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How I caught the cycling BUG

Karen Stintz, National Post · Monday, May 31, 2010

June is Bike to Work Month. Last year I had great intentions but was not able to participate as my bike was liberated from in front of City Hall. I learned a very valuable lesson about the inadequacies of cable locks.

Following the theft, I bought a new Canadian-made Trek hybrid bicycle from Sporting Life and took to the streets again. A few weeks ago, with spring in the air, I cycled to work and put a note on my Facebook page about the experience. A constituent contacted me to see if I was interested in forming a Bicycle User Group--BUG--and cycling to work on the launch of Bike to Work Month.

I agreed and our BUG was formed. Paul Hentschel, who lives in the community and works downtown, mapped out the route and advertised the BUG on his Facebook page. We agreed to meet at the Cricket Club on Wilson Street near Avenue Road. Coffee and muffins greeted the 10 members of the BUG. I went with the first shift, at 7:15 a.m. Ten of us began our ride and followed bicycle route 35 downtown, which runs south along Duplex Avenue, Rosewell Street, Lascelles Boulevard, Kilbarry Street and Russell Hill Road.

Unfortunately, I was the turtle of the pack and missed the light at Duplex and Lawrence. My BUG continued on, leaving me alone, waiting for the light to turn green. I continued on Route 35 and joined the dedicated bicycle lanes down Russell Hill Road, then turning on to the bike lanes across Davenport to Bay Street, and then south on Bay to City Hall. Although I lost my BUG, I joined others along the route and I felt very safe riding through the streets of Toronto.

I then popped into the councillor showers, near the council offices on the second floor of City Hall, and made it to the office in the same time it would take to drive or take the subway.

While I will not join the ranks of the daily bike commuter, I will bike to work more regularly. I have also learned a few things. I felt safer when riding on dedicated bike lanes. I have a new appreciation for the complaint about people parking in bike lanes. Biking on secondary roads is less appealing because there are so many stop signs. I am not sure we have a rational plan for integrating bike lanes into our transportation network but I do believe we should keep trying.

- Karen Stintz was elected to city council for Eglinton-Lawrence in 2003 and is standing for re-election in October.

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