First Year Bike Program

TO: Dan Bellrichard, Greg Lonning

FROM: Max Molzahn, Ross Frei, Charlie Crum

SUBJECT: First year bike pledge program at Luther College

Introduction:

During the course of the fall 2009 semester, we have researched various programs to increase sustainable transportation by the student body. Our group looked into building new covered bike racks, a revamping of the bike share program, investigating bike rack placement, and the “velorution” project at Ripon College in Ripon, WI. The “velorution” project is a program that provides every incoming student with a new bike if they pledge not to bring a car to campus for the entirety of their first year. After we encountered communication issues with both the bike rack projects, as well as a new bike share system, we felt that the “velorution” project would be best to focus our time and energy on.

Deciding project focus:

We decided to focus on sustainable transportation for Luther College students because of the campus’s small size as well as Decroah’s proximity and size. Decroah provides a large variety of shops that can meet most students needs, and is easily accessible by bike. We also were excited about the possibility of increasing bike use to contribute to local business and the Decorah community. Luther College is determined to meet its sustainability goals, and the student body needs to contribute whenever they can. Our group went on to contacted Ric Damm, the head of the “Velorution” program at Ripon College, who provided information and expertise from the two-year-old Ripon program.

“Velorution” information:

After contacting Mr. Damm and researching Ripon’s program, we felt that this program may be feasible on Luther’s campus, though Luther College is larger than Ripon. The program runs well at Ripon because of how it is managed.
Like Luther College, Ripon College is located in a vibrant small town where bike travel is easy.

Ripon has paired with the Cannondale bike company, who can easily provide a large amount of bikes, and a custom paint job for the College.

This brings Ripon’s annual costs total about $50,000 with a student body of about 1,100 students.

Ripon’s program is funded and strongly supported by outside gifts from trustees, alumni and friends. We feel this may be possible at Luther as well, though any way the college could tackle the costs best would be ideal.

The program is based on an honor code, much like Luther’s academic honor code. This program fits in well with Luther’s ideals concerning both honesty and sustainability.

Ripon has had few to no problems with students disregarding the pledge in the programs first two years.

Upon signing the pledge, the care and ownership of each bike is turned over to the students, who also sign a waiver releasing the college from blame in the occurrence of an accident.

Ripon’s program was started by the President of the college, making approval and support easy to come by.

**Cost/funding:**

As stated previously, Ripon covers the program costs through gifts and outside funding. Luther, however, should pursue whatever plan works best for the college and its students. With incoming classes of about 650 students, Luther would need a plan to cover a cost slightly larger than Ripon’s average cost of ~$50,000.

**Rationale:**

It is our belief that this project would allow for Luther College to continue on the path to a sustainable campus community. This project would not only reduce stresses on the college and Decorah because of the high use of automobiles, but it would also contribute to reducing Luther’s carbon footprint. It would also serve as a visible representation of Luther’s commitment of creating a sustainable college environment. This can only help Luther’s reputation among Decorah residents, students, as well as prospective student and parents. Cars, trucks, and other automobiles create a large amount of carbon pollution, as well as creating noise, and demand a large amount of space and pavement. We feel that the quiet, space efficient idea of bike transportation around Decorah would enhance the college’s already beautiful setting.

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Appendix/Timeline:
Appendix includes:
A) Project outline/ possible timeline
B) Informational links

Spring 2010:
Meeting with Sustainability coordinators and head of Wellness program with a presentational proposal.
Discuss possibilities for Luther College.

Fall 2010:
Questionnaire for incoming students to gauge support and participation for program.
Possible “test program” with small sample of students.
Assess information and pursue funding of success (as the school and coordinators deem it) seems possible.

Links:

http://www.ripon.edu/velorution/