

# State promotes bike safety at Ocean City bike path

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OCEAN CITY - The state Division of Highway Traffic Safety promoted bicycle safety Tuesday at the city's new bikeway on Haven Avenue. Director Pam Fischer led dozens of city police and residents on a ride down Haven Avenue, a road that uses a reduced 15 mph speed limit and ample stop signs to discourage car traffic and give bicyclists a safer place to move north and south on the island. Bicycling is the preferred mode of local travel for many visitors and residents, particularly in the summer when traffic is heavy and parking scarce. In the mornings, the city's Boardwalk makes a good bike route. But the city wanted a route to get people safely downtown from 34th Street. Fischer said New Jersey drivers must learn to share the road with bicyclists. She noted that the state already has seen 11 fatal bicycle crashes this year, one shy of last year's totals.

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Frequently, bicyclists are at fault for not obeying the rules of the road, she said. "I drove up Eighth Street, and I almost had a collision with four bicyclists," she said. "We'll work with bike rentals and bike shops to plaster New Jersey with reminders to bicyclists that they are like a vehicle. They have to obey the same rules." In some cases, bicycling presents cultural confusion since Eastern Europeans are taught to pedal against oncoming car traffic, Fischer said. Illegal immigrants often resort to bicycling because they can't get a driver's license and might be unfamiliar with local traffic rules.

Meanwhile, the Community Arts Project unveiled its latest sculpture on Ninth Street, which features a steel bicyclist atop a silver wave. Somers Point artist Jose Chora, 52, designed and built the 12-foot-tall sculpture. He said it took about eight weeks to shape the 1,250-pound project. Chora said the artwork serves a useful purpose in denoting the start of the Haven Avenue bikeway. "It's an excellent way to convey a public message," he said.

Drew Fasy, chairman of Mayor Sal Perillo's advisory council on physical fitness, said he envisions the Transportation Center one day serving as a rest stop with shade and water fountains for bicyclists coming over the new Route 52 causeway, which will boast its own bike lane.