

Peak Racks' Plaque Program Promises Free Bike Parking

BY CHRIS LESSER

SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA—Thanks to a collaboration between San Luis Obispo's public works department and Peak Racks, a new bicycle rack company, cyclists in this coastal city now have more than 70 new places to park their bikes—and it didn't cost the community a dime.

Peak Racks last year launched its Racks With Plaques pilot program in San Luis Obispo and now is looking to apply the concept to other cities.

Similar to adopt-a-bench programs that municipalities have used to defray the cost of putting benches in public spaces, local businesses or individuals can purchase a public bike rack through the city and commemorate their donation with a bronze plaque.

"We really believe that if cities adopt this program it will help create an awareness of cycling," said company founder and rack designer Rod Hoadley. "Bicycle dealers have a stake in this because if they can get their city to take it on, it will be an outlet for more bike sales and it helps create the infrastructure to grow cycling."

Hoadley, a metal manufacturing professor at the California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo and a certified instructor with the League of American Bicyclists, said the investment of donating a rack will pay dividends for years to come.



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"Even on the coast, data shows that good dip-galvanized steel will last decades—I'd bet 50 years," Hoadley said. Racks also are available in powder-coated steel that can be color matched to a particular city's preference.

The rack design itself allows from two to eight bikes to be parked just 16 inches apart. Vertically staggered bike slots prevent tangling, and each slot has a waist-high locking bar through which

the bicycle's front wheel and frame can be secured.

Hoadley has donated racks within industry and advocacy circles to help generate buzz about the design and collect feedback.



Peak Racks' design allows two to eight bikes to be parked just 16 inches apart.

"When you've got wide drop handlebars and different configurations all going into a bike rack that has slots for 12, you can really only get eight bikes in there. With [Hoadley's] rack, you almost have to try not to be able to fit all the bikes in there," said Grant Petersen of Rivendell Bicycle Works.

Hoadley also sent racks to the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation. Although the rack has won "favorite rack" status from executive director Rob Sadowsky, the city already has grants and contracts with other rack providers to meet the city's near-term needs.

Indeed, the biggest challenge to starting Racks with Plaques programs in other cities is breaking through the bureaucratic red tape of getting a town or city council on board. Hoadley said that it will take community advocates to convince their respective communities of the benefits of the program.

In San Luis Obispo, for example, the city has taken on the order processing, installation and maintenance of the racks—a small investment considering the payback, said transportation planner Peggy Mandeville.

"California specifically is cash-strapped right now and this program saves the city a ton of money because bicycle parking was an issue and this way we don't have to pay for it," Mandeville said.

The rack donors that have stepped up are split between businesses and individuals or groups dedicating racks as a memorial.

Hoadley has produced an instructional DVD that's available to interested parties. For a DVD or more information on Peak Racks, go to www.peakracks.com. **BRAIN**



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