

# High School Bike Ed Program Grows Amid State Budget Cuts

BY LYNETTE CARPIET

SANTA CRUZ, CA—California's fiscal woes have put school administrators in a bind as they wrestle with shrinking budgets and cuts to state-funded programs. Luckily, Bike Shop at School, Santa Cruz County's bicycle education program, remains alive and well.

The course, which debuted at Harbor High School in January 2007, is expanding to two other local high schools this fall. The main reason it's able to continue

is that it's funded almost entirely through Project Bike Trip, a nonprofit formed to administer the program.

Project Bike Trip provides teaching materials and raises money to set up the classrooms with bikes and tools while the instructor's salary comes from the Regional Occupational Program instead of the school district's budget. ROP is a career technical education and training program.

"All we need to do is show interest from students,"

said Julie Mitchell, executive director of Project Bike Trip. A minimum of 22 must enroll, but that hasn't been a problem. Mitchell said one high school wanted it so badly that it put in matching grants to fund the classrooms.

"I'm thrilled to provide this opportunity for our students," said Casey O'Brien, a competitive cyclist and principal of Aptos High School, which will offer the course for the first time. "It will not only provide students with valuable life skills and professional career pathways, but also serve as a hub of activity around the benefits of cycling and environmental awareness."

## SO SIMPLE



545RR PREMIUM HITCH MOUNTED BICYCLE CARRIER



#### US DISTRIBUTORS:

Action Bike  
Downeast Bike  
Hawley USA  
J & B Importers  
KHS Bicycles  
Lexco Distributors  
Seattle Bike Supply

#### CANADIAN DISTRIBUTORS:

Babac Bicycle,  
D'Amour Bicycle & Sport

The ALL NEW 09 Allen Sports bicycle racks are so much easier to operate, while providing great margins, amazing sell through and always comes with our lifetime warranty. It's so simple, it's Allen Sports.

**ALLEN**  
SPORTS

www.allensportsusa.com  
1.800.722.5536



Photo by Craig W. Smith

Kirk Bernhardt, who put in time repairing bikes in Santa Cruz Bicycles' warranty department, taught the pilot class at Harbor High School.

Bike Shop at School is a one-year high school course in bicycle assembly, maintenance and repair that teaches basic mechanical skills in preparation for an entry-level job at a retail shop. Bike industry members who have worked at retail or at the manufacturing level teach the class after taking a few credential classes.

Berri Michel, owner of Bicycle Trip, came up with the idea after noticing how most retailers struggle to find trained and qualified bike mechanics. She launched the pilot using grant money from a foundation her parents started to purchase the bikes and tools.

Her store remains a sponsor of the program, giving students a place to go for discounted parts and offering one to two internships per year.

"Bike Shop at School holds a lot of promise, not only for the students, but for the industry as well," said Bill Armas of Park Tool, a longtime supporter and board member of Project Bike Trip. "The shortage of mechanics is an issue that shops deal with every year."

Last fall, Project Bicycle Trip launched an after-school middle school program called Bike Club at School that goes over some of the same material but adds more advocacy, safety and cultural elements of cycling. And further expansion is in the works.

"I'm currently working with San Francisco nonprofits to create an extension track," Mitchell said.

Mitchell now is approaching industry companies and organizations for financial support to underwrite the costs to build the new classrooms at Aptos High and Pajaro Valley High. It takes about \$15,000 to set up each classroom with repair stands, benches, tools and bikes, she said.

For more information, go to [www.projectbiketrip.org](http://www.projectbiketrip.org). **BRAIN**