



Sitka Cycling Club
Promoting safe and fun cycling in Sitka, Alaska
<http://sitkacycling.wordpress.com>

NEWS RELEASE:

For immediate release

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Sitka renews Silver Bicycle Friendly Community status

SITKA, Alaska (Wednesday, Dec. 16, 2020) — The League of American Bicyclists announced today that it has renewed the Silver Level designation for Sitka, Alaska, in the Bicycle Friendly Community program.

The Bicycle Friendly Community program promotes safer streets and better bicycling by awarding various levels to communities based on how their city or town meets standards in the Five E's — Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, Engineering, and Evaluation/Planning. A new E, Equity, is being introduced to the judging process and will replace Enforcement in future applications. Communities are required to resubmit applications at least once every four years.

This is the fourth time Sitka has been honored with a Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) award. Sitka became Alaska's first BFC in 2008, after community members chose becoming a more bike- and walk-friendly community as one of the community wellness projects from the first Sitka Health Summit in 2007. Sitka renewed at the Bronze Level in 2012, and upgraded to the Silver Level in 2016. In addition, Sitka also earned the state's first Walk Friendly Communities designations with Bronze Level awards in 2013 and 2017 (WFC is a newer program coordinated by the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center and supported by the Pedestrian and Bicycling Information Center).

"This is great news," Sitka Cycling Club President Doug Osborne said. "Thanks to the League (of American Bicyclists) and everyone in town who's helping us to be a Bicycle

Friendly Community. Being a bike friendly community was identified as a top goal at the first Sitka Health Summit planning day in 2007. Since then, we have made steady progress and now we have more places to ride.”

Today’s announcement honored 51 communities as renewing or new Bicycle Friendly Communities at the Platinum (1), Gold (3), Silver (11) or Bronze (38) levels. In addition, there were 16 communities that earned Honorable Mention status, just below the full BFC designation. Since 2002, the League of American Bicyclists has awarded 485 BFC designations in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, and has received applications from more than 850 communities. There now are five BFCs in Alaska – Sitka (Silver), Anchorage (Silver), Juneau (Bronze), Kenai (Bronze) and Soldotna (Bronze) – and two Honorable Mentions (Fairbanks and Haines).

“During one of the toughest years in recent memory, we have seen so many Americans turn to biking during the pandemic for fun and for necessary transportation options. It’s so important that communities like Sitka have laid the groundwork over several years to make biking a safe, accessible option for people when we all need as much health and happiness as possible,” said Bill Nesper, executive director of the League of American Bicyclists. “This Bicycle Friendly Community award is the culmination of years of work put in by Sitka and its citizen advocates for better biking. This award round, Sitka joins 51 new and renewing Bicycle Friendly Communities in the movement toward healthier, more sustainable and connected places. As we turn the page on 2020 and look ahead to 2021, we’re proud that Sitka and communities like it are embracing bicycling as a solution to our collective recovery.”

The Bicycle Friendly Community program is part of the League of American Bicyclist’s larger Bicycle Friendly America program, which also includes Bicycle Friendly State, Bicycle Friendly Business, and Bicycle Friendly University designations. Sitka’s largest employer, the SouthEast Alaska Regional Health Consortium (SEARHC) Sitka Campus, holds a Bronze Level Bicycle Friendly Business designation.

During normal years, Sitka is known for hosting a variety of community bike rides and education events, such as National Bike Month events in May and a Kidical Mass family friendly bike ride in September, and having one of the state’s highest rates of people who commute to work by bike. But the COVID-19 pandemic limited those activities this spring and summer.

Sitka still accomplished several cycling-positive projects over the past couple of years, such as building four single-track mountain bike trail loops off the Sitka Cross Trail this summer, opening the Salty Spoke bike cooperative at Hames Wellness Center, rebranding the Sitka Bicycle Friendly Community Coalition as the Sitka Cycling Club

and getting nearly 250 club members to register, starting a citywide bicycle parking plan, starting a Sitka mountain bike trails plan, launching a Bicycle Benefits program where cyclists can show participating merchants a sticker on their helmets to receive a discount at local businesses, and hosting the 2019 Alaska Walk and Bike Conference that included a two-day Smart Cycling training (Sitka also was scheduled to host the 2020 conference before it went virtual due to the pandemic).

To learn more about the Sitka Cycling Club, go to <http://sitkacycling.wordpress.com> or like our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/SitkaCycling>. To learn more about the League of American Bicyclists and its Bicycle Friendly Community program, go to <http://www.bikeleague.org/community>.

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