

For immediate release
Contact:
Jose Menendez
813-598-1031
linksmaster@netzero.net

INDEPENDENCE FROM OIL & BICYCLIST SAFETY DAY

TAMPA, FL (Aug. 9, 2010) — Last week BP finally succeeded in plugging its blown-out oil well in the Gulf of Mexico. Sealing the well, however, won't repair the massive environmental damage that has been done to the Gulf, and it won't solve the other problems related to America's addiction to oil. To emphasize that fact, and the fact that bicycle commuting has never led — and never will lead — to oil spills that foul our oceans and beaches, local cycling advocates, joined by Tampa BayCycle (<http://www.tampabaycycle.com/>) and SWFBUD (South West Florida Bicycle United Dealers — <http://swfbud.blogspot.com/>), have declared Sunday, August 15, 2010, "Independence from Oil Day 2."

Like the first Independence from Oil Day this past 4th of July, the goal is to promote the environmental (and other) benefits of using bicycles for transportation. This one, however, will be much larger, a true Tampa Bay area event, featuring simultaneous rides starting from Curtis Hixon Waterfront Park in downtown Tampa, USF's Tampa campus, Coachman Park in Clearwater, and the Pier in St. Petersburg.

All the rides will start at 8 a.m., but participants* should arrive at the starting points no later than 7:45 a.m. Since the theme of the event is "independence from oil," participants are encouraged to ride their bicycles from home to the starting points. To find more bike-friendly routes, people can use the bicycle directions feature on Google Maps — <http://maps.google.com/biking>. (See page 2 for specific ride information and links to route maps.)

While the organizers of this event believe strongly in the benefits of bicycle commuting, the recent tragic death of retired admiral LeRoy Collins Jr. is a stark reminder of the risks. Therefore, we have also declared August 15th "Bicyclist Safety Day," and we call on both local and state governments to make Florida's roads safer by adding more bike-friendly infrastructure, such as bike lanes, multi-use paths and trails, sharrows, and "share the road" signs.

We also call on the media to help keep pressure on government officials to make our roads safer. And we ask them to help raise public awareness by doing more reporting on the issue of bicyclist safety, rather than just reporting the latest traffic fatality or injury. For instance, they could remind their viewers and readers of the 3-foot passing law and that motorists need to watch out for cyclists and pedestrians before making turns.

Finally, since knowledge is a cyclist's best protection, the organizers will offer some printed copies of bike safety literature to the participants of each ride. (The supply is limited, however.) We also urge cyclists to make use of bike safety resources on the internet. One of the best is the Florida DOT's online version of *Florida Bicycling Street Smarts* (http://www.dot.state.fl.us/safety/ped_bike/brochures/pdf/index.htm). Tampa BayCycle (<http://www.tampabaycycle.com/>) has links to many other resources.

Unfortunately, it's impossible to make the roads totally safe for bicyclists and pedestrians — or for motorists. Accidents will always happen. Our hope, however, is that by working together, government, media, and advocates can help prevent some needless injuries and deaths in the future.

SPECIFIC RIDE INFORMATION

Downtown Tampa Rides. Starting place: Curtis Hixon Waterfront Park, 600 N. Ashley Dr., 33602. Pace: 12-14 mph.

The shorter ride will be about 11 miles long and will go down scenic Bayshore Blvd. to Ballast Point Park, then head back to downtown. Contact: Karen Kress, 813-221-3686, KKress@tampasdowntown.com.

Route map: <http://www.mapmyride.com/route/us/fl/tampa/910127732519235986>

The longer ride will be about 24.5 miles long and will also go to Ballast Point Park, then west on Gandy Blvd. and across the Gandy Bridge, turning back after reaching the Pinellas side. Contact: Margaret Shepherd, 813-254-8882, shema711@verizon.net.

Route map: <http://www.mapmyride.com/route/us/fl/tampa/733127732460144652>

(Thanks to City Bike Tampa, — <http://citybiketampa.com/> — 212 E. Cass Street, for its generous support in offering to provide some refreshments for the participants of the downtown Tampa rides.)

USF Ride. Starting place: Near the Botanical Gardens, 12210 USF Pine Dr., Tampa, 33620. Pace: 12-14 mph. This ride, led by the USF Bicycle Club, will be about 21.5 miles long and will go to Curtis Hixon Waterfront Park in downtown Tampa, then head back to USF. Contact: Jessica Brenner, jlbrenne@mail.usf.edu.

Route map: <http://www.mapmyride.com/route/us/fl/tampa/793128130001740510>

Clearwater Ride. Starting place: Coachman Park, 301 Drew St., 33759. Pace: 10-12 mph. This ride will be about 18.6 miles long and will go to the Pinellas Trail, head north on the trail to the Honeymoon Island spur trail, west on the spur trail across St. Joseph Sound to the entrance of Honeymoon Island State Park, then head back. Contact: Chip Haynes, 727-464-8200, chaynes@pinellascounty.org.

Route map: <http://www.mapmyride.com/route/us/fl/clearwater/191128096290555604>

St. Petersburg Ride. Starting place: The Pier, 800 Second Ave. NE, 33701. Pace: 12-14 mph. This ride will be about 28 miles long and will go up to Gandy Blvd. and head east across the Gandy Bridge, turning back after reaching the Hillsborough side. Contact: Jose Menendez, 813-598-1031, linksmaster@netzero.net.

Route map: <http://www.mapmyride.com/route/us/fl/st-petersburg/905128129874436590>

In case of rain in the area on the morning of the 15th, the rides will be rescheduled for a later date.

**All participants in this event assume responsibility for their own actions and safety. By participating, they agree to absolve all organizers and sponsors of the event of all blame and liability for any harm, injury, or loss that may result from participating in the event. All bicyclists must wear a bicycle helmet and ride a bicycle in good operating condition. They are also encouraged to bring spare inner tubes, snacks, and plenty of water.*