

"For all the rhetoric, everything related to cyclists is an afterthought," said Paul Nicholson, owner of Paul's bike shops and a former city councilor.

The city used the summit meeting to kick off a new bike/pedestrian plan for the city. The plan focuses on vision, promotion and education more than increased funding, said Rob Inerfeld, the lead city planner on the project. "It's not capital projects per se."

But Susan Stumpf of the GEARS cycling group said the city will need to put in more money to back up the ambitious vision people are talking about. "I think it's got to" have more funding, she said.

And now might be the perfect time for the city to tap into big federal bike spending. Local Congressman Peter DeFazio, a former bike mechanic and frequent bike advocate, is now chairman of the House Transportation Committee, which controls billions in federal spending. At the summit, DeFazio said he'd like to see Eugene become the top mid-sized city in the nation for cycling.

But Eugene continues to lavishly fund car infrastructure while bike needs remain unmet. The \$150 million new I-5 Beltline interchange is now under construction to serve urban sprawl in the Gateway area. Tens of millions of dollars in improvements to the Beltline freeway to serve Triad and other urban sprawl are planned. The Eugene City Council recently backed a proposal to build a \$16 million parking garage for a developer downtown at a total cost of about \$80,000 per parking space.

At the same time, the city has for years refused to prioritize funding to address dangerous conditions for cyclists and pedestrians. At the summit, participants placed scores of dots on city maps to identify needed fixes. Several participants complained of conditions on Willamette Street from 24th to 29th, for example. The area of fast moving traffic lacks bike lanes and has narrow sidewalks with telephone poles in the middle of them.

"It's scary," said Jan VanderTuin of the Center for Appropriate Transportation (CAT).

The lack of funding to fix dangerous roads for cycling has taken its toll. In 2005 there were 89 reported bike accidents in Eugene, an increase of 56 percent from 2001. In that five year period, a total of 322 cyclists were injured and five were killed. On May 16, almost 200 bicyclists participated in a local "Ride of Silence" to remember cyclists killed or seriously injured by cars, and to call for drivers to share the road.

More bike lanes and paths increase safety and increase cycling. Portland credits its big increase in bike commuting to a near tripling of its bike lanes and paths in the past decade.

Eugene has extended recreational paths along the river and in the West Eugene wet-

'For all the rhetoric, everything related to cyclists is an afterthought.'

— Paul Nicholson, owner of Paul's bike shops

lands in recent years. More projects in the works include bike/pedestrian bridges over the I-5 and Delta freeways, extending the riverfront bike path to Santa Clara and bike lanes on 18th Avenue. But a decade ago, the city backed off completing plans for additional key bike lanes in the central city after objections about lost parking, and the subject hasn't come up since.

"That was pretty discouraging," said CAT's VanderTuin of the defeat of the city's bike lane master plan. "It was sort of shocking."

BIKE THEFT CAPITAL

Eugene may no longer be the leader in bicycling, but it's tops in bike theft. Last year Eugene was the only smaller city named to Kryptonite Lock's 10 worst cities for bike theft. Bike theft and the fear of it is a major deterrent for bicycling, cities have found.

Last year 717 bikes were reported stolen in Eugene. There's little evidence local police have prioritized the problem. Only 68 of the stolen bikes were reported recovered.

'I'd like us to not be the capital of bicycle theft.' — cyclist Charles Biggs

Summit participants criticized police for prioritizing ticketing bike protesters, sometimes by sending as many cops as bicyclists, rather than focusing on bike theft. "While the Eugene Police Department is concerned with Critical Mass rides, it's not so concerned when your bike gets stolen," wrote one participant anonymously.

"I'd like us to not be the capital of bicycle theft," said cyclist Charles Biggs during a visioning session.

Better bike parking could help reduce theft and promote bicycling. But the city's bike rack requirements have many loopholes. Only new buildings or major changes in use have to have racks. Even when racks are required, city officials sometimes waive the requirements. That's what happened with the new Market of Choice at 29th and Willamette. The bike rack in front of the store sits in a deep puddle because the city waived covered parking requirements.

"That's a bunch of b.s.," said EBC member Paul Moore of loopholes in the code.

Portland has taken a more proactive approach to bike parking. The city has a large downtown bike parking and shower-

ing facility and will pay for new bike racks for many businesses that request them.

Besides addressing theft, many bike advocates say that kids hold the key to the future. Cities have focused programs on increasing the numbers of children biking to school. Eugene has a similar program but faces an uphill battle.

Eugene's system of school choice has undermined the tradition of nearby neighborhood schools and left many school kids with long commutes. Many of the city schools now suffer dangerous morning traffic jams of rushing parents driving their kids to the schoolhouse.

Another key to increasing biking is good land-use planning. With longer trips more likely to be made by car, urban density is a key to bicycle commuting. But Eugene is becoming less dense, not more dense. Since 1950, Eugene's population density (people per acre) has declined 29 percent with urban sprawl.

Under TransPlan Eugene is supposedly pursuing a strategy of "nodal development" to make areas more dense and bikeable/walkable. But the nodal development standards lack teeth and enforcement and so far have done little to reduce sprawl and driving.

Large employers, including Symantec, PeaceHealth, U-Lane-O (now the Oregon Community Credit Union) and *The Register-Guard*, have left downtown in the last decade for sites on the northern edge of town that are far harder to bike to, especially with Beltline providing a wall to north-south bike connections.

BIKE BOOSTING

Bike advocates praise the city for organizing the summit to promote bicycling.

"It's really good what they did," said VanderTuin. "People were coming out of the woodwork that I hadn't seen."



TED TAYLOR

It rains in Eugene, but Boulder, Colo. has snow and still manages a bike commuting rate almost four times higher than Eugene's.