

## **PR update for the past year**

In the year since our last Annual Meeting, PR produced by the Eastern Trail Alliance has risen sharply in an attempt to keep pace with the phenomenal growth and use of the trail. Our little office has continuously refined and expanded our list of local media contacts to include radio stations and the community relations department at Southern Maine Medical Center, as well as newer newspaper and broadcast media contacts. Press releases and trail events are now routinely disseminated to all of the above and posted to the online community calendars of the likes of MPBN and WCSH-6, as well as to the Google calendar imbedded on the ETA website.

As a result, attendance for a growing number of volunteer and staff-led events has consistently ranged from 10-20 participants each. In addition, the trail has seen a jump in the number of events held by outside groups, which themselves have attracted much larger attendance totals. To date, roughly a dozen separate events by outside groups, including the Biddeford YMCA and SMMC have announced events to be held on various sections of the trail in 2012.

In addition, outreach for the Maine Lighthouse Ride has been boosted by the addition of media contacts outside of Maine, and a campaign to distribute MLR brochures to bicycle shops throughout New England. Partner organizations such as the Bicycle Coalition of Maine and the East Coast Greenway Alliance have helped spread the word by adding MLR brochures to rider packets for their own events, and by posting the MLR (among other ETA events) to their online calendars. These efforts very likely have contributed to an increase of roughly 200 registrants for last year's ride. Brochures have already been mailed to bike shops for the 2012 MLR, and we hope for the same or greater results as last year.

Of course, the PR efforts of our organization were assisted by the Maine Turnpike Authority – which headed up the PR for the opening ceremony of the Eastern Trail Turnpike Bridge – and by the greater visibility of the trail itself via that bridge and the newly-christened John R. Andrews Bridge over Route 1 in Saco. This greater visibility may have helped create a snowball effect in online public awareness, as our Facebook fan page now has roughly double the number of fans than it did just one year ago. As of yesterday, that's 828 people receiving an update from the ETA whenever we post something new on our page wall.

Much has been accomplished through our PR efforts, and much remains to be done to spread awareness and support for this vital community resource.

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