

PRESIDENT'S LETTER — JOHN KNOWLTON

An Invitation and an Appeal

KBC has had a great riding season. And by no means do I think September is the end! But soon we will smell ripe grapes, see leaves turn to gold and start thinking about fat bikes. KBC will continue to work on our projects throughout the cooler months and I want to invite you into the process.

Invitation

As I shared last month, we are changing our monthly member meeting format. Business will be conducted at the executive committee meeting at 6 p.m. This meeting is open to any member of KBC. If you have an agenda item, please email it to president@kalamazoobicycleclub.org. At 7 p.m. we will open the general meeting with introductions and brief announcements. Any club member may share announcements at that time. Then we will hear from a guest. Our September guest will be Isaac Green, director of the Open Roads Bike Program. Open Roads offers bikes, bike repair and repair training to Kalamazoo youth. Please come to hear from Isaac, learn about open roads, and continue to connect to the broader cycling community.

Our October guest will be John Lindenmayer from the League of Michigan Bicyclists. This change to the meeting format is an experiment; please let me know your thoughts. We hope to become more engaged with other bicyclists and organizations. I also encourage you to share suggestions: who should be a guest at a KBC meeting?

Appeal

Our club has an ambitious purpose statement. It includes these phrases:

We defend and protect rights of cyclists; foster development and maintenance of safe cycling infrastructure; help everyone recognize bicycles as vehicles used for pleasure, fitness, and transportation.

The Road Commission of Kalamazoo County and the City of Kalamazoo have both implemented new and improved non-motorized road infrastructure. Kalamazoo City in particular has been pretty innovative and experimental. It is the nature of experiments that sometimes they work,



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**Please send stories
and photos of your
rides to:**

editor@kalamazoobicycleclub.org

and sometimes they don't. When they don't, people get irritated. And that irritation can create a negative feedback loop where less innovation occurs.

I want KBC to be among the loudest voices encouraging safer streets. And safer necessarily means different. While we don't all agree on every change, change must occur if we want a healthier region and streets that work for everyone. Political leaders need to hear from us. They need to know that we notice and appreciate their work. We need to uphold our purpose. To that end, I am appealing to you to add your words to the conversation. You matter. Your voice may make the difference for safer streets *for decades*.

Elsewhere in this issue I have shared the results of a messaging brainstorm we held in August. You can borrow some sentences or use them to spark your own thoughts. You can write an email. You can visit a City Commission meeting and speak directly to the commission. You can mail a note to the commission. I know you can. And I'm asking you to do it.

KBC Business

The next KBC meeting will be **Tuesday, May 9** at 7:00 p.m. at [Oshtemo Community Center](#) (North Room), 6407 Parkview Ave, Kalamazoo MI .

Kalamazoo Bicycle Club August 8, 2023 Oshtemo Community Center

ATTENDANCE

Clark Bennett	Charlie Grdina	Paul Guimond
John Knowlton	Mike Krischer	Tim Krone
Teri Olbrot	Paul Sotherland	Pam Sotherland
Bill Surna	Gordy Vader	Paul Wells
Rick Whaley		

The meeting started at 7:00 pm with a message from President John Knowlton. John reiterated what he shared in July's Pedal Press about trying out a new format for the Club's monthly meetings. With the intention of connecting and reconnecting with the community and presenting interesting topics for our members, we will have a business meeting from 6:00 PM to 7:00 PM followed by a guest presenter at 7:00 PM. The goal is to connect with our membership and do something fun and entertaining at our meetings. John pointed out that we have a unique ability to engage with city officials and add value to club membership beyond our Club rides. Here is the speaker schedule for the next few months:

September: Isaac Green from Open Roads

October: A representative from League of Michigan Bicyclists

November: Kathleen Hoyle from the City of Portage (to be confirmed)

December: TBD

Other ideas to promote fun and engagement at meetings included hosting an occasional game night (Jeopardy, Trivia). Another suggestion was not to host a club ride that conflicts with our meetings.

Rick Whaley announced the South Haven Century Ride is coming up on August 26th. Meet at 8:00 AM in the KVCC parking lot in Texas Township. Rick also said he would like to pass on ride leadership for this ride to another member for future rides. John thanked Rick for his many years of leadership for this ride.

Paul Sotherland announced that City of Kalamazoo officials are at a “tipping point” regarding their support for non-motorized infrastructure. They are hearing a lot of negative messages from the motoring public, and it is essential that the cycling community speak up in support of the on-going changes and initiatives. John Knowlton led a Brainwriting exercise on how to communicate positive messages of support, including:

Attendance at Kalamazoo City Commission meetings, typically held on the first and third Monday of each month, at 7:00 PM.

Email the mayor, vice mayor, and city commissioners. For email addresses, see: <https://www.kalamazoo-city.org/Government/Mayor-Vice-Mayor-and-City-Commissioners>

Ride your bike on the new infrastructure and share constructive and supportive feedback with City leadership and other cyclists.

Paul also reminded those present that the City is planning a grand opening of the Parkview-12th Street roundabout this Thursday and encouraged KBC members to be present with their KBC jerseys as a sign of support.

Paul Wells announced that he is stepping down as Bike Camp chair and is looking for someone to continue in his place. John Knowlton responded that the EC wants to improve marketing for Bike Camp and thanked Paul for his leadership.

Meeting closed at 8:00 PM

Teri Olbrot, KBC Secretary

September 2023 Membership

Total Memberships: 321

Total Individuals: 494

New or Renewed Members: Kathy Braginton; Kerri Chapel; Neil Feliska; Brian Germain; Paul Guimond; Rick Hysell; Joshua Kling; Harry Snyder; Shane Thellman; Jeremiah Todd; Mike & Sharon VanderMeulen

August Expired Members: Travis Branderhorst; Dawn Gross & Family; Joseph Morton; Sam Schnepf; Jason Sparks

Rick Whaley, Membership Director



City of Kalamazoo – City Commission Remarks August 21, 2023

I am John Knowlton, president of Kalamazoo Bicycle Club. You may be surprised to know that KBC has more than 500 members.

I suspect that you have been getting a lot of feedback about bike lanes and other infrastructure updates. My purpose tonight is to thank you and encourage you. Kalamazoo is earning a reputation for having a lot of good things going on. In January I spoke with someone from the League of Michigan Bicyclists in Lansing. One of her first comments was really positive about how the city is building safer streets that include all users. And we had a new member join about 18 months ago when she moved from the desert southwest. She can't get over how beautiful it is and continues to be thrilled that her teenage kids can ride their bikes to the store, school and work.

Thanks:

Thank you for enacting and maintaining the five-foot passing rule. This ordinance reminds drivers to give bicyclists plenty of space when we're sharing the road.

Thank you for your emphasis on making streets safe for all users: pedestrians, cyclists as well as motorists. Bike lanes help non-motorized users feel seen, safe and welcomed. Many people ride bikes for exercise, but a lot of people on bikes can't afford a car or don't have a driver's license. Safer streets are a matter of justice for them and expand the workforce for city businesses.

Encouragement:

Nobody likes change and many of the complaints are just a reaction to change. Please continue to innovate and experiment. It is the nature of experiments that some work, and some don't. The planning and engineering department are trying new things. And they're doing it cheap, with paint and movable bollards before they pour concrete. You are empowering an innovation culture that will make Kalamazoo a jewel in the Midwest that others will want to copy.

You're doing great work! Stick with the plan. In a few years drivers will be used to the bike lanes, and cyclists will be accustomed to having safe places to ride. And No ONE will want to go back! Keep it up!

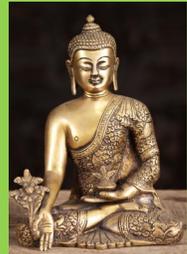
DA2



I am soliciting the membership for their observations for improvement, things that are working well and creative ideas that would improve the overall bicycling experience for riders in the community. One paragraph or two will fit the bill and it will be a work in progress. Send articles & associated photos to editor@kalmazoobicycleclub.org.

Calming Effects

I heard some very positive news today, 10 August 2023, at this month's meeting of the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study (KATS) Technical Committee. Dennis Randolph, City of Kalamazoo Traffic Engineer, reported on a pre-post study of traffic crashes on Park and Westnedge avenues. Though traffic engineers prefer to rely on data from three years, Dennis reported on data from the past 18 months, since the installation of the left-side bike lanes, and compared it with similar data from 2013-2019. There has been an 8% decrease (pre- to post-) in crashes on Westnedge and Park. Moreover, on other streets with newly installed bike lanes, and a commensurate narrowing of travel lanes for motorists, there has been a 39% (no...that's not a typo) decline in crashes. And, on Stadium Dr. there has been a 22% decline in crashes since the new configuration was completed last fall. Tell you what...traffic-calming measures sure seem to be having a positive effect. From a personal perspective, that positive effect feels better; driving and riding around seems less frenetic. What do you think?



Paul Sotherland , KBC Member

KBC Photo Contest

Everyone I know carries a camera with them nearly 24x7. Sometimes they even use it as a phone but are probably more inclined to use it as an alarm clock. Given the number of KBC members and the 1,000 's miles ridden in the many beautiful places , I know there are many a great photo sitting in your pockets just waiting to get out. The photo should be cycling related and have at least a bike or riders in the frame somewhere. You must have taken the photo yourself and not used any editing software to enhance the shot. The above picture was taken by Paul Guimond who did not see the rider who had been attached to this bike at one point. It was in Canada so they most likely had healthcare.



We will vote on the winner at the KBC meeting in October and the first place winner will take home **either** a sports car, Trek Domane e-bike or a KBC hat (yes, they are that nice). Please send photos to: editor@kalmazoobicycleclub.org along with a description of the photo (who, what and where) .

Charlie Grdina, KBC Editor

Infrastructure is (nearly) Forever!

In 1962 Michigan and Kalamazoo Avenues were converted to one-way streets. Engineers' objectives were to move automotive traffic through the city as quickly and efficiently as possible. And it worked - in the following year average traffic speeds were 11 mph higher! As the City of Kalamazoo seeks to re-make them into safer more welcoming streets, the important fact is the second word. We have had this 5 lane speedway for 61 years! It takes decades to change concrete and so the work done now may well last longer than most of us reading. That is why it is vitally important for cyclists' voices to be heard. City Commissioners are hearing lots of negative feedback about the infrastructure changes. We need to encourage them to stick with the plans, to push through the opposition and give them political cover to do unpopular things. At the August KBC member meeting we brainstormed messages that might be helpful to political leaders. The list of ideas is at the end of this article.



My Appeal: Please add your voice to the campaign to transform the streets. We need this to be an ongoing effort. I am writing 12 emails and using the “send later” feature of Gmail (next to the blue “send” button is a triangular drop down – click it at select “schedule send”). These messages will go to the commissioners monthly starting in September. You could do the same. Or, consider attending a City Commission meeting to share your comments at the beginning of the agenda. Here are their e-mail addresses if you choose to send a note:

mayor@kalamazoocity.org

cooneyd@kalamazoocity.org

hessj@kalamazoocity.org

praedelc@kalamazoocity.org

deckerq@kalamazoocity.org

hoffmans@kalamazoocity.org

juareze@kalamazoocity.org

Suggested Messages:

Bike lanes and non-motorized infrastructure is an invitation to non-motorists and a message that they are included and welcome on our streets. People want to feel seen, safe and secure. Bike Lanes help non-motorized users feel seen, safe and secure.

Please continue to measure the impact of updated infrastructure; we think it will show fewer accidents and safer streets.

Thank you for innovating and experimenting. There is an obvious change and willingness to try things. Keep iterating, measuring impact, and trying new ideas. It takes courage and we notice and appreciate it!

As you experiment, please consider before and after comparisons. It may take a few months or years for people to get used to a new idea, but once they do, they might like it!

Thank you for passing and maintaining the five foot passing ordinance.

Non-motorized infrastructure and bike lanes make shops, workplaces and hospitals more accessible and safer for bicycle commuters.

Thank you for your emphasis on non-motorized transportation. We see a sea-change in your approach and attitude!

It takes a long time, but investing in multi-modal transportation yields economic gains. Kalamazoo has done a great job with bike lanes and safety; we need to promote it with better signage and advertising locally and to visitors.

Safer roads make the city more attractive to businesses, visitors and people moving to Kalamazoo which may be more important in the future as environmental pressures to limit carbon use increase.

Ebikes are becoming more popular and they fit well with a lower carbon transport system.

People feel safer as they see more bikes, and this leads to more bikes and less cars.

Bikes take up a lot fewer parking spaces!

5th Fall Bike Celebration Weekend Coming Sept. 15-17

Scenic Rides-- Kids Bike Rodeo -- Farmers Market Cycle-In! -- Guided Tours -- & More

The FBC is coming! This year the Fall Bike Celebration Weekend offers a 7+ route **Bike Tour** (including gravel rides!), a kid's **Bike Rodeo**, a **Farmers Market Cycle-In!** event, guided tours of the **Vicksburg Historic Village** and **Vicksburg Mill Project**, plus fascinating live and online presentations, all during the third weekend in September from September 15-17. The weekend also highlights attractions in and around the charming village of Vicksburg, MI and raises awareness of the need to drive bike safely as the hours of darkness increase during the fall, with the help of many KBC members. Organized by Bike Friendly Kalamazoo, the "FBC" has consistently been followed by a generous donation to KBC -- so the more KBC riders, the better! For full details, see www.fallbikecelebration.org.

Two main events are scheduled for Friday Sept. 16. **The first 30 bicyclists to ride their bikes to the Vicksburg Farmers Market can receive a \$5 coupon good for purchases at the Farmers Market.** Another offering allows the public and area school groups to schedule guided tours of the Vicksburg Historic Village.

A free **Bike Rodeo** for children from the entire area is planned for the morning of Saturday Sept 16, courtesy of Safe Kids of Kalamazoo County. Bike Rodeos teach and encourage kids to ride bikes safely on a closed course set up with fun and realistic educational challenges. KBC members with kids or an interest in child safety and education are encouraged to attend and volunteer. The Rodeo will include a helmet check, a bike mechanical check, and a chance to have fun and exercise while learning the rules of the road. Saturday also features guided tours of the Vicksburg Historic Village *and* the Vicksburg Mill Project, a bicycle mural exhibit and an **Ice Cream Social at Apple Knockers Ice Cream Parlor with a free cone for pre-registered riders.**

On Sunday Sept. 17 the **Fall Bike Celebration Bike Tour** will offer routes that take cyclists back in time, starting and ending at the lovingly restored Vicksburg Historic Village while featuring views of Vicksburg Quilt Trail paintings. Cyclists can pick from scenic destinations all the way to **Shipshewana**, views that include Michigan's longest **covered bridge**, along the **Vicksburg Quilt Trail**, visiting **Scotts Mill Park**, through the village of Climax, as well as more bite-sized family-friendly routes. New for 2023 are gravel routes whose ride leaders include John Knowlton and Steve Cox. In addition, KBC members Bill Price, Kitty Vader and Paul Guthrie will be leading routes out at the start; others are expected.

Bill Adams, former Vicksburg Village President observes, "Vicksburg welcomes bicyclists and encourages everyone from the region to enjoy the Fall Bike Celebration. We are grateful for the support of the generous sponsors and wonderful in-kind supporters who make this fantastic fall bicycle festival possible."

The weekend long event is organized by civic leaders, local charities, and KBC members, packing the weekend with dozens of reasons to ride, showcase local amenities, provide ways to support bicycling, emphasize the need for motorist and bicyclist safety, and to have fun. Some activities are free, some require waivers and some may require children to be accompanied by an adult. KBC is donating 5 Foot Safe Passing yard signs to event participants and volunteers. The latest updates can be found at www.fallbikecelebration.org/schedule/.

"This year the Fall Bike Celebration will be more exciting and enjoyable than ever," observes KBC member / Bike Friendly Kalamazoo President Paul Selden. "We welcome everyone to enjoy the entire weekend at any level."

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Bike Friendly Kalamazoo (BFK) is a Michigan non-profit organization mission is to help make our greater community even more bicycle friendly. Its programs include funding the All Kids Bike Kindergarten PE program (thanks in part to a generous donation from KBC), public murals, grants and scholarships to support bicycle/motorist safety, education and infrastructure, all while fostering collaboration among local leaders and organizations to improve the quality of life. For more information and downloads of our fantastic, artist-designed posters, please see www.bikefriendlykalamazoo.org.



Good Things a Plenty in KZO !

I attended the recent talk that Matt Penniman, **League of Michigan Bicyclists**, gave providing the state of biking in Michigan. It was a very upbeat and positive 30 minute assessment of the state of bicycling here in Michigan as of August 2023. He indicated that e-bikes are really a catalyst for the uptick in cycling with e-bikes outselling e-cars by a wide margin. He indicated more charging stations are needed but that e-bikes are a very good fit for the 40-50 mile commute or less and are vastly more efficient than electric cars or public transportation.

The crux of what he spoke about was the increase in new infrastructure being dedicated to non-motorized transportation. He indicated the number one issue that deterred people from bicycling on existing road infrastructure is that they felt unsafe and that protected bike lanes were key to getting more people to commute by bicycle in their communities.

Matt then went on to cite to some of the progressive Michigan cities that have been making significant infrastructure improvements. He first cited the city of Ferndale and the massive improvements made on Woodward Ave. I was chomping at the bit writing down my input to the chat session about the many great changes we have been seeing in Kalamazoo when, faster than you drop two gears, he brought up the great changes that have been made to the infrastructure in Kalamazoo. Always nice to see the hard work of the traffic engineers, city planners and cycling advocates get recognized in Lansing. Helmets off to you all for your hard work making this happen – not an easy task rolling out changes of this magnitude.

Pictured below are members of the Kalamazoo Bicycle Club at the opening of the new roundabout on Parkview 11& 12th street. One of the first things I noticed coming over the hill for the first time was the slowing of traffic to navigate the roundabout – was kind of calming to be honest. The designated bike route sign was a pure bonus to see.



(photo provided by Pam Sotherland)

The other significant infrastructure project for the city of Kalamazoo has been the massive reworking of W. Michigan avenue going through downtown. As you can see from the picture below there is now a dedicated bike lane and the traffic lanes have been scaled back from 5 to 3. Recently constructed, I have only seen this new development from a car but look forward to riding this smooth ribbon of asphalt before the leaves turn color. It is not yet fully completed but a great start to safer cycling through the downtown corridor.



(photo provided by Paul Sotherland)

Matt also spoke of the [Michigan Transportation 5 year Plan](#). Yep, we got one and as involved citizens of this great state and nation, should read and comment on it. The Michigan Department of Transportation Five-Year Transportation Program has been released and is open for public comment until Sept. 8, 2023 [Comment on the MDOT 5YTP \(ujoin.co\)](#)

There is also a short, 5-7 minute, anonymous, for those of us still in witness protection, survey that the League of Michigan Bicyclist is conducting to help shape the future of bicycling in Michigan—your input is greatly appreciated. [LMB cycling Census Survey: LMB.org/survey](https://lmb.org/survey)

Matt closed the meeting on a hopeful and positive note. In his experience the hard work is getting the initial work off the ground, the community opening up to the changes and building the first 50% of the infrastructure. The final 50% is the downhill part of the ride. I believe we are well on our way to cresting that hill so keep your heads down, butts up and keeping pedaling on this effort—we will get there.

Charlie Grdina, KBC Editor

2023 Cycling Events.

Not all inclusive but looking to capture the main cycling events in the immediate (50 mile or so) area. Provided for informational content only — **KalTour, W-Ride Bike Camp and KBC Recovery Party** are KBC sponsored events. Get out and ride your bike !

[RACE SCHEDULE — MGRS \(michigan gravelraceseries.com\)](https://michigan gravelraceseries.com) - Link to all gravel races



<u>Event</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Link</u>
Paw Paw Vineyard Classic	10 September 2023	Vineyardclassic
Fall Bike Celebration	16-17 September 2023	www.fallbikecelebration.org
Lowell Gravel Race	28 October 2023	LOWELL CLASSIC GRAVEL ROAD RACE - Home (thelowell50.com)