

## **WALLOWA COUNTY CYCLING TOURISM DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE**

### **Application for Oregon's Economic Development Association award**

They won the **Economic Development Award of Excellence for Marketing & Promotions 2010**

A collaborative effort to develop bicycle tourism in Wallowa County. Over 100 contacts were made with entrepreneurs and tourism development partners within the region and statewide. Project activities included training in niche-tourism development with a pilot of the Rural Tourism Studio Workshops from Travel Oregon. Outcomes of the Rural Tourism Studio Workshop included identification of road and mountain bike routes for development of bicycle route maps. Funding requests were submitted and funds raised from private, non-profit and public sources to cover costs for design, printing and distribution of the maps. Volunteers assisted in route mapping and map design. 10,000 copies of each map will be distributed via Travel Oregon, Baker County Chamber, Union County Chamber, Wallowa County Chamber, USFS Wallowa Mtns Visitor Center, City of Enterprise, City of Joseph and local and regional businesses. The maps will also be available online at the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce and RideOregonRide websites. Several thousand maps will be distributed during Cycle Oregon's event in Wallowa County this month.

#### **1. What is the goal of the project?**

To develop a collaborative partnership to attract bicyclists to NE Oregon and continue to expand tourism opportunities and the businesses that support them.

#### **2. Who are the participants in this project? Who was involved in planning/implementation? Who is affected?**

Participants include NEOEDD (lead partner), USFS, Wallowa County Chamber, Travel Oregon, Eastern Oregon Visitor Association, Wallowa Resources, Eagle Cap Skip Club-Bicycle Committee, Joseph Hardware/Bike Shop, City of Enterprise, City of Joseph, Cycle Oregon, PacifiCorp, Wallowa County Ford Leadership class, Wallowa County GIS, and numerous community volunteers. NEOEDD, USFS, Wallowa Resources, Wallowa County Chamber and Wallowa County GIS, as well as community volunteers and local businesses who participated in the RTS workshop, were involved in planning and implementation. Tourists and local residents who wish to participate in cycling opportunities in Wallowa County will benefit from route information. Destination management organizations will now finally have a map product to use in responding to visitor inquiries. Local tourism businesses will have an additional tool to use to attract and serve visitors planning trips or already in Wallowa County.

#### **3. What has been the impact of the project? How effective has it been in furthering economic development in your community? Identify any tangible and/or intangible results and value added.**

Visitor information organizations, such as the USFS Visitor Center and County Chamber had no cycling maps to provide visitors. Visitors were often referred to the local bike shop for information. The bike shop owner assisted visitors as well as possible, but was uncomfortable having to make personal recommendations for each visitor. Now there is standardized information readily available in printed and electronic format. The project has provided the impetus for organizing and collaboration of businesses and other partners to support bicycle related development. This has involved both local organizing as well as outreach to regional, state and federal partners. Nine different strategies have been completed or are underway as a result of this project. These include a bike rack on the public transit van, the bike maps, trail development and signage, installation of more than 70 bike racks throughout the County, and development of bike lanes on key road routes. To date, NEOEDD has been able to leverage our initial \$5,000 investment to raise over \$27,000 in cash match and over \$5,000 in in-kind match for the nine different strategies, including the bike route maps. Cycling businesses in Joseph and La Grande have been able to retain and expand employment as a result of the increased interest in cycling. Joseph Hardware invested private funds to add-on to their existing store and has increased jobs in the bicycle repair/rental/sales department from 1 to 4. Local lodging businesses are offering special promotions for cyclists. Longer term projects, such as four proposed national scenic bikeways and a possible rail with trail along the Wallowa Union Railroad corridor, are expected to provide significant economic benefit as a regional attraction for tourism and recreation.

**4. Is this project replicable or transferable? Can it be adapted for use in other communities? What lessons have been learned?**

The project is definitely replicable and can readily be adapted for use in other communities. Lessons learned include engagement of community stakeholders, local businesses and outside resources; building off local assets in response to market trends and in keeping with community goals; having a lead organization with paid staff (need to find money to pay for their staff time) to organize and manage volunteers, partners, and provide financial management and fundraising support; ensure adequate communication with partners and the public on project accomplishments and needs; volunteers need to reward themselves and celebrate success.

**5. In what ways is this project innovative or creative?**

Creativity was a tool used in engaging stakeholders and planning for project activities.

**6. Are there any other relevant details not covered above or specific to your category?**

We have printed 10,000 copies of each map. We plan to reprint the maps in the future and add new routes and improved information. At that time we will use sponsorships to raise funds to cover printing costs and plan to charge a nominal fee, \$1 per map, to generate funding for future cycling related projects.