



FROGG

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Friends of the River of Grass Greenway

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website: www.evergladesROGG.org

FROGG, P.O. Box 5031, Everglades City, FL, 34139

email: snookcity@gmail.com

Spring 2022

NPC is the “2021 Supporting Agency of the Year”



Congratulations to Naples Pathways Coalition (NPC) for receiving the 2021 Florida Bicycle Association’s Award for Supporting Agency of the Year. NPC works to create safe, bikeable, walkable communities in Collier County, from its flagship project, the Paradise Coast Trail, to educational and public safety initiatives.

Pictured above is Michelle Avola-Brown, NPC Executive Director, accepting the award during NPC’s recent annual Bike Brunch at Lowdermilk Park with over 400 cyclists participating.

For more information, visit www.naplespathways.org.

Florida Bicycle Association Awards Everglades City Receives the “2021 Bicycle Friendly Community of the Year” Award



Each year the Florida Bicycle Association (FBA) recognizes various individuals, organizations, city and state officials, and communities for their contributions in promoting safe cycling. During its March 1 City Council meeting, Everglades City was the FBA recipient of the 2021 Bicycle Friendly Community of the Year Award. Everglades City received this distinction due to its effort during the past three years after being designated a Florida State Trail Town in 2019. The city provided bicycle racks throughout town, installed a Bike Repair Station and Dolphin Bike Rack at McLeod Park, and adopted the Everglades City Bicycle/Pedestrian Master Plan which will allow both cyclists and pedestrians safe alternative transportation throughout the community. Also, area churches have been welcoming bicycle tour groups through this area for over 10 years. Congratulations, Everglades City, City Council, and Mayor Howie Grimm for encouraging safe cycling!

Pictured above is FBA Vice-President Patty Huff presenting the award to Mayor Howie Grimm and the Everglades City Council at its March 1 meeting. For a full listing of all the recipients of the various annual awards given by FBA, visit website www.floridabicycle.org.

FROGG is committed to establishing the safe use by the general public of US41 across the Everglades between Naples and Miami, focusing on safety and environmental education and stewardship for those hiking, walking, and cycling through south Florida and the Everglades.

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Along the Tamiami Trail

US41 – West End

Thanks to FDOT District 1, it is now safer to cycle between Marco Island and Port of the Islands along US 41. The RPMs (Raised Pavement Markers) **have been removed** from the shoulders along this stretch of the Tamiami Trail! We appreciate this upgrade after many years of working together to improve this section. For safety, there is new white striping with the audible/vibratory markings along the edge of the shoulder. Thank you, FDOT!

US41 – Central

Interest in cycling through the Everglades continues, especially in the central section through the Big Cypress National Preserve along US41. At the intersection of SR29 and US41 in Carnestown the only open facility is the Marathon Gas Station which offers Subway sandwiches and snacks/drinks. Be prepared to take extra water and supplies along this route since this is the longest section with limited services. It is beautiful with native trees, birds, and alligators. You will find amenities at several locations: the Big Cypress Swamp Visitor Center, the historic Ochopee Post Office, Joanie's Blue Crab Café, Trail Lakes Campground (Skunk Ape Headquarters), H. P. Williams Roadside Park, Kirby Storter Roadside Park, Big Cypress Oasis Visitor Center, and Clyde Butcher's Big Cypress Gallery. Visit our website for a detailed map/brochure: <https://evergladesrogg.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/FROGG-Brochure.pdf>. **Note:** Miccosukee Indian Village is temporarily closed due to COVID-19, but the Gift Shop will remain open Wednesday – Sunday from 9:00 A.M. - 4:30 P.M. Visit website <https://www.miccosukee.com/> for updates and more information.

US41 – East End

FDOT asks motorists and bicyclists to use caution when traveling through construction zones along the east end of US41.

Monday, March 28 through Friday, April 1, 2022

Preparing the work zone along SW 8 Street/Tamiami Trail from east of the ValuJet Memorial to just east of S-334 control structure (about 1.5 miles west of Krome Avenue)

- Clearing the existing work zones
- Rebuilding sections of roadway within the work zones

Lane Closures

- Lane closure hours have been extended. Operations will take place between 9 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Motorists should be prepared to stop for up to 15 minutes at a time during the flagging operations. Please use caution while driving through the area.
- Lane closures will be posted on the department's project page. Work will be done in stages to minimize construction-related impacts.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS SCHEDULE MAY CHANGE DUE TO WEATHER OR UNEXPECTED CONDITIONS. For more project information, contact Construction Senior Community Outreach Specialist Heather M. Leslie at 305-905-5876 or at Heather@hmlpublicoutreach.com. Drivers are encouraged to log onto www.fl511.com to get real-time traffic and lane closure information.

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Cycling South Florida

by Thomas DeMarco

As a property owner in South Florida, one of the world's most vulnerable places to rising seas related to Global Warming, I've long endeavoured to minimize my personal Carbon Footprint. For over 30 years now, I've maintained a policy that No Engine Ever Runs Just For Me. No driving, no taxi, no motorboat, no lawnmower. I also discourage others from burning fuel for my sake, so when down here, I prefer to personally undertake the necessary displacement for visits with my three snowbird siblings, all motorists. This not only saves gas but also saves me from hearing pathetic complaints about traffic, a product of motorists' very own creation! By entirely avoiding the frustration of driving, I can accurately declare that I enjoy every moment of every day spent in Florida.

To visit my brother's family in Palm Beach County, I have 3 appealing e-friendly options...I can cycle the whole way, about 6 hours, mostly on the beautiful seaside A1A, usually with the benefit of the prevailing southeast wind... or I can board Tri-Rail or, even faster, Bright Line, with 35-minute bike rides on both ends of the journey. For my sister and brother on the Gulf Coast, I used to bag my bike at the Ft Lauderdale Greyhound station and bus across state, but this service was discontinued 2 years ago. I was told at the time that no alternative coach service was available. I've already biked the Tamiami and the Loop Road, and have also already done Tri-Rail to West Palm Beach, then cycling west. This time I decide to bike straight west from my Plantation home, as I always seek new roads to ride.

Harbouring a lifetime ambition of riding every street of Broward County, I'm particularly excited by the prospect of finally doing Snake Road, an outlier on the county's western edge. I've always been fond of snakes, and winding roads are a novelty down here. Leaving my condo before dawn, the first 13 kilometres will be the best of the day, along the New River Canal, Broward's longest segregated bike path. West of Markham Park, highway 84 is also fine. I often enjoy its wide paved shoulder in the company of local cycling club members. But beyond highway 27, Alligator Alley, aka I-75, becomes the only option and cyclists are not permitted on interstates, according to State Troopers. I am not convinced they are correct, as out west, where I'm from, the rule is clear: one may bike an interstate highway when there is no nearby alternative. Why would federal law vary from state to state? But at any rate, Plantation to Naples is a long way, especially against today's stiff northwest wind, so when I arrive at the toll booth, I click out of my pedals and resolve to turn adversity into advantage, to engage in a form of transport even more environmentally-friendly than bus, rail

or bike: hitch-hiking. It's the closest one can get to zero personal contribution to CO2 emission, as your benefactor's vehicle is not likely going to consume more fuel with its extra passenger, especially not in flat Florida! Hitch-hiking with a bicycle may seem a daunting prospect, but I long ago mastered the art. For this particular case, I have prepared a sign that reads \$20 FOR A RIDE TO THE NEXT EXIT. I don't wait long before kind Javier stops to offer me a lift in his pick-up, and he declines payment. In fact, he invites me to accompany him all the way to Naples but of course I decline, otherwise this story would not even qualify for FROGG's newsletter, and as far as I know, there are no hitch-hiking newsletters. As planned, I disembark at exit 49, where I load up on food at the new gas station. I'm amused by unsolicited advice to avoid riding Snake Road, as it is supposedly too dangerous, as it is narrow and curvy (the latter quality presumably the reason for its cool name). I've been issued similar warnings about western Maui's north shore, and about the hedgerow-lined backroads of rural England, both excellent road bike habitat. If I heeded every motorists' counsel regarding the risk of riding my bicycle, I never would have pedalled beyond the driveway of my childhood home in Ontario, beyond which Mum only allowed me to bike on condition that I stay "well off the road", which would have been...in the ditch! Snake Road indeed has no shoulder, but also very little traffic, so naturally it is a fine ride, except for the brisk headwind. In fact, I see few vehicles all the way to Immokalee, where I spot the first cyclists since Markham Park...and LOTS of them, and of my favourite breed: utilitarian! In fact, I'd say they constitute one of the highest transportation mode shares that I have seen anywhere in the state.

I roll into my sister's complex at Pelican Bay just after sunset, 179 bike kilometres and 42 hitch-hike kilometres from my place in Plantation. Though I am their first visitor ever to arrive by bike, there's no conversation about the day's journey, as my family long ago learned to take my biking for granted...even my mother did, eventually! I prefer it that way, as cycling really ought to be considered just as normal as driving. When patients recognise me on a bike back home in Whistler, BC, they'll often ask "are you out on a bike ride today, Dr DeMarco?" My reply is "no, I am going to buy toilet paper, actually."

The next afternoon I ride north to my brother's home in Estero. Though perhaps the world's worst example of runaway car-dependent noman's-land sprawl, I must grant Florida's SW coast at least 2 redeeming features...most of the main arterials are graced with bike lanes (good thing because there's rarely a viable option on quiet residential streets as most neighbourhoods are gated), and the motorists are definitely more patient and more courteous than those on the Atlantic side! I rarely hear a honk here.

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From Estero it's a 2-hour ride to Ft Myers the next day, where I bag the bike to board the Greyhound to return to Ft Lauderdale. Six weeks later, it's time to return to the Gulf Coast. In the meantime, I've learned that there are in fact 2 daily coach express services from Ft Lauderdale Airport to Naples, and both accept bicycles. But again, this newsletter is for cyclists, not bus passengers, so I forego RedCoach and FlixBus and choose to pedal west. On the map, Highway 27 from Weston to South Bay always looked like a dull choice with its 44 km without a single curve or intersection, and over 65 km with no services. But I've recruited my partner Hisano (rhymes with Shimano) so this time I'll have some company along the way, and I can take advantage of her substantial team-member discount at the new Hampton Inn in Clewiston en route...\$35 for room and breakfast! In return, I provide Hisano shelter of a different kind, as she drafts close behind me, reducing her exposure to the stiff headwind (yes, again!). Highway 27 proves to be just as monotonous as anticipated. We pedal 3 hours before we even see a house! Though bordered by the New River Canal the whole way, we don't see many birds either. Day's end is spoiled by construction along the Okeechobee bike trail between South Bay and Clewiston, rendering it almost unrideable. Day 2 is far superior as we zigzag our way southwest, mostly with a gentle tailwind. Highway 832 in western Hendry County is our favourite stretch...33 km with minimal traffic, paved shoulder and, unlike yesterday, lots of trees. Remarkably, we again travel over 60 km before the first opportunity for provisions, the Shell station in Felda. Ahead of schedule at this point, we elect to do a pleasant loop on routes 830 and 830A, almost car-free.

Unfortunately there will be no more quiet riding west of Immokalee. We end up covering 285 km over the course of the 2 days. For our return trip east a couple of days later, my brother in Estero has just acquired a new bike rack for his car and insists on driving us back to Plantation. He says he's going that way anyway, to visit a friend, so I can declare the trip carbon-neutral hitch-hiking.

After a total of 53 days and almost 5000 kilometres of cycling in South Florida this winter, now I'm undertaking another journey west. Not so environmentally-friendly this time, I'm flying home to British Columbia to get back to work, and to get back to biking on the snow and the ice to fetch my toilet paper and groceries. Sometimes I wonder why an avid cyclist like me has chosen to spend most of his professional career in the Arctic and in a ski resort....maybe because it makes South Florida all the more appealing! As for next winter, I already have plans for 2 more bicycle itineraries to the Gulf Coast assisted by 2 novel modes of low-carbon transport...any guesses what they may be?



Marin Museum of Bicycling

by Patty Huff

Last month while visiting my daughter and her family in California, my 14-year-old grandson (who has recently discovered his passion for mountain biking) and I walked to nearby Fairfax to tour the Marin Museum of Bicycling which also happens to be the Mountain Biking Hall of Fame headquarters.



Any cyclist would enjoy spending hours learning about the history and admiring the multitude of bicycles from several generations on display. Marin County has been the epicenter for mountain biking enthusiasts for over 50 years. We were fortunate enough to have Joe Breeze (pictured above) as our guide, giving us his first hand knowledge and experience of the role of mountain biking in the Marin community. One of my favorite exhibits highlights women, in particular Jacquie Phelan whom I had met several years ago. If you can't visit in person, go online to <https://mmbhof.org/>.

"I'll tell you what I think of the bicycle. I think it has done more to emancipate women than any one thing in the world"

Susan B. Anthony (1896)

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