

Bicyclists battle rising gas prices

By CLARE KITTREDGE

Union Leader Correspondent

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PORTSMOUTH –

With gas prices going through the roof, folks could save bucks and be healthier by biking to work, according to Josh Pierce.

Pierce, president of Seacoast Area Bicycle Routes, was among about 50 people who showed up at Popovers On The Square yesterday for free breakfast to mark New Hampshire's Bike/Walk to Work Day.

"Riding here this morning, I saw a lot more people on bikes," Pierce said, as he handed out information outside the popular Market Square bakery and cafe. "With the cost of gas going up, more people are changing the way they think about jumping into their cars to get around."

Pierce said yesterday's event, declared by Gov. John Lynch New Hampshire's sixth annual Bike/Walk to Work Day, coincided with National Bike to Work Day.

"Fifty percent of Americans live within five miles of where they work," said Pierce, who commutes as often as he can to work at Papa Wheelies Bicycle Shop in Portsmouth. "We're not advocating that people get out of their cars and ride all the time, but if you do, you'll save a lot of money."

Susanne Delaney of Portsmouth said she showed up with her trusty cycle "because we need fewer cars on the roads, and we have beautiful roads here on the Seacoast. With high gas prices, it's good for more people to ride their bikes," said Delaney, race director of the Portsmouth Criterium, an annual athletic event and cycling festival.

Also on hand was Portsmouth City Councilor Ned Raynolds, who said he bikes as often as possible because "you feel better during the day -- it gets the endorphins going."

Diane Stradling of Portsmouth works at home so there's nowhere to commute to, but she bikes as often as she can. "So I came to join everybody this morning," Stradling said.

With new cyclists' breakfasts this year in Rochester, Milton and Lee, yesterday's activities on the Seacoast alone featured nine free commuter breakfasts.

Among the Market Square crowd chowing down on donated rolls and coffee was Zip Zamarchi of Eliot, Maine, with his vintage 1905-1910 Dursley-Pedersen bike -- one of the first three-speed bikes.

"I have 70 bikes at home," said Zamarchi, a retired mechanical engineer. "I just ride for the pleasure. I've done three trips in Europe and a couple in the U.S., and I'm planning a demo during the bike race this fall (Sept. 21)."

Matthew Clark, manager of Popovers On The Square, said his cafe got involved because it wants to be "a good neighbor to the downtown community." "So we do as much as we can to be ecologically friendly," Clark said.

Aside from Portsmouth's Market Square, cyclists got free breakfast at the Pease International Tradeport in Portsmouth, at the common in Rochester, the Timberland Company in Stratham, the Exeter bandstand, Dover's

Henry Law Park, the University of New Hampshire's Whittemore Center in Durham, Veterans Park in Milton and Stevens Field in Lee.

New this year, Seacoast Area Bicycle Routes organized guided rides from a variety of popular commuting destinations, including Durham to Dover, Portsmouth (via Pease), and Exeter; Dover to Portsmouth and Durham; Portsmouth to Exeter and Stratham; and Newmarket to Durham and Dover.

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