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EDITOR'S PICK | FEATURED

# Advocate touts bicycle sharing for jobs and recreation

By Rick Dandes and Joe Sylvester/The Daily Item May 16, 2016

Robert Inglis/The Daily Item

Sue Auman of Lewisburg is trying to get a bike sharing program started in Lewisburg.

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*Second of two parts*

A former York County resident who with her husband moved to Lewisburg 10 years ago is working to create and promote the use of bicycle and walking paths in the Valley as a means to reach employment sites and for recreation.

With a dearth of fixed-route bus systems across the Valley, and shared-ride programs targeted mostly to the elderly and disabled, Sue Auman, of Lewisburg, believes bicycle sharing could address part of the problem.

“It’s here to stay nationwide,” she said. “But the key to its success seems to be that there has to be a large enough population base in order to make it economically viable, whether it is with a private foundation, a nonprofit or with a for-profit, so that the program can support itself.”

Here’s how it works: A person rents a bicycle at a kiosk with a credit card and returns the bicycle to any open station at his or her destination.

“Bike sharing has come up in many conversations that I’ve had between folks who are involved with nonprofits, business people in the community, people who are interested in biking and walking,” Auman said. “We don’t have it here right now, but it does come up as a topic. I must say though I am not sure about the economic viability in a community of our size.”

Auman is also interested in bicycle sharing from a visitors and tourism viewpoint.

“If we can have it on a broad enough scale this could be an avenue to help people help themselves,” Auman said. “Transportation is a major issue here, for people who need services.”

**Large market in cities**

B-Cycle is a next-generation bicycle-sharing system that is capturing a large market share in cities around the country, Auman said. Bicycles rent for $3 per half-hour.

While there is no B-Cycle in the Valley, Auman has become involved in assembling those who are interested in bicycling and walking issues under the banner of Walk It! Bike It! Lewisburg.

“There are a lot of people interested in promoting safety for pedestrians and bikes and helping make sure the infrastructure is there,” Auman said. “When I started volunteering I had in mind a bigger geography. But there are many people in the greater Lewisburg area who were already actively involved in efforts to improve pedestrian and cycling conditions.”

There are groups in East Buffalo Township and in Lewisburg, she said.

“So we have all coalesced as a group under the River Towns group, which is a part of the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership and through Lewisburg Neighborhood Corp.,” Auman said.

Walk It! Bike It! Lewisburg meets twice a month, has 50 volunteers, and promotes walking and bicycling and the conditions that will allow them to thrive, Auman said.

**Linking towns with trails**

Trish Carothers, executive director of the Susquehanna Greenway Partnership, is working with Auman and others on a steering committee to create a plan to link Susquehanna Valley River Towns with walking and bicycling trails.

The Susquehanna Greenway Partnership is attempting this one segment at a time, Carothers said.

Several trails and bicycle paths are being planned around Lake Augusta at Sunbury. A North Branch trail that begins just north of Danville on the Susquehanna River and extends to Route 42 in Catawissa will open this summer.

The long-range plan to create trails is also dependent on funding sources.

“There are obviously road, bridge and highway projects that generally take precedence,” Carothers said.

“But what we believe is that when it comes to a long-range transportation plan, biking and walking should be part of the plan.”

Added Auman: “We are reaching out to local municipalities, boroughs, townships, the officials, the police departments, Buffalo Valley Recreation Authority, Bucknell University, Evangelical Community Hospital, the United Way and Geisinger Health System.

“Anyone who has a stake in the infrastructure,” Auman said of her meetings with Carothers.

Auman said she has been meeting with interested parties for eight months.

“I am taking the long view,” she said. “We are looking to promote a culture that is respectful to walkers, bikers and drivers. How can we promote that culture? It is tricky. There are infrastructure changes that we do hope to see made over time. And that can be loaded because it costs money, but we want to make sure that people understand it’s an issue we have identified that people care about.”

When the state Department of Transportation designs the reconstruction of a road, her group wants

to advocate for improved conditions for bicyclists and walkers, she said.

“Let’s keep that in mind when we do that design,” she said.

*Email comments to rdandes@dailyitem.com and Jsylvester@dailyitem.com. Follow Dandes on Twitter @rdandes or Sylvester @JoepSylvester.*

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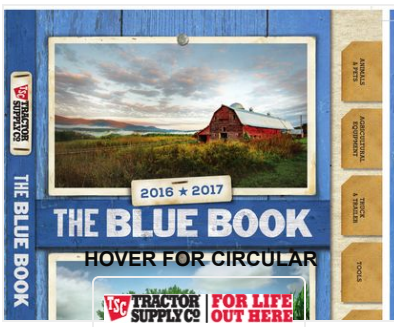


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