How to Host a Successful Women’s Bicycling Forum

Women Bike Webinar: July 23, 2013
Women Bike aims to change the face of bicycling by getting more women on bikes and participating as riders, advocates and leaders to create strong communities and celebrate the joy of riding a bike.

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velojoy.com – a fresh spin on city cycling

SRAM

FUJI
Women Bike Chicago
Day of Dialogue and Demos
Presenter: Susan Levin
Organizing

Women Bike Chicago =
A loosely organized, grassroots federation of women in Chicago from every organization & none

• All volunteer, grassroots
• Organizers: Some work in bike community, local advocacy organization board involvement
• No budget: Donated materials
• Planning meetings: Various locations, Google group

Photo by Michelle Stenzel
Getting the Word Out

Created blog, Facebook page and Twitter account

Promoted mostly within the bike community

Could have targeted women interested, but not involved yet

Conservative in promotion because of space constraints

Could have been more proactive

Sold out before the event!

40-60% RSVP no shows

Photo by Michelle Stenzel
Event

Sessions
Introduction
Family Biking
Dressing & Fashion
Commuting & Shopping
Visiting Bike Shops

Photos by Michelle Stenzel
Event

Outdoor area

Access to try different types of bikes + tire changing demo

Photos by Michelle Stenzel
Event

Bike Buddies:
*Stickers for neighborhoods for women to find others to ride with, map route*

Photo by Michelle Stenzel
Lessons Learned

Signage:
*Not well placed for visibility*

Rooms:
*Decided last minute based on interest*

Timing:
*Needed better planning to keep event on track*

Volunteers:
*Not always busy; need to be better organized*

Sessions:
*Not long enough*
Post-Event

Survey for participants

Post-mortem meeting: Organizers wanted to plan additional events, rides

Main challenges:
- Promotion
- Maintaining momentum

Opportunities: Partnering with local advocacy organization on women’s specific programming
Ohio Women’s Bicycling Summit

Presenter: Jess Mathews
Mobilizing Women

Recognized an untapped need for women’s specific bicycle rides and programming in Columbus, Ohio
Heels and 2 Wheels

Non-intimidating, social ride

Celebrated wearing everyday clothing

Discussions about comfort and safety based on the route

Ride exploded in popularity
Taking it further
Organizing Statewide

Speakers | Sponsors | Promotion

Jess Mathews (right) with Ohio First Lady, Karen Kasich (center)

Photo: Ohio First Lady
Ohio Women’s Bicycling Summit

Nine sessions Broad diversity of topics

- Recreational riding
- Being a women bike business owner
- Clothing, Mechanics, Economic benefits
Lessons Learned

Intentionally kept the first Summit broad in content

Included participant survey to hone in on key interests for next Summit

Lessons learned
• Be a listener
• Keep it simple (Less IS more!)
• OVER-volunteer
First Step: Internship

Women’s Outreach Internship

WABA = “Interested by concerned” about women’s programming; internship was a great way to test the waters
Forum Evolution

Intern gathered input from local women leaders, riders

Private interviews turned into interest in group discussion... and a public forum

Forum Goals:
Allow women to tell their stories and encourage other groups to dream big
Forum Format

8 panelists, 1 moderator | Pre-event survey | Communications and press
Costs & Impact

**Costs:** Voluntary internship with minimal staff coordination

**Direct Benefits**

- **Agreement point:** We have a problem and need to do something about it!
- **Buzz:** Got members, supports and media talking about the issue
- **Support:** Inspired staff, board and members to invest resources
Started with **pilot project** to continue to raise awareness, build support and track justification

Led to **Women & Bicycles Program** program design and fundraising

Current program going strong; **providing a model** for other communities and organizations
Why Host a Forum?

Low cost, low-time investment consciousness-raising
Builds excitement and support and...

You never know where it will lead!
Questions? Comments?

Carmelita Sams, of West Town Bikes, at the 2013 National Women’s Bicycling Forum (Photo Brian Palmer)
Find out more...

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**Ohio Women’s Bicycling Summit**
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