me.

A local resident told me that Cimarron has received 10 inches of rain since April, and the meadows are greener and lusher than I can ever remember. And the sunflowers! There must be millions of them, head-high, lining and illuminating the roadsides with their bright yellow heads. Various sparrows, juncos, and bluebirds spray from the brush, and occasionally I hear the sharp keeeerrr of a red-tailed hawk patrolling high above in search of prey. Windmills dot the meadows too, and each cattle tank is brimming over with water, proof of a robust monsoon season this summer in northern New Mexico.

At the first rest stop, about Mile 17, I chat with the volunteer staffing

the station. He drives truck for the Scout Ranch, ferrying scouts and supplies to various camps and outposts on the sprawling 137,000-acre property. This year has been a banner year for the Philmont, hosting over 26,000 scouts after 2 lean or non-existent years in a row because of last year's pandemic restrictions and the massive Ute Park Fire the year before. After munching an energy bar, banana, orange slices and fig newtons, I thank him and wish him well, remounting my bike just as the last riders (so I'm told) pull up behind me. I will not see them again until the last aid station some 15 miles from the finish.

Around mile 30 the road descends into Lookout Canyon, where ponderosa pine predominate, and the Culebra Range makes an impressive appearance. Spanning the Colorado-New Mexico border, the Culebra ('snake' in Spanish) towers from 11,000' to over 14,000' in elevation,

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Martha pushing her bike up The Wall. Cimarron Challenge 2021 Gravel Race. Photo by Don Scheese

and the wide-open parks and soaring peaks make for a postcard-like view. Now comes the first of a number of steep twisty descents, down down down to Aid Station #2, at the Forest Service campground of McCrystal. A light burn has darkened the pine forest on the south side of the road, where new grasses are sprouting, and the fire-blackened tree trunks seem no worse for the burn. The volunteers at this aid station tell me the fire was “a good one,” clearing out the understory but not intensifying into a stand-replacing crown fire. Here I top off my Camelbak, eat some more food, chat with the volunteers and some fellow bikers, before moving on.

One of the stretches of route I have vivid memories of is the steep climb after the second aid station for a couple of miles up the Forest Service road to the junction for the turn on the shorter route. While the longer 78-mile route continues on up the decent gravel of the Forest Service road to top out at Windy Gap, the shorter 68-mile route turns left onto a more primitive jeep track. I’m riding a gravel bike with 40 mm tires, while a few other riders are

on mountain bikes with half or full suspension using 2-inch plus tires, and here is where they clearly have an advantage. As the road gradually descends through thickets of pine and gambel oak, I have to be extra-vigilant watching for rocks, ruts, and sand traps, while the mountain bikers bomb past me easily riding over the obstacles.

I call this long stretch of the route “Forever Mesa.” It’s beautifully diverse as we wend our way through younger forest, past lush meadows, occasional lakes, and cow ponds, sprawling old burns, and many Scout cabins that serve as base camps for forays into the wilderness. Eventually the primitive 2-track devolves into single-track and turns into a fun descent through an old burn along an arroyo to Aid Station #3 at Dan Beard Cabins. It’s a strategically placed spot to rest and refuel before The Wall—a quarter-mile hike-a-bike up a 25-30% pitch featuring baby-head size rocks and deep ruts that, as far as I’m aware, no rider has ever been able to ride all the way up. Here I join with Martha, a fit racer from

Colorado whom I remember from 2 years ago After doing the Cimarron Challenge for the first time, she told me “Never again!” Yet here she is once more, this time enjoying the ride and laughing when I remind her of what she said way back in 2019. Once we top out on Forever Mesa, she quickly disappears as I pause to take some photos. As the Navajo say, Go in Beauty.

Now comes the most fearsome, and dangerous, stretch of the entire route. The race organizer at the riders’ meeting repeatedly warned cyclists not to bomb down this part of the ride, because of the steep, rocky, rutted sections. And indeed, the monsoon rains have rendered these sections even worse, with deeper ruts exposing more rocks than ever. I gingerly dismount and walk my bike down a few of the worst sections and have a minor slow-speed crash on another section I try to ride. Slowly ever so slowly I descend into Ponil Canyon, with sublime views over countless corrugated canyons and ridges. I breathe a sigh of relief as I bottom out along the creek and end this white-knuckle stretch of the route. I then somehow manage to power my bike through a calf-deep creek crossing, and the cold water soothes my aching feet.

At Aid Station #4 I chat again with the volunteers and refuel for the final 15 miles or so of mostly downhill two-track through Ponil Canyon. Most of the riders have passed through, a few remain behind me, and a few have dropped out—“DNF” in racing parlance. The staffers warn me about 3 more creek crossings, but none as deep as the one just above. “Easy ride from here,” one of them says, but the truth is that it is never easy on the Cimarron Challenge. There are lots more sand traps on this stretch, more rocky stretches, not to mention a brisk headwind as the wind now shifts to the south. But it’s a beau-



Descending into Ponil Canyon. Cimarron Challenge 2021 Gravel Race. Photo by Don Scheese

tiful descent nonetheless down a fire-scarred canyon with picturesque rimrock walls along a sunflower-lined road (“more sunflowers there than in all of Kansas,” one volunteer from that state tells me). Someday I’ll come back and ride at a more leisurely pace to check out the T-rex track and Anasazi petroglyphs close to the road. Today I am intent on making a respectable time and finishing the race.

After three more creek crossings (two of which I have to walk through), my drivetrain is making horrible noises and I worry about snapping a chain, but somehow it lasts to the finish line. Where the two-track joins with another tributary of Ponil Creek at Six-Mile Gate, the road becomes a county artery, flattens out some, and becomes smoother. I’m still feeling good as I pass the Chase Ranch property (allegedly home to the concept of

the Marlboro Man)—I’ve smartly hydrated & eaten well the entire route—and while there is a bucking headwind at least the breeze is cool and refreshing, with temperatures never topping the low 80s.

Then comes the penultimate turn on Highway 64, the last few miles of pavement, then the turn back to the start point at the Brewery. What better place to finish a grueling gravel grinder and celebrate with a cold local brew?

Ever the English professor, I think of Whitman, who wrote: “I am the man. / I suffered. / I was there.”

Don Scheese is an avid cyclist and retired professor of American Studies who once taught, among other things, courses on Lance Armstrong and Sport in American Culture.

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Manti-La Sal National Forest Taking Comments on Plan

The Forest Service plans to update the Land Management Plan for the Manti-La Sal National Forest in Utah. It is taking public comment till October 25 on the environmental impact statement it is working on. The service plans to offer a draft plan next summer with a final statement the summer of 2023. The plan is intended to guide management of the forest for the next 10-15 years.

Manti-La Sal is a popular mountain biking destination for both tourists and locals, helping the local economy, the draft plan issued last year notes. The current management plan dates from 1986 and mountain bike use has increased dramatically since then.

Management indicated it is interested in ways to manage the Fish Creek National Recreation Trail for mountain biking and other mobility activities. The plan will deal with balancing conflicts among various trail users (mountain bikers, hikers, snow mobilers, etc.). For details and to get involved, see <https://www.fs.usda.gov/main/mantilasal/landmanagement/planning>.

-Charles Pekow

Black Rock Desert Places Limits on Use, Including MTB's

The BLM is temporarily restricting activities in Black Rock Desert — High Rock Canyon Emigrant Trails National Conservation Area (Black Rock Desert Playa) in Humboldt, Pershing and Washoe counties, NV. The restrictions last through October. The BLM anticipated high use of the area and determined it needed to restrict access to protect the environment and human health. Since the Burning Man festival has been canceled for the second consecutive year, would-be attendees use the playa for other events.

You can ride a bike but only in designated roads and trails in vegetated areas, but you’re not allowed to engage in other activities such as lighting fires, using pyrotechnics, dumping water or human waste, etc. Details at <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2021-08-18/html/2021-17736.htm>

-Charles Pekow

A photograph of two mountain bikers standing on a rocky ridge at sunset. The sky is filled with vibrant orange, red, and purple clouds. The bikers are silhouetted against the bright light of the setting sun. The foreground is a dark, textured rock face.

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