



# **2016 ANNUAL REPORT**

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# Year in Review

2016 was our first year of operation and it was met with some successes and some disappointments. Such is not unusual for start up organizations and we finished the year with good feelings toward our future.

The organization was created as a result of conversations between Brandon Rutherford, Director of Invest Elyria, and Ed Stewart, Founder of Silver Wheels Cycling Club. In fact, the original concept was Brandon's and he knew to bring the discussion to someone with some experience in the area. The two had been friends for a number of years so discussions of this nature were natural for them. After agreeing on the basic concept, they drew others into the discussions, people known to have common interest in cycling.

A small core met a few times to decide what such an organization could be. Then in early spring, 2016 they declared the organization real. No formal or legal action was taken at this time in the formation of the group, just to call it "Bike Elyria." A bank account was created and some few organizational decisions about membership and activities were made.

It was decided for the time being that the leadership would be referred to as a Steering Committee, charged with steering the organization in some direction for the first year at least. This allowed the group time to feel its way toward what it could become later.

More informal meetings were held throughout the year to determine some activities, such as classes and rides. Most important was the decision to have the group be more of an advocacy organization than an actual "club." The Steering Committee adopted the structure common to many other cycling advocacy groups, using the familiar term *Five Es* as its basis. These are the same primary topics used by cycling advocacy groups all over the country. As stated in the group's brochure, these are defined as follows:

## **Encouragement**

We offer opportunities for people to enjoy bicycling together. Group rides and community rides are just the beginning for Elyrians to learn more about having fun on bikes.

We have cycling events to help you discover that Elyria is really a pretty good place to ride.

## **Education**

There is a lot more to riding safely than just balancing on two wheels. We have classes for all ages, beginners to seniors. Beginner classes and for those who have been riding a while will always feature how to ride your bike safely. Check our website often for a schedule of our education program.

Education also includes how to take care of your bike. Look for classes on how to fix flats, how to take care of your bike, and how to be ready for repairs on the road.

## **Engineering**

An important part of our mission is to work with our city and county to make our streets better for cyclists. This goes beyond painting some lines to make a bike lane. We need intersections that are designed to make it safer for bicyclists and pedestrians. We need routes created so cyclists can get to destinations easily and with confidence.

## **Enforcement**

Our police force is an important part of making our streets safer for all. We will work together with the Elyria Police Department and others to help create the safest environment for riding and to aid in educating the public about responsible cycling.

## **Evaluation**

We will work to measure everything to see how bicycling is becoming better in Elyria. We set goals and see how well we do, then move forward with the next goal.

An early decision to be made was on the topic of mandatory helmet usage. After considerable debate, it was decided to "strongly recommend" helmets be used when participating in a Bike Elyria hosted ride; helmets would not be required. While this goes against informed judgment, the group also realizes that people are allowed to take their own risks if they so choose. The Steering Committee believes that riding a bicycle without a helmet is unwise and strongly encourages the practice; the scientific evidence for the protection provided by a helmet in the event of a fall is long understood. However, there is no state or local laws requiring such usage so we adopted a less stringent position.

On the other hand, the Steering Committee did adopt the policy that Bike Elyria events will be operated in full recognition of Ohio's vehicular code. Our rides will be conducted within the law, requiring all participants to behave accordingly in order to be a participant.

Bike Elyria had some successes in its first year. We enrolled some members; we had some nice rides; we had some positive public awareness; we had some educational programming; we created some identity material in brochures, a logo and garments; we distributed many items of information; we began a website and Face Book page. We gained a handful of sponsors who were willing to donate money and/or services to aid our success.

Bike Elyria also faced - and continues to face - challenges common to new groups.

1. We have limited means to expand knowledge and awareness of the group so as to interest new members. Because of this, our growth in membership was small in the first year.
2. Some active cyclists are not interested in conforming to the constraints of riding as we require in our hosted events.
3. Bicycling advocacy is challenging to support for many people because the rewards are delayed for long periods often. Most people who have an interest in bicycling are mainly just interested in the riding aspect, rather than the advocacy work of influencing government to improve cycling conditions.
4. While Elyria is the county seat and the second largest city in Lorain County, bicycling is not a highly popular activity. The more typical bicyclist in Elyria is either one who has little choice about biking (for any number of reasons), has no concept of or intention to ride legally, or is more interested in doing "tricks" such as wheelies or jumps or other juvenile stunts.

Although Bike Elyria had limited successes and faced large challenges in 2016, the steering committee has committed to continue in 2017 with new resolve. See the Goals for 2017 toward the end of this report.

# Activities

This accounting of the Bike Elyria activities in 2016 seems mundane when reported in this fashion. But we do want our members, sponsors and others to know that these activities are what made the year pretty exciting, even though they were limited.

**Meetings.** Our calendar shows we held twelve meetings of varying sorts, from Mid-April through December. Most of the meetings were among the Steering Committee, to make decisions about policies and activities. During these we decided when and where rides would occur. As some on the committee were less experienced in making these types of decisions, we always took extra time to inform all how this is done. The meetings were held in places where there was no fee (a challenge in Elyria). We met at a few restaurants, the Elyria Arts Council, and at members homes. Finding a predictable meeting place is a task we look forward to in 2017.

**Rides.** Bike Elyria hosted 22 rides from late May through late October. A ride about one each week was the average. This will be increased in the future.

The nature of the rides was to explore various sectors of Elyria's communities. That is why we referred to them as "Neighborhood Rides." We tried to explore the corners and center of town on short rides of 5 to 10 miles approximately. These were social events, with speeds of only around 10 mph and lots of conversation taking place. The purpose was to have riders discover how nice it can be to ride in Elyria and to explore neighborhoods they might never have visited before. That part of our activities was very successful - commonly heard among riders was the exclamation, "I never knew such a nice neighborhood existed before." All participants learned at least something new about their city during these rides.

**Classes.** Two classes were scheduled this year: How To Commute By Bicycle and Cold Weather Biking. The commuting class had to be canceled due to a lack of registrations. The Cold Weather class was held on October 10 at the Elyria Police Department Community Room. More classes will be offered in 2017.

**Other Activities.** In addition to the activities listed above, the group participated in a variety of other programs, meetings or awareness activities.

**1. WEOL Interview, May 17.** Local radio station WEOL host (WHO?) interviewed the chairman on tghe morning show.

**2. NOACA Bike Counts, May 17 and September 13.** The Northeast Ohio Areawide Coordinating Agency (the 5-county organization responsible for coordinating how federal funds for certain projects are distributed to our area) annually conducts a bike count at strategic locations to determine how much bicycling accommodations are being used. Members of Bike Elyria participated in this activity.

**3. St. Jude Festival, September 4.** Bike Elyria representatives participated in this activity to help increase awareness of the group to this well-attended function. Many participants stopped at the booth and showed interest.

**4. Elyria Farmer's Market, each Saturday in the summer.** Every weekend June through September, a member from Bike Elyria sat at a table to pass out literature from BE and from Silver Wheels Cycling Club, Inc. and to answer questions about the groups.

**5. Lorain County Town Hall Meeting: Bike/Ped Master Plans, November 16.** Members participated in this important initial meeting hosted by the Lorain County General Health District. Future plans are for this style of meeting to be repeated to gain more information about what people want and need for better healthy options in Lorain County.

# Marketing Activities

Spreading the word about a new organization is difficult with a very limited budget. However, even within that very limited budget we did get the word out in a variety of ways.

**1. Website: <https://BikeElyria.org>.** We began this simple website in early spring for a way to keep people informed and to keep track of dates and stories and whatever else we could use on a website. The site allows for people to add commentary and to interact with the group on a limited basis. As a Wordpress site, it is basically designed as a blogging tool, but it can be used as any other website with all the bells and whistles you want to bother with. We have not bothered with much yet. Over time, this will be our primary tool for communications and information.

**2. Facebook page.** Also in early spring a Face Book page was set up. This is used for more frequent information spreading and to let non-members who "like" the page can be informed as well.

**3. Brochure.** A unique brochure was designed for use as a hand-out tool to interested persons we meet first hand or that we can leave at specific places where people like to pick up such material. We have distributed many copies of the brochure at various venues. The brochure has been printed numerous times as needed.

**4. Garments.** Having an identity is an important part of marketing. We created two types of garments this year: one for the Steering Committee, a gold polyester golf style shirt with the logo embroidered on it in black. This helps to distinguish leaders from other members at events. We also created a tee shirt for members. This is a medium blue polyester shirt with the logo silk screened on it in black ink. The tee is made available for sale to members at near cost and to non-members for a little more.

**5. Banner.** An inexpensive vinyl banner was created for display at events where we have a table set up. This adds distinction to our table and helps to identify the group.

**6. Interest Survey.** In November we created a survey to get a feel of what would interest members and non-members for the year 2017. The survey was publicized only on our Facebook page and on the website. This limited exposure was to try and tap into people who already had been engaged with Bike Elyria somehow. The responses were slow in arriving but eventually rose to a number that we feel was good to be used as a planning aid. Of course, we cannot please all but at least we know where most respondent's preferences may lie. A summary of the survey is included in this report.

# Finances

This is a summary financial report. Anyone needing a more complete report with details should contact our treasurer, Betsy Miles.

## 2016 Income

Memberships	\$250.00	
Sponsors	\$825.00	
Merchandise Sales	\$ 97.00	
Other Donations	\$462.81	<b>\$1634.81</b>

## 2016 Expenses

Office Operations	\$197.20	
Merchandise	\$520.69	
Marketing Materials	\$278.92	
Ride Related Items	\$ 56.64	<b>\$1053.45</b>

**Balance at end of 2016** **\$ 581.36**

# Membership

At the end of 2016 Bike Elyria had 23 paid memberships plus 8 sponsor memberships.

Sponsors for 2016 included the following businesses:

- LifeCare Ambulance, Inc.
- Silver Wheels Cycling Club, Inc.
- Dale Yost Construction, Inc.
- Hair Choppers
- Lowell Street Cafe
- Elyria Fence
- Elyria Print, LLC
- Convenient Food Mart

We are extremely grateful for the generosity of our sponsors to help Bike Elyria have a positive first year.

# Survey Results

The survey was released via the Internet in November. A link to the survey was placed on the website and through the Facebook page. This distribution method is only partially efficient; we did not send the survey directly to members, which would have yielded a better picture of member interests. The survey responses were turned off at February 1, 2017. The survey results were helpful in planning some of the goals for 2017. Here is a summary review of the survey responses.

There were a total of 29 responses to the survey. The average time taken for completion was 4:24.

Q1. Were you a paid member of BE during 2016? 28% YES

Q2. Did you participate in any BE activities in 2016? 24% YES

Q3. Do you anticipate joining BE in 2017? 50% YES

Q4. Type of rides would prefer in 2017:

Moderate Rides in Neighborhood (5-10 miles)	59%
Rides from Elyria to other cities (10-20 miles)	48%
Start ride out of county, stay on trails	48%
Short rides in Neighborhood (>5 miles)	34%
Ride to other cities from Elyria (20-30 miles)	31%
Multi-day rides in other areas of state	14%
Ride including overnight stay	10%

Q5. Times preferred for riding

Saturday Afternoon	54%
Saturday Morning	54%
Sunday Morning	54%
Weekday Evening	50%
Sunday Afternoon	43%
Weekday Afternoon	29%
Weekday Morning	21%

Q6. Classes about bicycling desired

Basic bike repairs you can do	69%
Traffic skills - riding in Elyria	58%
How to fix a flat tire	54%
How to clean and detail your bike	50%
What to carry on your bike and why	46%
Group riding skills	38%
Understanding bike lanes and sharrows	38%
Cycling with children - family cycling	31%
Bicycle Commuting	27%
Beginner skills	19%

Q7. Interested in auditing Elyria street conditions for bikeability and walkability: 68%

[Two other anecdotal questions were asked about problem areas for biking in Elyria but there were too few responses to consider for this report. The responses will be taken into consideration when planning future activities.]

# 2017 Goals

As we start out our second year of operation we remain positive in our mission and purpose. From the very start, we all agreed that our main drive for the organization is to help our great city become more bicycle-friendly.

That has not, and likely will never, change.

Our goals for this next year fall into two main categories: Organizational and Categorical.

As a still very young organization, we need to concentrate on assuring the strength and stability of the group. For that reason we have adopted three large Organizational Goals that will help us keep that important focus.

**1. Develop and operate under a system of Constitution and By-Laws.**

This will give us a necessary structure and procedures for performing functions.

**2. Explore the possibility of becoming a recognized non-profit organization, a 501 (c)(3).**

Such a designation would open doors for the group and give it significant credence.

**3. Establish partnership relationships with other organizations that have missions that overlap ours.**

The Greater Lorain County area has a multitude of hard working groups with which we can relate and share in programming.

One of the important decisions we made when Bike Elyria was formed was to adopt the general categories of activities and programming consistent with other groups of similar purpose throughout the region and the country. These categories are referred to as the 5 Es. Many of these activities will be conducted conjointly with the Elyria Bicycle Advisory Committee.

**4. Encouragement - to operate programs and activities that encourage more people to ride bikes.**

- a. Host "Ward Rides", at least one in each of Elyria's seven wards.
- b. Participate in the city's Bi-Centennial Parade (8/5/17 tentatively)
- c. Participate in the "Blessing of the Bikes" (6/24/17 tentatively)
- d. Create a "History Route" bike ride (6/4/17 tentatively)
- e. Continue to offer periodic "neighborhood rides" throughout the year
- f. Create a "200-Mile challenge" to go with the Bi-Centennial activities
- g. Use the results from the survey to create events

**5. Engineering - to work with governmental divisions, assisting them in preparing for improved cycling infrastructure.**

- a. Develop ratings of bikeability and walkability for each of Elyria's roadways.
- b. Assist in the development of a bike route system for the city.
- c. Survey the city for preferred bike rack placement for public and commercial locations.

**6. Education - to provide opportunities to learn more about various aspects of cycling**

- a. Offer commuting class during Bike To Work Week (3rd week in May)
- b. Offer classes on maintenance of bicycles, especially how to fix a flat tire
- c. Offer additional classes based on interests from the survey

**7. Enforcement - to work with law enforcement agencies to improve relations with cyclists**

No specific activity is being planned yet under this category. However, some discussions have explored the possibility of future programs among cyclists and police officers.

**8. Evaluation - to measure the completion of activities and their influence on 'bicycle-friendliness.'**

Each of these activities will be evaluated as they are conducted.

