

PASO PEOPLE

North County Mayors celebrated Bike Month with Cycle de Mayo

Photos and text by Heather Young

For the first time, the mayors of Atascadero and Paso Robles joined together to plan a Bike Month event for the entire North County - Cycle de Mayo - on May 17. Friends Steve Martin, Paso Robles mayor, and Tom O'Malley, Atascadero mayor, have worked together over the years to put on Cycle de Mayo and other bike events in Atascadero. Now that they have both been elected to serve as mayors of their communities, they expanded the annual event.

"It was great. I had a great time," said Martin, who rode his bike from Paso Robles to Templeton. "We took the short way [by Target]."

Part of the event's focus was to bring attention to the missing link in the bicycle trail between Atascadero and Paso Robles - Templeton. The mayors got San Luis Obispo Council of Governments to get behind the expansion.

"We're pleased that we expanded to Templeton," O'Malley said. "In the past we're focused on youth or bicycle safety. The focus is on putting them through the missing link in Templeton. It is an important link for county-wide tourism, as well as safety."

SLOCOG Executive Director Ron De Carli said the Salinas River Conceptional Plan was adopted by the countywide governmental board and endorsed by the SLO County Board of Supervisors. The plan includes connecting San Miguel to Santa Margarita with trails that can be utilized by pedestrians, horses and bicycles.



Right: Mayor Tom O'Malley of Atascadero, left and Paso Robles Mayor Steve Martin.

Left: Children negotiate bike mazes in training sessions.

Lower left: The Atascadero Kiwanis Club was on hand serving lunch. Below: A rider works with her bike, and below, Mayor Martin discusses bike path goals with Roblan Larry Werner.



"Meanwhile," De Carli said, "you have the cities working [on paths within the cities' limits]. [SLOCOG] funded a study to start looking at this section in between Paso Robles and Atascadero."

That study identified a one-mile stretch from the last exit in Atascadero heading south to the Vineyard Drive exit in Templeton, as the most important missing link.

"This time next year the county will be in a position to seek funding for the project," said Director of County Parks Nick Franco, adding that the funding will most likely come from SLOCOG and the state.

SLO County Parks had a display of the bicycle paths in the county, along with the proposal for addressing the missing link. In addition, Atascadero Kiwanis Club, of which both Martin and O'Malley are members, prepared a tri-tip

lunch available for purchase. Although Martin and O'Malley were the instigators in this year's event, they enlisted help to pull it together, Paso Robles resident Steve Fluery and Atascadero resident Susan De Carli.

"They really did a great job," O'Malley said, adding that an Atascadero bicycle club is in the works. "They will work together for North County bicycling."

The event in the park began at 10 a.m. with 23 people cycling 12 miles from Atascadero to



Templeton via Highway 41 and the El Pomar area. That ride was led by Atascadero resident Glenn Vanderlinde, who's a member of the SLO Bicycle Club. Paso Robles Postmaster Mike Milby led eight people from Paso Robles past Target and down Main Street in Templeton.

"It was nice," Milby said. "It was a nice, comfortable, easy pace."

Paso Robles resident Bill Haas led 14 people in a 22.5-mile ride through wine country on the east side of Paso Robles and Templeton.

Around 150 people came out for the rides, bicycle safety and a children's obstacle course.

"For my expectations [for the event] - this more than fulfilled them," said Martin, who got on his bicycle for the first time to ride from Paso Robles. "We took the short way here." He added that riding gave him and the other participants the opportunity to really see what needs to be done to improve safety for bicyclists. "The big red bicycle paths end [at Highway 46 West]."

The event, and the expansion of the bicycle paths, was also supported by First District Supervisor Frank Mecham and Fifth District Supervisor Debbie Arnold.