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Downtown Norfolk Likes Bikes

Multiple initiatives make Downtown bike friendly

NORFOLK, Va. – (March 2015) – If you think more and more bike racks are popping up in Downtown Norfolk, you're right. Also popping are bike riders, bike committees, bike clubs and even a bike maintenance facility, the first in the region. Like other metropolitan areas around the country, Downtown Norfolk is working hard to be bike friendly.

It started in 2011 with funding for five functional art bike racks in Downtown funded by the Downtown Norfolk Council. Made by local folks, these racks include The Fork at Flat Iron Park, Frankenstein Rack at Tidewater Community College's Student Center, Cycle Siren at the City Hall entrance to MacArthur Center garage, You Lock U Locks at Two Commercial Place and MacArthur Square, and The Buoy at TowneBank Fountain Park. Since then 35 additional bike racks have been installed Downtown including one corral, which holds up to ten bikes.

Two more are planned at Harbor Park in 2015 through a program of the Norfolk Public Art Commission.

"We already have a very walkable Downtown," says Mary Miller, president and CEO of Downtown Norfolk Council. "We want to appeal to our businesses and members who also want to improve our bike-ability factor. We've learned that this is an important recruiting tool not only for businesses but also for employees. Bikes are growing in popularity, and they pair nicely with other modes of mass transportation like light rail, the ferry and even buses. Here, you can get from one side of Downtown to the other in a matter of minutes by bike."

The newest addition is a Bike Maintenance Fixit Station adjacent to the MacArthur Center light rail station on Atlantic Street. This handy station includes all of the tools one needs to perform basic bike repairs and maintenance:

- Change a flat tire
- Adjust brakes and derailleurs
- Air pump to fill tires
- Includes philips and flat-head screwdrivers, allen wrenches, headset wrench, pedal wrench, box wrench and tire lever

The maintenance facility, funded by Traffix, is the first in the region and the first of three planned for Downtown. Two additional maintenance stations are in the works at The Plot and along the waterfront both sponsored by local businesses and residents.

Sharrows have also been added to Granby Street from Main Street to Brambleton Avenue. Also known as shared-lane markings, these symbols reduce the chance of a bicyclist impacting the open door of a parked vehicle; alert cyclists of lanes that are too narrow for a motor vehicle and a bicycle to travel side by side; alert motorists that bicyclists are likely to occupy the same lane; encourage safe passing of bicyclists by motorists; and reduce the incidence of wrong-way bicycling.

In addition to the Bike-ability Subcommittee of Downtown Norfolk Council, there are riders groups and Bike Norfolk, an advocacy organization. The horizon is favorable for more bike programs including bike sharing, mobile bike racks at events like First Fridays and even bikes for the Downtown Norfolk Council staff.

"We've got two bikes coming that we'll share with our staff to help us get to meetings, events and even on the roads for a recreational ride," added Miller.

"DNC is actively working on initiatives to improve the bike-ability and walkability in Norfolk with a specific emphasis on transportation to Downtown and within Downtown," said Travis Davidson, member of the Bike-ability Subcommittee. "Two of our members are serving on the City of Norfolk Bike and Pedestrian Plan Technical Committee. The plan has made significant progress and is on schedule for completion this May."

The Downtown Norfolk Council (DNC) is a private, not-for-profit membership organization comprised of businesses and individuals working toward a dynamic, attractive and prosperous Downtown. DNC also manages the Downtown Norfolk Improvement District, a 48-block special services district with enhanced services that keep Downtown friendly, safe and spotless. Connect with Downtown Norfolk on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram or visit DowntownNorfolk.org.

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