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HOW TO  
SEIZE POWER  
& GET YOUR WAY

*Or: How does bike advocacy actually work  
and why does it take so long?*

Hello, my name is Colin and I am a grumping-on-the-internet addict. For a long time, Twitter was my medium. With a quick, biting remark and a couple of @ symbols I could publicly shame government agencies, corporations, or my neighbors into doing what I wanted—usually just stop parking in the bike lane or honking at me on my ride home.

That was the idea at least. In reality, it was mostly just therapeutic venting. Don’t get me wrong, therapeutic venting is important. Riding your bike can be stressful and if using a few exclamation points or four letter words on the internet helps relieve that stress, great.

But what does it take to move beyond grumping and actually make biking better? What do we actually do all day in the WABA office? Well, you’ll probably be pleased to know that mostly it isn’t Twitter.\*

Bike Advocacy work likes most other types of advocacy. It has three basic steps:

**1.** We pinpoint the change we want. This is often more challenging that it sounds. A strong advocacy ask benefits from clarity and specificity. “More bike lanes!” is great priority, but less compelling as an advocacy ask than “We want a two-way protected bike lane on this stretch of road because it connects two major trails and a retail destination.” Or, at the structural level “Stop being so afraid to take space away from cars” might translate to “We want the County to prioritize active transportation by replacing the car-centric Level of Service engineering standard with the bike and pedestrian Level of Stress standard.” WABA has dozens of specific projects and campaigns we are working on, guided by a set of 10 advocacy priorities. You can read more about them at [waba.org/priorities](http://waba.org/priorities).

**2.** Identify the people who have the ability to enact that change: Often, but not always, these folks are elected legislators or leaders at government agencies. The DC region is something of a jurisdictional labyrinth, so the ability to find the right decision maker is important. Our Advocacy team keeps track of who’s in charge of in what in the various departments and agencies that work on bike related issues across our region.

**3.** Convince the decision makers to make the right decision. This is the hard part. It would be convenient if a well reasoned argument were sufficient to make this happen, but in most cases it isn’t. Instead, we look what levers we have to influence their decisions.

Though lawmakers and civil servants feel pressure from many places, at WABA we primarily work with two levers:

Understanding jurisdictions, regulatory structures and policies. This is important. As great as it would be to tell our local DOT “Just build the bike lane!” things don’t generally work like that. Depending on who controls the road (is it a federal highway? state road? county? local? the National Park Service?) and how a project is funded, there are a number of regulatory and bureaucratic hurdles that need to be overcome. Traffic studies, public input periods, environmental assessments, contracting processes for both design and implementation — a project can stall at any one these points. Being able to answer the question “What’s the hold up?” is an important part of what we do, because it ensures that bike advocacy’s most powerful resource (see below) is being used efficiently.

So what is bike advocacy’s most powerful resource? Well, it’s you, of course. Without you, WABA is just a dozen people in a basement office. But with the more than 5,000 of you who are

Peter M. Baskin

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## MEMBER CORNER: Tips, Tricks & Advice



by Jen Hovis,  
WABA member from Alexandria, VA

I first heard the term shoaling in the context of biking only about a year ago. It can also refer to a large school of fish, a sandbar, or something far too complicated for me to decipher related to wave energy.

As a bicycling behavior, shoaling is the act of passing stopped bicyclists at an intersection so that you can pull out at the front of the pack when it is time to proceed. It's much like a driver that passes the long line of cars stopped on an exit ramp in order to jump the line right at the last second. And how does it make you feel when you're in one of those cars diligently waiting your turn at the exit? I tend to scream "Cheater!" at the top of my lungs.



The author, enjoying her commute.

Shoaling is not cool, folks. It's unpredictable behavior that can startle the stopped bicyclists. It's also aggressive, disrespectful and just plain rude. The worst thing about shoaling is the sense that the person doing it is surely thinking "Get out of my way! I'm faster or fitter than you!" That's harsh.

There are lots of us on the road now, and our numbers are growing. (and how awesome is that?) Let's respect everyone's place along the bikeways and set a better example than the "cheater" on the exit ramp. Let everyone proceed thru the intersection as they arrived - you will get an opportunity to pass in the travel lane if you really are moving faster.

Got a tip? Send it to  
[rideon@waba.org](mailto:rideon@waba.org)

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members, and the 40-odd thousand of you who read our emails and take action, we are collectively a force to be reckoned with. Your phone calls and emails to your elected officials, your conversations in the grocery store with your neighbors, your standing up and speaking at a community meeting, are what moves a bike project from a neat idea on the internet to a reality you can pedal on.



Does this mean we shouldn't grump on the internet anymore? By no means! Social media spaces are online coffee shops—noisy, rowdy places where you find yourself connecting to fellow grumpers, commiserating, conspiring, looking for ways to focus your energy and amplify your message. Then at some point you look around and hey, you're bike advocates! Welcome!

\* But you should follow us anyway, if only for the cheesy puns. We're @WABADC.

Get involved at [waba.org/advocacy](http://waba.org/advocacy)

### *The Prince George's County Action Committee and Suitland Road: A Coalition Case Study*

Every day, we work with elected officials, policy makers, and government staffers towards policies and real improvements that make the region a better place to ride a bike. They know that when we speak up for an issue, we stand with over five thousand area members who share our mission. But, with limited budgets and competing interests, we are most convincing when community organizations and groups are with us too.

Since last winter, our Action Committee for Prince George's County has been advancing a campaign to install protected bike lanes on Suitland Road, a state highway in central Prince George's. With extra-wide travel lanes and proximity to Metro, a federal center, businesses, and DC's bike lane network, Suitland Road is an ideal choice for the county's first protected bike lane. To get from the idea to construction, though, we knew we needed enthusiastic buy in from local partners.

In February, the Suitland Civic Association invited us to present our concept for protected bike lanes at their monthly meeting. Though most attendees would not describe themselves as people who bike, many were interested in hearing more about making Suitland Road safer, more accessible, and bikeable. So in April, with the Suitland Civic Association and Black Women Bike DC, we hosted a community walk on Suitland Road to see the challenges of walking and biking, discuss possible solutions, and find common ground. Following honest feedback and insightful discussions, we all walked away with infectious ideas, new relationships, and a rough plan for approaching agencies together to make it happen.

Our Safer Suitland Road campaign still has a long way to go, but with support from invested community organizations and neighbors, we know that we are on the right track.

Learn more about the project at [waba.org/campaigns](http://waba.org/campaigns)

### *The Long Road to a Rebuilt Rock Creek Trail: A Case Study in Bureaucratic Navigation*

The Rock Creek Trail is, at present, a pretty unpleasant experience on a bike. Roots and washouts have damaged an already rough, narrow trail surface. Outdated trail design elements like sharp corners and detours onto narrow sidewalks next to busy roads add unnecessary stress to the route.

At long last, the trail, along with Beach Drive, will be completely rebuilt beginning this fall, but why did it take so long? Plans to rehabilitate the trail have been in the works since the late 1980s. Federal recreational trail funding for design and construction was established more than a dozen years ago. Then the federal Environmental Assessment (EA) planning process stalled for more than eight years. During the initial planning and scoping for the project, talks between the District Department of Transportation and the National Park Service got stuck on a core issue: trail width. DDOT, as the agency funding and constructing the trail, wanted the trail to be 10 feet wide. Rock Creek Park, as the agency with jurisdictional control and administrative authority over the land, rejected widening the trail for its entire length, citing negative impacts to the environment. Progress on the

project halted as neither agency took responsibility for the hold up.

WABA's advocacy team eventually identified this disagreement the source of delay, then channeled the community's frustration into a request for compromise so the project could move forward. Eventually, NPS and DDOT agreed to widen most of the trail to 10 feet, except for a few pinch points where the eight-foot width would remain. With middle ground reached, the environmental assessment process restarted. DDOT released a draft EA in December 2011, but after a short

public comment period, momentum disappeared again.

Once again, WABA's advocacy team did some investigating. This time, we found no substantive reason for the delay. We mounted a broad public petition and press campaign to re-engage DDOT's attention, asking the agency to finalize the EA document and move the project forward.

DDOT released the Final EA last year and, with the Park Service and Federal Highways administration, is planning to begin construction this fall. The project will take about two years.



A wider trail through this tunnel is coming soon. Photo by Flickr user neilfein



# GROWTH, PROGRESS, GOOD WEATHER

*Bike to Work Day 2015  
in pictures.*

On May 15th, more than **17,500 people** rode their bikes to work. For **6,800** of those riders, this was their **first bike commute**.

Riders visited 79 pit stops across the region—from Leesburg to Bowie, and from Frederick to Dumfries.

14,000 bright orange t-shirts and a thousand gallons of coffee later, we call it another successful Bike to Work Day!

*Did you catch a great photo on you ride? Share it with us! We're @wabadc on most social media channels, or send it to [rideon@waba.org](mailto:rideon@waba.org)!*



Sarah Stuart Walters

Overflow bike parking at Reston-Wiehle Station



Aline Newman

Sun and smiles on the Mount Vernon Trail in Alexandria





Colin Browne



Greg Billing

At the Freedom Plaza pit stop, DDOT's Sam Zimbabwe and Leif Dormsjo announce the installation of protective barriers along Pennsylvania Ave



Leah L. Jones

Trike traffic in College Park



Katherine Campanile

Family Commuting in Mt. Rainier



Ryan Lovin



Ryan Lovin

Cycle chic in the District's protected bike lanes.



Erica Flock

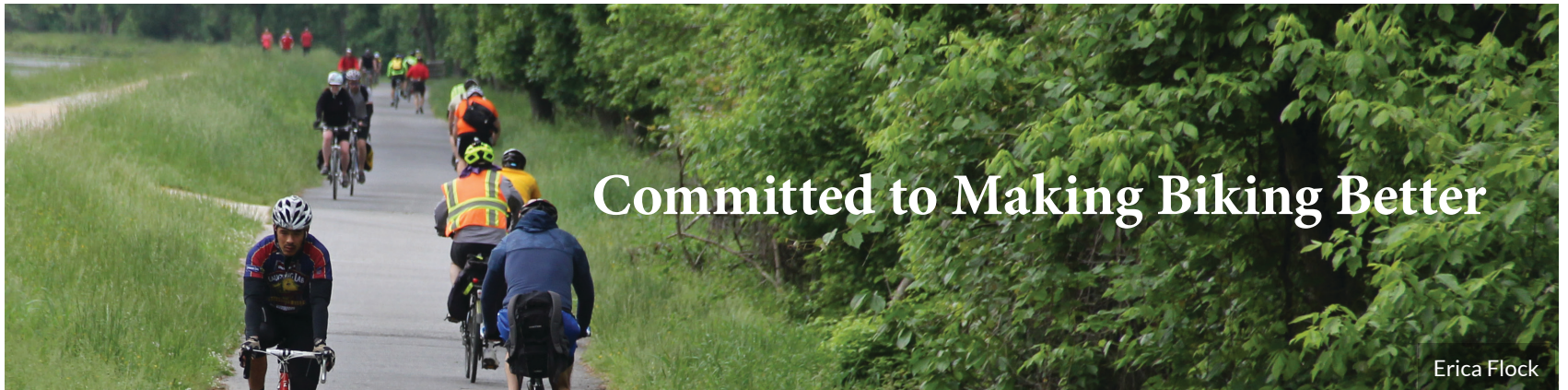
Practically a traffic jam on the Capital Crescent Trail



Linda Keenan

Convoy rollout in Silver Spring





*We've been taking some time recently to really get to know a few of our longtime supporters. These folks have been donating to WABA over and above membership for more than a decade. Their financial commitment helps boost our mission and expand our programming in ways that are often untested, and therefore, sometimes difficult to fund. What we heard back was inspiring and we wanted to share their stories.*

**Mike Morency** has never lived in the area and has never ridden on one of our many bike lanes. (He lives on a farm in Loudoun County) But he's been donating to WABA since 2002 after hearing about WABA's work through Adventure Cycling, another group he's been involved with for years. Mike feels that what we do is so important, and he wants to be a part of our support network. Mike likes our work promoting bike commuting which he feels leads to touring by bike, which Mike has enjoyed over the years.

**Marjy Jones** commuted by tandem with her husband from their home in Alexandria to their offices downtown for years. Now working out of her home, she misses those rides every day. She was lucky that her former employer was progressive enough to provide showers and accommodations in the mid-90s to enable her commuting choice.

Bicycling still makes her feel like a kid, and she is so glad that WABA is there to advocate for bicyclists. Sometimes, it's just someone she knows she can express a concern or frustration to, about an abrupt end to a bike lane or the behaviors of car drivers. She loves that WABA keeps her updated on issues, and provides critical education for cyclists as they navigate a rapidly changing and expanding landscape.

**Richard Reis** has been supporting WABA since 1998, the same year he applied for and received an official Bicycle Permit from WMATA so he could take his bike on the train after rush hour and on weekends. Years ago, Rich, along with WABA, was also a prime mover behind getting the bike racks on the buses, a feature which he still uses frequently. His days as a bicycle commuter led him, like Mike, to many long distance tours including one from Pittsburgh to Silver Spring in 2013! He's happy to see Montgomery County making some inroads with better bicycling infrastructure and knows how much WABA is doing to make this happen. Someday he hopes to be able to ride easily to his daughter's house in Baltimore.

And then there are people who can mark their time as WABA supporters to the length of time they've actually worked

in the field. **Charlie Denney** who is now a principal with Alta Bikeshare is one. In the early-90s, Charlie started out as a planner but quickly fell in love with the emerging bicycling field, so was able to re-position himself and get into the bike planning field as it was taking off. He's been standing with WABA ever since. He knows our regional impact is close to exploding: the distances are just right for bike travel, Fairfax has a master bike plan now and along with Arlington County can implement those plans as they proceed with a robust street repaving schedule. He says WABA "puts a good face on bicycling" that it's not just for commuters, or road racers, but for everyone, daily.

All of these long-standing supporters and others like them, have helped make WABA what it is today. Even though Mike, Marjy, Richard, and Charlie don't have a desk in our office, they are a critical part of our WABA team and we thank them for helping us make our region one of the best in the country for bicycling.

*Do you include WABA in your philanthropic giving? Tell us why! [rideon@waba.org](mailto:rideon@waba.org)*

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# Thank you for being a WABA Member!

WABA represents the interests of bicyclists throughout the D.C. region. Since 1972 we have been the regional advocates for bicycling for health, transportation, and recreation. Our mission is to create a healthy, more livable region by promoting bicycling for fun, fitness, and affordable transportation; advocating for better bicycling conditions and transportation choices for a healthier environment; and educating children, adults, and motorists about safe bicycling.

We could not do this work without the financial stability your membership provides. Thank you.

As a WABA member, you enjoy incredible member benefits, including:

WABA-Related:

- ★ A team of advocates and organizers working every day to make biking better in our region.
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- ★ Subscription to RideOn, WABA’s newsletter (Hi!)
- ★ Most WABA rides are members only!
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- ★ Discounts at over 50 area bike shops



## Do you own or manage a local business?

Join WABA as a Business Member and become part of our community of area cyclists. Whether your desire is to encourage a more bike-friendly environment for customers, employees, and the larger bicycling community, or to broaden your customer base, supporting WABA as a Business Member helps us build a truly bikeable region, where everyone can ride where they need to go safely and conveniently.

We offer two levels of business membership. Find the one that fits your business at [waba.org/biz](http://waba.org/biz)

For more information, contact Sarah Katz-Hyman at [membership@waba.org](mailto:membership@waba.org) or call (202) 518-0524 x 203.

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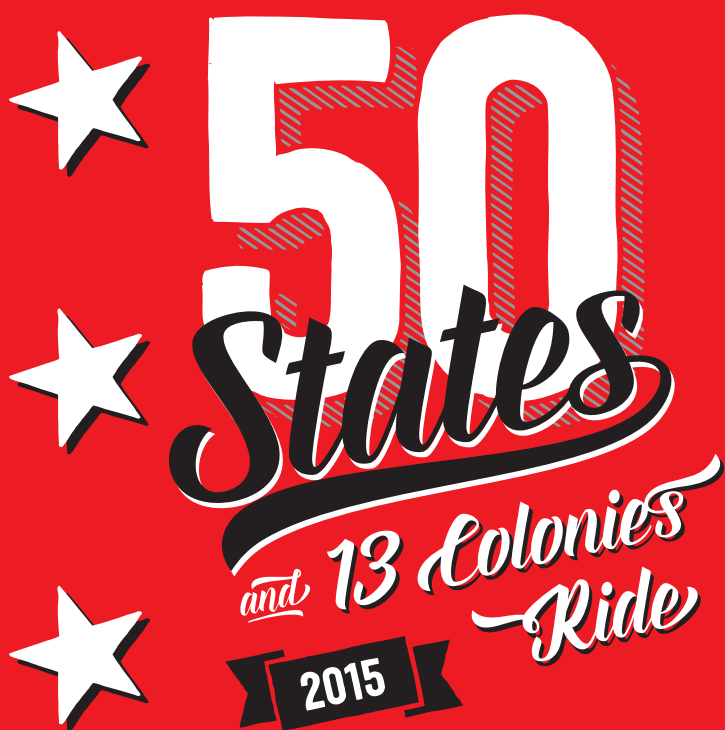
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Mark your calendar.

**September 12.**

Registration opens August 11.



MORE AT [WABA.ORG/EVENTS](http://WABA.ORG/EVENTS)

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- ★ How Bike Advocacy works
- ★ Advocay Case Studies: The Rock Creek Park Trail & Protected Bike Lanes on Suitland Road.
- ★ Bike to Work Day photo recap

Photo: Martin Moulton



We had a blast piloting our Bike Camp program this year! Email [education@waba.org](mailto:education@waba.org) to join our interest list for next year.

RIDE ON  
SUMMER ★ 2015

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