



## PRESS RELEASE

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#### **Contact:**

Bicycle Transportation Alliance & Washington County Bicycle Transportation Coalition

Karl Rohde - BTA

Work: (503) 226-0676 x12

Cell: (503) 866-8222

[karl@bta4bikes.org](mailto:karl@bta4bikes.org)

Hal Ballard – WashCo BTC

(503) 516-6733

[info@washcobtc.org](mailto:info@washcobtc.org)

### **Tragic Death Inspires Awareness Campaign**

September 6, 2008 - This past June, Tim O'Donnell, 66, was struck and killed while riding his bicycle with a group of friends. This tragedy brought increased attention to the safety of cyclists using Washington County roads. Tim's wife, Mary, established a memorial fund to address this problem. The Bicycle Transportation Alliance (BTA), working with the Washington County Bicycle Transportation Coalition (WashCo BTC), is spearheading an effort to increase awareness of these serious safety issues.

The Bicycle Transportation Alliance in partnership with the Washington County Bicycle Transportation Coalition, has formed an ad hoc committee to develop a program to raise motorists' awareness about the increased use of Washington County roadways by bicyclists of every age, description, riding style and purpose.

Through the grassroots efforts of the WashCo BTC, volunteers at venues around the county will promote the message to motorists that the cyclist they are passing is a relative, friend, coworker or neighbor. The goal is to appeal to motorists' compassion, humanizing the concept of the "Share the Road" signage posted at many locations around Washington County.

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The campaign will be launched in September to coincide with BTA's increasingly popular annual "Bike Commute Challenge," and the time of year when many beginning and seasoned cyclists take advantage of the good weather.

The campaign will include life-sized cutouts of people with their bikes that will remind motorists that bicyclists are their relatives, friends, coworkers and neighbors "and we bike". The cutouts will be placed around in front of businesses and community gathering spots around the county. The message is, "*Be careful; the cyclist could be someone you know.*" Printed material will include a list of ways motorists can more safely interact with bicyclists. Presentations will be made to community groups throughout the month.

"From city councils to community events and all venues in between, volunteers plan to attend many public gatherings throughout the month to promote the message that bikes belong on Washington County's roads, too," said Hal Ballard, Director of the WashCo BTC.

The cycling community and safety advocates are concerned about the number of cyclists who have died on Washington County roads since the Spring of 2005. Lack of understanding of the law is an issue, as well as there being minimal legal consequences for killing or injuring a cyclist or pedestrian:

Washington County averages 20 new, out-of-state motor vehicle registrations daily. "None of those new registrants, nor long-time Oregon drivers receive adequate education about Oregon bicycle laws beyond a slight mention in the Oregon Driver Manual. The woman who struck and killed cyclist Tim O'Donnell in June of this year was from out of state. She had no insurance, the registration had lapsed, and her driver's license had been suspended in her previous home state." Ballard said. The driver was cited for careless driving, passing in a no-passing zone and driving with a suspended license. She may receive a maximum fine of \$1,115.

"As part of a larger campaign, greater consequences would make drivers take greater care around vulnerable road users." Ballard continued.

The campaign is also meant to draw attention to that vulnerability. During the closing days of the Oregon Legislature, following Tim's death, HB 3314, the "Vulnerable Users of Public Right of Way" bill was passed and signed into law by Governor Kulongoski. The law becomes effective on January 1, 2008.

The ongoing efforts of the WashCo BTC is designed to keep this matter before the folks who already drive and bike here, and those many thousands expected to move here in the near future.

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“Through it all, we expect bicyclists to obey traffic laws, be predictable and visible and courteous to other road users. We also expect motorists to be aware of the vulnerability of bicyclists, and that it takes relatively little time to get around any cycling group if we’ll just be patient.” Says Ballard

To find out more about the campaign, go to [www.AndWeBike.com](http://www.AndWeBike.com). People wishing to contribute to the campaign can give to the Tim O’Donnell Memorial Fund on the BTA’s website [www.bta4bikes.org](http://www.bta4bikes.org).

The BTA creates healthy, sustainable communities by making bicycling safer, more convenient and more accessible. We work to open minds and roads to bicycling. More information at [www.bta4bikes.org](http://www.bta4bikes.org).

The mission of the WashCo BTC is to promote bicycle transportation, protect bicyclists’ rights, and to improve bicycling conditions throughout Washington County, Oregon through education and advocacy. More information at [www.washcobtc.org](http://www.washcobtc.org).

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