

46
UPDATES
TODAY

87°
FEW CLOUDS



Advanced Search

News Opinion Sports Business Life Get Out Nerdvana Photos Jobs Elections Marketplace Obits

FREE & LOCAL East Valley Mesa Gilbert Chandler Tempe ABC15 Weather Discover Mesa Best of Mesa 2015 Discover Gilbert Best of Gilbert 2014 Discover Chandler

Home East Valley Local News Chandler

East Valley rides into cycling community

Story Comments

Share Print Font Size:

Tweet 11 Like 6

Posted: Monday, March 23, 2015 10:30 am

By Tony Gennario, Special to Tribune

East Valley cycling has taken off in recent years as the area has become one of the most bike-friendly regions in the country.

Mesa, Chandler and Gilbert were all recognized as bronze-level bike friendly communities in 2014 by the League of American Bicyclists (LAB). Tempe achieved silver-level status, while, in the university category, Arizona State was placed in the gold bracket.

The league was founded in 1880 with the mission to create a "Bicycle Friendly America" as it travels around the country advocating for cycling improvements.

LAB's rubric for community rankings is known as "The 5 E's," which includes engineering, education, encouragement, enforcement and evaluation and planning. Each of the East Valley cities has honed these characteristics in various ways.

Roads and trails

One of the most important aspects in LAB's evaluation is the number and types of bike lanes and paths around each city.

Mesa has significantly increased its number bike lanes in accordance with the Mesa Rides cycling initiative it introduced in 2012. The city has scattered 360 miles of designated lanes and more than 140 miles of signed bike routes along its roads. These additions landed Mesa in the top 10 list for most miles of bike lanes in the country as of 2014.

Tempe, while having less than half as many miles of bike lanes as Mesa, — 175 compared to 360 — has gone a step further in handling its roadside cycling. It has implemented protected and colored lanes, alerting drivers and pedestrians alike that cyclists have a certain right to their area on the road.

Chandler put a larger focus on specific paths when it renovated Paseo Trail, a popular cycling route that runs along the Consolidated Canal from Riggs Road to Chandler Boulevard between Arizona Avenue and Cooper Road. The city added wide concrete pathways from the end of the trail to Frye Road, providing cyclists with an easier route to the major street.

Chandler then added a major bicycle and pedestrian bridge over the 101-freeway near the Chandler Fashion Center mall.



[David Jolkovski/Tribune]

Mike's Bike Chalet

Apprentice Polo Mendoza works on a bicycle at Mike's Bike Chalet.

Buy this photo

CIGARETTES
(Cigars & Smokeless Tobacco)
WE STOCK OVER 350 FLAVORS!!!

On-Auk-Mor Trade Center
8001 E. McKellips | 10115 E. McDowell
Scottsdale | 480-949-0971 | Scottsdale | 480-945-4116
(Hayden & McKellips) | (McDowell & Longmans)

Visit Our Deli **Patio Dining**
Featuring: (McKellips Location Only)

Lone Butte Trade Center
1188 S. 56th St., Chandler, AZ 85226 • 520-796-3930 (10 exit 1629)

SURGEON GENERAL'S WARNING: Quitting smoking now greatly reduces serious risks to your health.

"The bridge ... reconnected neighborhoods divided in the late 1990s when the Price Freeway was constructed," said Jim Phipps, a Chandler public information officer.

Gilbert is currently putting together its Transportation Master Plan, which aims to improve its cycling amenities on the street.

"The plan identified gaps in our bike lanes and trail system. We're prioritizing those and figuring out how to address those issues," said Erik Guderian, Gilbert's traffic engineer.

Safety concerns

Efforts to make the road more bicycle-friendly will be meaningless to Valley riders if they do not feel safe.

Ken St. John, Chandler resident and member of Phoenix Metro Bicycle Club (PMBC), rides a bike around the city as his primary form of transportation, including the seven-mile trek to and from work every day.

"Chandler has several areas where it's not safe. They don't have good bike lanes," he said. "There's a quarter-mile stretch near my house that is the most dangerous area I've ever ridden down."

Businesses are even being indirectly affected by unsafe roads, as St. John said there are certain places he will not go to because he can't get there safely by bicycle.

Mike Mah, Chandler's city transportation engineer, said concerns about unsafe roads often stem from an individual's comfort of being on a busy road rather than a designated cycling path. Mah noted the city's 10-year run as a LAB bike-friendly city and said its safety is an important part of that honor.

St. John understands local government's efforts and didn't put the entire fear burden on the city; distracted motorists and uneducated cyclists are to blame as well. He said he sees drivers on their phones not watching the road, as well as cyclists riding down the wrong side of the street more often than he would like, and believes both sides are equally at fault.

"The way to be safe for any vehicle operator is to be predictable," he said. "They put themselves and others in danger (when they aren't predictable)."

East Valley cities are addressing these safety issues in a preventive fashion by educating drivers and cyclists alike on everything from road laws to proper safe driving and riding techniques.

Mesa offers an adult bicycle education program through the Mesa Public Library system with around four to six classes per year. Tempe and Chandler are putting together safety programs and finding ways to educate the public.

Bike centers

While safety is one issue to be improved, convenience is a major aspect the Valley has set out to master. Bicycle facilities have sprouted up all over the East Valley, with many cities even renovating older buildings to make them more cycle-friendly.

The Tempe Transit Center on 200 E. 5th St. near Sun Devil Stadium has a bike cellar that allows people to lock up their transportation while they move about the city. Mesa has opened bike valets across the city, while Tempe Beach Park is opening a valet near the end of the year. Tempe's valet will be operated by volunteers hoping to raise money for charity through tips and donations.

"We are entering a new era of bicycle facilities ... new and state of the art," said Amanda Nelson, Tempe transportation public information officer.

Chandler echoes the accommodations at its transit centers, as the park and ride at Germann Road and Hamilton Street has a plentiful selection of bike lockers. In addition, many of the city's public transportation services provide riders an easy transfer to other areas of the Valley.

"The Arizona Avenue LINK (bus rapid transit) service gives bicyclists in the area a direct connection to Metro light rail," Phipps said in an email.

Community bike sharing

Grid Bike Share is a program that allows users to utilize city-owned bicycles to get from place to place. Each bright-green Grid bike has a basket on the handlebars and a screen behind the seat that accepts credit and debit cards for people to pay for one hour of ride time. Phoenix offers month and year-long memberships to Grid for \$30 and \$79 per year, respectively, which gives subscribers 60-minutes per day on its bicycles.

Phoenix has experienced profitability from the program and two East Valley cities are looking to follow in its footsteps, as Mesa and Tempe each hope to have Grid instituted in their cities in the near future.

"Our Grid Bike Share system will be up and running with the launch of the new light rail expansion expected this fall," said Jim Hash, Mesa's bicycle and pedestrian coordinator.

The locations in Mesa are yet to be determined, but Hash said the most logical locations would be near its event centers and schools such as Mesa Amphitheatre and Mesa Community College, along with many other spots around the city.

Tempe hopes its student presence will make the program a successful project. ASU is already a gold-level bike-friendly university, but the city is strongly committed to improving its cycling conveniences even more with Grid on campus and throughout surrounding areas.

"You don't have to have a car to get around," Nelson said. "We really encourage biking as an alternative mode of transportation."

There are currently no plans for Chandler or Gilbert to introduce Grid Bike Share or any similar program.

Promoting cycling

Mesa and Tempe are taking a written approach in their cycling initiatives as both cities plan to launch a new magazine for their riders. BikeLife Mesa and BikeLife Tempe will be bi-annual publications with issues released in the spring and fall. Mesa published its first edition on March 1, while Tempe is aiming toward a fall 2015 premiere issue.

BikeLife is a chain of cycling magazines exclusive to cities that are heavily engaged in their cycling populations. Ten cities around the country have a variation of the magazine, with Mesa and Tempe joining Tucson as the three Arizona versions.

Mesa, Tempe and Chandler are putting their lanes and services to use while taking part in Valley Metro's annual Valley Bike Month, with events scattered throughout each city during the 30-day period.

Mesa hosts the largest celebration with its CycloMesa weekend bringing in more than 10,000 people each year. The three-day cycling festival, taking place April 10-12, includes El Tour de Mesa, Bicycle Rodeo and more.

Tempe mirrors Mesa with a Tour de Tempe Community Bike Ride on April 12 as well as a Bike to Work and School Day on April 15, while Chandler is hosting its annual Family Bike Ride event on April 25.

These events aim to spark cycling excitement for one month, but Corinne Holliday, Valley Metro public information specialist, said the ultimate goal is to keep people pedaling throughout the year.

• Tony Gennario is a senior at ASU's Walter Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication. He is an intern with the Tribune this semester. Reach him at tribintern@evtrib.com.

More about **Tempe, Az**

- **ARTICLE:** Women's League giving away free prom dresses to area students
- **ARTICLE:** Budget expected to lead to funding cuts for districts
- **ARTICLE:** Highland's Hatch does it all for champion Hawks
- **ARTICLE:** Fuel price fall back

More about **Chandler, Az**

- **ARTICLE:** Women's League giving away free prom dresses to area students
- **ARTICLE:** Ewan a 'good fit' at Westwood
- **ARTICLE:** Budget expected to lead to funding cuts for districts
- **ARTICLE:** Highland's Hatch does it all for champion Hawks

More about **Gilbert, Az**

- **ARTICLE:** Women's League giving away free prom dresses to area students
- **ARTICLE:** Budget expected to lead to funding cuts for districts
- **ARTICLE:** Highland's Hatch does it all for champion Hawks
- **ARTICLE:** Motocross racer to donate kidney to Gilbert boy

Tweet 11 Like 6

Discuss Share Print

Posted in Chandler, Gilbert, Mesa, Tempe, Local on *Monday, March 23, 2015 10:30 am.* | Tags: Tempe, Az, Chandler, Az, Gilbert, Az, Mesa, Az, Mesa Arizona, Sustainable Transport, Mesa Community College, Chandler, East Valley, Segregated Cycle Facilities, Cycling, League Of American Bicyclists, Valley Metro, Bicycle Sharing System, Bicycle-friendly, Transportation, Tempe, Ken St. John, Jim Phipps, Gilbert, Paseo Trail, Consolidated Canal, Chandler Fashion Center Mall, Chandler Fashion Center, Price Freeway, Public Information Officer, Traffic Engineer, Erik Guderian, Phoenix Metro Bicycle Club, Phoenix, Mesa Amphitheatre, Bicycle And Pedestrian Coordinator, Jim Hash, Bikelife, Public Information Specialist, Corinne Holliday, Walter Cronkite School Of Journalism And Mass Communication

More From This Site

- [Budget expected to lead to funding cuts for districts](#)
- [Flying Allegiant made easy](#)
- [McAlister's Deli expanding in East Valley](#)
- [Gilbert Chamber to host Red Carpet Economic Development Tour](#)
- [BadAZ Bike Show](#)

From Around The Web

- [Soviet Sniper: The Deadliest Woman in WWII \(OZY\)](#)
- [Jill Duggar Can't Resist An 'Overdue' Baby Bump Photo \(Stirring Daily\)](#)
- [Khloe Kardashian Leaves the House Without Pants On \(Stirring Daily\)](#)
- [Model Charlotte McKinney makes presence felt among NASCAR drivers at Auto Club Speedway \(Fox Sports\)](#)
- [Jason Dufner Has It Made, Check Out Who He Some How Married \(AllRookie\)](#)

Recommended by

 Add a comment...

Also post on Facebook

Posting as **Sally McCann Mesarosh** ▾ [Comment](#)

Facebook social plugin

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT...



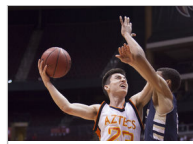
Budget expected to lead to funding cuts



Hamilton student makes her mark in



Songwriter Paul Williams: Principals



Corona's Barcello becomes leader for



City Manager Dlugas to retire in June



Gas price rise slows down

