

Seattle P-I

Friday, August 22, 2008



Dan DeLong / P-I

PATH employees, from left, Sue Wallace, Leslie Batchelor and Nancy Engel prepare to ride their Green Bikes from South Lake Union to the Seattle REI store for Thursday's launch of the Green Bike Project. The goal of the effort, financed with a \$225,000 state grant, is to get people out of their cars.

Green Bike Project gets rolling

Program's goal is to reduce number of driving commutes

By [LARRY LANGE](#)
P-I REPORTER

GREEN BIKE PROJECT

Money is going to purchase

200

new bikes and

100

tune-ups. So far,

250

people have signed up.

Giving away bicycles to commuters to get them out of their cars is no longer strictly a private enterprise. The state and King County are trying it as well.

A new "green bike" program announced Thursday is aimed at getting 300 workers to reduce their commute trips by 60 percent between now and May.

The effort is financed with a \$225,000 state trip-reduction grant that will be spent buying 200 bicycles, tuning up 100 more and paying for riding and safety classes.

Organizers concede that the number is small compared with the number of people driving to work. But so far more than 250 people have signed up through their employers.

That includes the almost 200 people who signed up for free bikes -- Novara commuter bicycles that retail for \$649. REI is selling them for an undisclosed amount, and in turn will receive about 80 percent of the total grant.

About 20 percent of the grant will pay for training classes put on by the Cascade Bicycle Club, said Susan Whitmore, manager of the program for King County Metro. She said 53 people so far have signed up for the tune-ups.

Whitmore said "an honor system" will be in place for employers and other cyclists to track who is using the free bikes and the number of commutes taken.

The effort is part of a statewide program that began in 2003 and is aimed at employers with at least 100 full-time workers.

The program, intended to reduce driving and congestion, could be expanded if enough money is available.

Brian Lagerberg, assistant public transportation director, said the state has appropriated about \$1.5 million during each biennium since the program started and \$2.5 million is set aside in the current two-year budget.

With the state facing a budget squeeze, "next biennium we don't know."

The new program is jointly sponsored by the county, the state, REI and the bicycle club. It is thought to be the only one of its type involving both public and private backing.

Two private entities -- the law firm Hagens Berman Sobol Shapiro and Children's Hospital and Regional Medical Center -- started their own free bike programs earlier.

**P-I reporter Larry Lange can be reached at 206-448-8313 or larrylange@seattlepi.com.
Read his Traffic Watch blog at blog.seattlepi.com/seattletraffic.**