

“When I’m biking, there’s a lot more freedom,” says Emily Farthing, coordinator for Eugene Sunday Streets. “At this time of year, you get to experience all the fall colors on the bike path and all Eugene has to offer — the sights, the smells, the people.”

Protected bike ways tap into this sense of security and enjoyment. They make the experience safer and more pleasant, and when biking offers that feeling for people, they’re more likely to jump on a bicycle.

“Communities with nearly 20 percent of people biking have a protected bikeway network, and that means people of all ages and abilities feel comfortable on the same network,” Dunbar explains. “We don’t have to take a confident cycling class to feel comfortable in the system. The system just works for us.”

In Eugene, the two-way bike line on Alder Street near the University of Oregon campus represents the closest thing to a protected bike way, but actual protected paths are in the works — one on 24th Avenue near Roosevelt Middle School and a two-way path on 13th Avenue between campus and downtown. The 13th Avenue project will happen in 2018 or 2019, costing a little more than \$1 million.

Many students bike to school via 13th. According to a 2013 UO commuting survey, 79 percent of students get to campus by walking, skateboarding, biking, carpooling or public transit instead of driving alone in a car — they have high active transportation rates.

Richard Hughes, a member and former president of Greater Eugene Area Riders (GEARs), says bi-directional, protected bike lanes make sense, especially for routes often used by new students. Even though diehard bikers might not need them, protected bike paths bring new cyclists into the fold.

On 13th, Hughes says, new students “go the wrong way in the existing bike lane” or ride on the sidewalk to get to and from campus. “When they get to the UO,” he says, they don’t know how to get back. Allowing them to go either way on 13th is “intuitive,” he adds.



PHOTO BY ATHENA DELENE

Dunbar describes the protection as a vertical and flexible physical barrier between bikes and car traffic. At intersections with lights, bikes would get their own signal, which solves one of the most common bike-car conflicts — the “right hook,” when a bike and car are moving parallel and the bike goes straight but the car turns right and hits it.

“If we give the bikes their own movement, we’ve eliminated that conflict opportunity,” Dunbar adds.

MAKE A CONNECTION

Turning 13th into a protected two-way street has more upshots than just safety — it also improves Eugene’s bike path connectivity, which currently has gaps.

“I think connectivity in Eugene is still something that has a ways to go,” says Steve Hecker, the current president of GEARs, which hosts group rides throughout the year. GEARs provides bike education courses, including

confident cycling classes that acquaint people with laws, crash avoidance techniques and safety tips for cycling in urban settings.

These classes can help people feel safer on Eugene bike lanes, Hecker explains, although a fully connected path system would help with that, as well.

“For cars, you would never have roads that don’t connect with each other,” Schlossberg explains. “It wouldn’t work, but in some ways that’s what it’s like for the bike system in Eugene.”

Many in the biking community speak longingly of a two-way protected bike path on High Street, which would serve as a needed connector between the Amazon bike path in south Eugene and the river paths.

Here’s the thing: Sometimes, giving space to bikes means taking space away from cars, like parking and extra lanes. As a result, not everyone wants new bike lanes —



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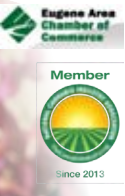
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