



## **Office of the Mayor**

### **NEWS RELEASE**

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### **South Bend tops Indiana cities in bicycle commuting**

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In a Bike to Work Week ceremony today to formally open the city's first downtown bicycle lanes, Mayor Stephen J. Luecke announced that South Bend became Indiana's leading city for commuting by bicycle, according to 2008 U.S. Census statistics.

South Bend also ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in the Midwest behind mostly college towns – Minneapolis, Madison, Wis., Ann Arbor, Mich., Champaign, Ill., and Iowa City, Iowa – and 36<sup>th</sup> among the 453 largest U.S. cities.

Members of the South Bend area bicycling community greeted the achievement by riding new downtown bicycle lanes along much of Colfax Avenue during the morning rush hour. The news conference was part of an organic blueberry pancake breakfast hosted by the LaSalle Grill on the 100 block of West Colfax for Michiana Bike to Work Week.

In addition, members of the Bike Michiana Coalition presented the mayor with a \$2,500 check to underwrite the cost of painting bike lanes along Colfax, one of the first bike-lane priorities identified by bicycle commuting advocates.

According to the Census Bureau's 2008 American Community Survey, an estimated 2.29 percent of South Bend commuters traveled to work by bicycle in 2008 – a percentage that exceeds national averages, including for cities designated as "Bicycle Friendly Communities." The 993 South Bend residents who used a bicycle to get to work surpassed every other Hoosier city except Indianapolis, whose 1,125 cyclists represented only 0.30 percent of the capital city's workforce. Bloomington's 1.84 percent was the state's second highest.

"Cyclists in the greater South Bend area are riding to work in greater numbers than ever before, motivated by higher gas prices, health benefits and greater availability of safe

routes established by the City of South Bend,” Luecke said. “We will continue to work with our partners in the bicycling community, such as the Bike Michiana Coalition, to increase bicycling alternatives and make South Bend a more livable community.”

Colfax Avenue is not the only downtown street to receive painted, five-foot-wide bicycle lanes this spring. Bicycle lanes also have been installed on Jefferson Boulevard between William and St. Joseph streets. The Colfax effort is part of the City’s “Cultivate Colfax” improvements from Lafayette Boulevard to Jacob Street, which seeks to promote development, support arts-related and other businesses, and enhance pedestrian, bicycle and motorist safety.

“I’m excited to see the new bike lanes added to our stretch of Colfax Avenue,” said Mark McDonnell, owner of The LaSalle Grill.

A 2007 study by the Michiana Area Council of Governments showed that the average speed of vehicles on Colfax near Sycamore Street was 39 mph, despite a posted speed limit of 30 mph.

“I am thrilled by the addition of bike lanes to Colfax Avenue,” said Paul Meyer, executive director of The South Bend Clinic. “The avenue now serves a wider population of users – motorists, pedestrians and cyclists. The businesses on Colfax will get a second look from passers-by, and the Clinic’s employees will have another choice – a healthy and safe one – in coming here.”

Bicycle lanes have been added along the entire 1.3-mile segment of Colfax, between Lafayette Boulevard and Jacob Street. Between Michigan and Hill streets, there are two traffic lanes with a continuous left-turn lane.

“The new Colfax Avenue bike lanes into downtown South Bend are fantastic. They provide a safe route to and from downtown for bicyclists to commute to work, shop, visit a restaurant or enjoy other venues in the East Race and downtown South Bend area,” said Judy and Bill Lee, president and treasurer, respectively, of the Bike Michiana Coalition. “On behalf of the Bike Michiana Coalition, we applaud South Bend officials for their forward thinking in providing for a safer, healthier, economical and environmentally friendly form of transportation.”

According to the U.S. Census Bureau’s 2008 American Community Survey, 0.55 percent of Americans use a bicycle as the primary means of getting to work. In 2008, the average bicycle commuter share for Bicycle Friendly Communities, those designated by the League of American Bicyclists for their pro-bicycling policies, was 1.5 percent.

The statistics, a conservative measure of bicycle ridership, do not account for recreational or shopping trips by residents using bicycles. The question, which asks workers the principal mode of travel they used to work in the previous week, also may undercount total bicycle ridership.

Bicycle commuters’ 2.29 percent of all workers in South Bend for 2008, the most recent year available, represented a dramatic increase from 1.07 percent in 2007 and 0.70 percent in 2006.

When Paul Taylor first moved to South Bend from Chicago in 1978 and continued his established practice of commuting by bicycle, he felt as if he was the only cyclist on the road. “Now, in my ride to and from work, I see several people each day. And my bike is no longer lonely, being joined by several other bikes at the bike rack, especially when the weather is good,” said Taylor, a member of the Bike Michiana Coalition. “The Census data showing a dramatic increase in South Bend folks who bike to work proves that it’s not my imagination: People really are recognizing that the simple bike is a great mode of transportation.”

“This independent data suggests that South Bend is Indiana’s most friendly city for bicycle commuting,” said South Bend Bicycle Coordinator Chris Dressel. “And our 132 percent increase from 2007 is nearly 10 times the national rate of increase.”