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EVANSTON CYCLISTS REAFFIRM RIGHT TO STREETS **New monthly bike event to create community and foster change**

Cyclists in 300 cities worldwide celebrate their devotion to cycling as a means of transportation by way of a monthly "Critical Mass" ride; typically on one Friday a month, large groups of bicyclists join together and ride en masse, temporarily and peacefully taking the street back from cars. Citizens of Evanston, IL., hoping to speed the pace of their city's progress toward becoming a safe place to ride a bike, have now come together to add another city to the list.

The first Evanston Critical Mass ride, held on Friday, May 5, was a resounding success, with 50 people in attendance. Riders came for many reasons: to advocate for cyclists' rights, to promote bicycling as an alternative to America's environmentally destructive "car culture," and to enjoy the sense of freedom, community and celebration that the rides embody. "It was a beautiful night for a bike ride," said Vic Sholis, a 61-year old retail manager. "And it was a great, diverse group. There were a couple of kids with their parents. Lots of high school and college-age people attended, including Northwestern University students. There were also some folks from the Evanston Bike Club, and even a few near-senior citizens like me." Several riders brought mobile sound systems, according to Sholis, playing music that ranged from classical to Bob Dylan to hip hop.

In Evanston, riders meet at 6 PM on the first Friday of every month in Fountain Square, at the intersection of Davis, Sherman, and Orrington in downtown Evanston (two blocks east of the CTA and Metra Davis Street stops).

The next ride takes place on Friday, June 2, 2006.

"Critical Mass is a unique event in that it has no formal leaders or organizers", according to participant Max Lavine, 18, of Evanston. "Instead, the ride operates using a process known as xerocracy, in which any rider can distribute flyers promoting a proposed route."

Emilou Kinsella, 17, of Evanston, explains, "Not only does the ride prompt you to collaborate with your fellow riders, but it also leaves you free to associate with pedestrians, something you could never do in a car." "People on the street get involved too" adds Emily. "The energy is just contagious; sharing music, conversation, and knowledge are the things that make Critical Mass, and bike riding in general, so enjoyable."

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