

Eugene Business Commute Challenge hits the streets

Eugeneans who drive to work are encouraged to bike or take the bus

BY EVA SYLWESTER
SENIOR NEWS REPORTER

Employees at 70 Eugene businesses took a break from their cars this week and commuted to work via bike, carpool or bus as part of the Eugene Business Commute Challenge.

In its sixth year, the challenge offers participants a chance to win prizes such as gift certificates to local restaurants and tickets to local events if they report the highest number of driven miles saved.

Lane Transit District distributes free day passes to the city to give to participating business upon request. The passes are good for the week of the challenge only.

Businesses reported their results on Wednesday, and there will be a celebration Friday in which winning businesses, judged in different divisions based on their number of employees, will be awarded the various prizes.

"Most cities have transportation programs like this because there isn't enough money to build enough roads to meet demand," said Lee Shoemaker, bicycle and alternate modes coordinator for the City of Eugene. "This is a way to reduce demand on the existing road systems."

In 2004, 1,395 employees at 65 businesses participated in the challenge, said Cindy Clarke, transportation options coordinator for the city of Eugene.

The employees each tallied the number of miles they walked, biked, carpooled or rode the bus, and Clarke said the combined total was 15,494 miles — miles that participants would have otherwise driven.

The program reduces traffic congestion, improves air quality and the health of citizens, and also decreases transportation costs, Shoemaker said.

"A lot of people have fun, and there's competition trying to win awards," Shoemaker said. "It's pretty positive." The goal of the challenge is to get people to try an alternative mode of transportation for one week and realize that it's easy to bike or ride the bus on a regular basis, Clarke said.

"We would love to have people do



Nicholas Stiffler, a molecular biology research technician, unlocks his bike for the trip home. He has been riding his bike to work for years, without influence from the Eugene Business Commute Challenge.

TIM BOBOSKY | PHOTO EDITOR

this year-round," Clarke said.

BRING Recycling Education Coordinator Jo Rodgers said she knew of only one or two employees who didn't participate in this year's challenge at the 17-employee company.

"It's a pretty environmentally conscious group of people," Rodgers said. "It's that whole thing of getting a little push."

The Eugene School District 4J administrative headquarters motivated employees to participate by dividing the 110 employees into two teams.

This has been done in the past, and Confidential Management Assistant Marian Stuart said the district won an award last year for saving the most miles for an agency its size.

Stuart said most district employees usually drive to work alone, although some regularly ride bicycles.

The free LTD day passes distributed as part of the challenge helped employees get used to riding the bus,

Stuart said, adding that one employee who lives in Cottage Grove rode the bus to Eugene for the first time.

The event usually takes place during the first week of October because the influx of students returning to the University and local high schools increases traffic congestion and because the weather is usually still pleasant, Shoemaker said.

The Eugene Business Commute Challenge is sponsored by the city of Eugene, LTD, Commuter Solutions at LTD, PeaceHealth and the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce. It won an award in 2002 from the Association for Commuter Transportation, an international organization that promotes transportation methods other than cars.

Contact the business, science and technology reporter at esylwester@dailymerald.com

IN BRIEF

Supreme Court clashes over assisted suicide

WASHINGTON — New Chief Justice John Roberts stepped forward Wednesday as an aggressive defender of federal authority to block doctor-assisted suicide, as the Supreme Court clashed over an Oregon law that allows doctors to help terminally ill patients end their lives.

The justices will decide if the federal government, not states, has the final say on the life-or-death issue.

It was a wrenching debate for a court touched personally by illness. Roberts replaced William H. Rehnquist, who died a month ago after battling cancer for nearly a year. Three justices have had cancer and a fourth has a spouse who counsels children with untreatable cancer.

The outcome is hard to predict, in part because of the uncertain status of retiring Justice Sandra Day O'Connor who seemed ready to support Oregon's law. Her replacement may be confirmed before the ruling is handed down, possibly in months.

Ted Koppel anchors last 'Nightline' on Nov. 22

NEW YORK — Ted Koppel will anchor his last edition of "Nightline" on Nov. 22, with the first post-Koppel edition of the ABC newscast airing Nov. 28, the network said Thursday.

Koppel, 65, has anchored the show since its official launch in March 1980. The show grew out of a series of special reports about the Iranian hostage crisis that began the previous November.

Koppel and his "Nightline" executive producer, Tom Bettag, are expected to keep working together on news programs after leaving ABC News.

Less than two months before its debut, how the late-night news show will evolve following Koppel's departure remains a mystery. ABC has appointed James Goldston, who produced a British show similar to "Nightline," as the broadcast's new executive producer and has also experimented with a multi-topic format on nights Koppel was off.

—The Associated Press



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Google: Company uses sponsored links

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Computer algorithms scan Gmail messages for key words and run sponsored links next to e-mails that correspond with the e-mail's content. For example, an e-mail from a friend about getting together to make pancakes might pop up with sponsored links about pancake recipes.

These same algorithms help Gmail users search through old e-mail messages.

But privacy is maintained. "No human individuals or third parties ever

look at private e-mails," Jaffe said.

Joe St. Sauver, director of user services and network applications at the University, said that while he uses Gmail only casually, he doesn't think the sponsored ads generated for e-mail messages make Gmail less secure than any other e-mail service.

People concerned about the security of their e-mail should consider using an encryption client, such as those available at www.GnuPG.org, St. Sauver said. PGP encryption clients can be installed on all computers and used with all e-mail serv-

ice providers.

Other Google features include Calculator, which allows one to type a mathematical equation into the main search page (www.google.com) and get a numerical result; Google Scholar (scholar.google.com), which searches scholarly journals; and Picasa (picasa.google.com), a computer program that can be downloaded and used to organize photos.

Contact the business, science and technology reporter at esylwester@dailymerald.com

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