

*Bicycles + bicyclists
msu - Cyclists for a Cleaner America*

Bicycles out-pace autos in commuter race

By TONI PELLILLO
State News Staff Writer

Did you ever seriously consider trading in your Volkswagen for a Schwinn?

The results of "The Great Bike Race," a commuter contest sponsored on campus Tuesday by MSU Cyclists for a Cleaner America, make the idea seem practical, especially for North Campus drivers.

Seventeen teams of cyclists and auto drivers, complete with red ribbon armbands, left different University buildings amid rush hour campus traffic and "raced" to destinations on predetermined routes. The driver was to plot on a map the exact spot, if and where, he passed the cyclist.

Data compiled from race results showed that an average distance of 2.7 miles was travelled by cyclists before the auto drivers passed the bikes. One cyclist travelled 6.3 miles before his auto partner finally passed him. The fastest auto journeyed 1.3 miles before overcoming the slowest bike rider. Approximately one-half of the cyclists reached their destinations before their auto partners did.

A spokesman for race participants said bike riders peddled from campus to surrounding areas like Indian Hills Estates in Okemos and White Hills Estates in East Lansing. Some riders made it midway to the Capitol.

According to data given by MSU Cyclists for a Cleaner America, between 50 and 60 per cent of the people driving on campus live within a four-mile radius of campus or within bicycling distance. A group spokesman said he hopes the results from the "Great Race" will urge more people to bicycle, especially in the North Campus area, for health and environmental reasons.

None of the participants were professional cyclists. Bikes used in the race ranged from auction "specials" with coaster brakes to 10-speed bikes.

Among the contestants were Provost John E. Cantlon and Louie Bender, State News columnist. Their route was from the Administration Building (where Bender had conveniently parked his bike just seconds outside the door) to Cantlon's home on Rosewood Avenue in East Lansing.

Bender said he arrived at Cantlon's house first. Seeing he was in the lead, Bender proceeded on to M-78 and waited there for

about three minutes before Cantlon arrived.

The victory was an easy one, Bender said.

"I had forgotten how much fun it is to ride a bike," he said.

When asked whether he found the five-minute ride to be strenuous, Bender commented that he did endure some physical pain.

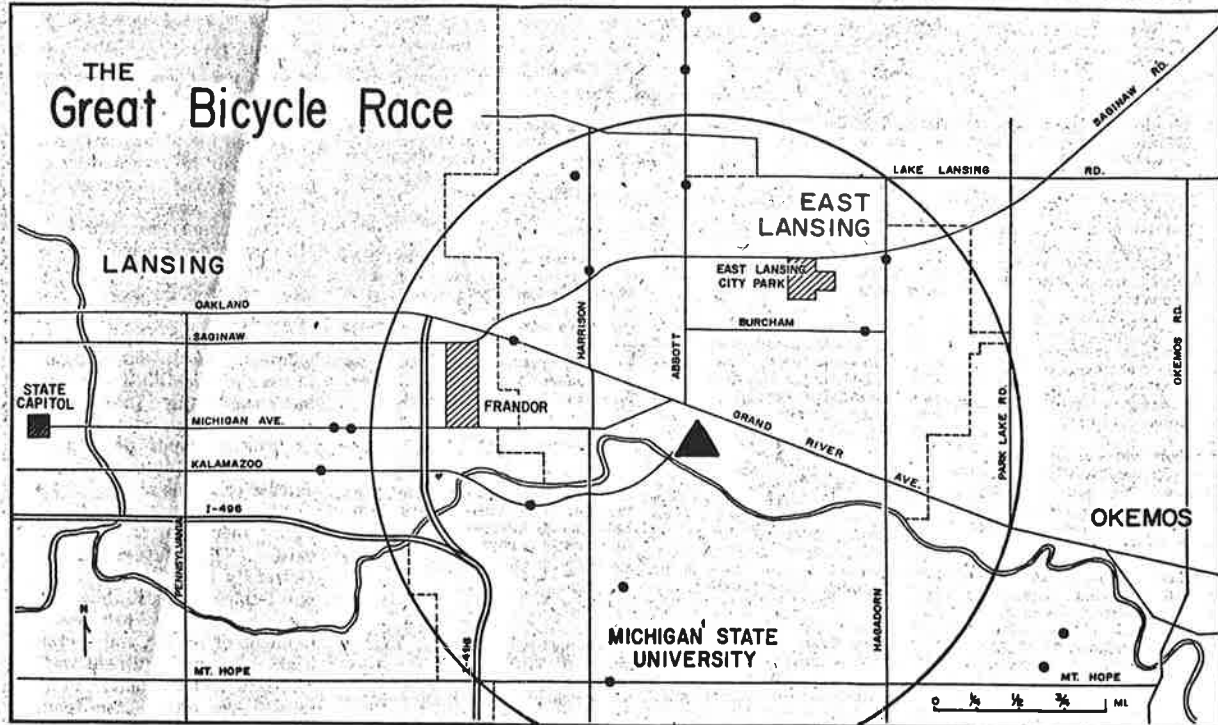
"Every single one of my toe nails hurts," he said.

The cyclists are now planning future races to increase their data sampling. The plans include a questionnaire survey on bicyclists' habits and behavior. Typical questions asked were: how often do cyclists use their bikes for transportation, does weather affect their cycling?

From such data, members hope to begin planning safe bicycle routes for travel in Lansing, East Lansing, Okemos and the surrounding area.

Improved cycling conditions on campus cannot be changed unless there is a significant increase in the number of bicycles used, a spokesman said. As of October, 1970, when maintenance workers took a count of bikes at MSU, 4,900 two-wheelers were found. In 1965, when the bus system began, there were about 8,000 bicycles on campus, he said.

MSU has one of the oldest campus bicycle path systems in the nation.



Two-wheeled, pedal-powered vehicles scored a clean sweep in "The Great Bicycle Race," run Tuesday amid rush-hour campus traffic. Competitors included 17 matched teams, each with a cyclist competing against an automobile driver following the same pre-determined route off campus. Dots on the above map, furnished by the sponsoring Cyclists for

a Cleaner America, indicate the exact points at which drivers finally overtook the cyclists. The triangle indicates the central starting point on North Campus. The circle represents the average area within which cycling is the faster means of transportation between the campus and residences in the surrounding area.