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Tour gives new perspective on Anchorage

COMPASS: Other points of view

By MIKE JENS

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On one of those recent sunny Saturdays that Anchorage has been blessed with, a few of us decided to jump on our bicycles and, in the spirit of the Tour de France, we did our own Tour de Anchorage. The route we took, which covered about 45 miles, did a pretty good job of circling most of the Anchorage Bowl, passing through a wide variety of neighborhoods, trails, parks and a few of the wilder parts of town. Who knew such a route existed right here in the Anchorage Bowl? Besides getting a little exercise, we were interested to see how our city is growing.



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Here's what we found.

We started out braving bear country by riding the Hillside ski trails from Abbott Road to the Stuckagain Heights Road. Once you get past the bears and the salmon in Campbell Creek, the cruise down Stuckagain Heights Road is a delight, with a very rural, parklike feel to it. From there it was easy riding on dedicated bike lanes along Baxter Road, past Cheney Lake with swimmers and boaters enjoying the warm weather, and on to Mountain View via Turpin Road.

If you haven't been to Mountain View lately you ought to pay it a visit and see what a great job Cook Inlet Housing Authority has been doing to build new homes and clean up an old neighborhood. And while you're there, challenge the local kids to a bike race like we did to add a little spice to your ride.

Passing out of Mountain View took us down the new Ship Creek bike trail. The way the muni has shoehorned the bike trail among the train tracks, businesses and Ship Creek will surprise and impress you. If you ride it, you will see parts of Anchorage you never knew existed or could look so attractive.

The Ship Creek trail eventually leads to the start of the Coastal Trail at the end of Second Avenue. Our first stop was at Westchester Lagoon, which was its usual beehive of activity, especially on sunny days. We, as well as lots of other folks out on the Coastal Trail that day, were the

recipients of a special treat in the form of free hot dogs from the Covy Caf  . And around the corner at the new fish-friendly outlet stream and viewing platform, we had a lively discussion with Bob Poe, candidate for governor now that Sarah has flown the coop. Only in Alaska can you meet a candidate for governor on a bike trail.

From there we headed for Kincaid Park, stopping for a drink of water and a tour of the new soccer fields and biathlon area, both nice additions to our already full plate of recreational options. The Kincaid area seems to get better every year and sees more and more users as the facilities expand.

The rest of our route took us down the new bike trail next to the Kincaid access road, over to Jodhpur and along Dimond (ugh), and out through South Anchorage, Shore Drive, Jarvi Drive and up Rabbit Creek Road (if you have the legs and lungs for it), or over DeArmoun, Elmore and Birch to complete the loop if you've run out of legs.

At the end of our ride we agreed that Anchorage has

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so much to offer and it keeps getting better every year. So get on a bicycle and check it out or take a leisurely walk along some of the newer trails that have been built in the past few years. You'll be reminded why this is such a great place to live. And if you want to check out the route we traveled, go to Google Maps and search for "Tour de Anchorage."

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davenorton wrote on 07/30/2009 10:36:39 PM:

This tour route sounds great and is one of the best parts of living here. However, it serves to highlight the glaring gap that is the unfinished south extension of the Coastal Trail. South Anchorage residents should be outraged at the woefully under trailed and under-parked condition of their neighborhoods. The Coastal Trail extension would tie neighborhoods to nature, get kids biking off Dimond and provide families with recreational opportunities that do not require a car trip to get to the trailhead. Many parts of the extension plan is shovel-ready, so let's get going.

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cbbrown wrote on 07/30/2009 05:10:44 AM:

How fun! Thanks for sharing.

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