



Town of Avon

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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TOWN ANNOUNCES BICYCLE FRIENDLY COMMUNITY STATUS

May 31, 2023 – Avon, CT – The Town of Avon is pleased to announce that it has been designated a Bronze-level Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) by the League of American Bicyclists.

Avon joins the ranks of over 500 Bicycle Friendly Communities across the country that are united by their commitment to improving their transportation networks through investments in infrastructure, programs and policies that support and serve all users. Avon is the 11th BFC in Connecticut and the seventh in our immediate region alongside West Hartford, Simsbury, Canton, Farmington, Hartford and New Britain. The Town was previously awarded an Honorable Mention for its 2021 application.

“When we build an America where bicycling is truly safer and easier for everyone, we are strengthening our nation’s economic vibrance, environmental welfare, and mental and physical well-being. That’s why we’re proud to celebrate all of the new and renewing Bicycle Friendly Communities in our movement to build a Bicycle Friendly America for everyone” said Bill Nesper, executive director of the League of American Bicyclists. “This round of awards is a testament to the community leaders and local bike advocates who are joining the League in raising the standard of what it means to be a Bicycle Friendly Community.”

The League of American Bicyclists’ Bicycle Friendly America program sets the standard for how communities build and benchmark progress toward making biking better. Earlier this year, the League made major updates to add and integrate equity and accessibility into the program’s application and emphasized the importance of building and connecting low-speed and low-stress bike networks. This round of awards includes 45 new and renewing awardees, joining a total of 506 current Bicycle Friendly Communities in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The Town’s Bronze-level designation represents an organized effort and partnership between the Town Council, Town staff and the members of BikeWalkAvonCT (BWACT), a local advocacy group dedicated to improving the safety and accessibility of walking and cycling in town. In the three short years since BWACT began meeting just before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic,

Avon has made tremendous strides in improving and showcasing our bicycle and pedestrian facilities and programming. A few of our collective achievements that were highlighted in the Town's BFC application include:

- The initiation of a town-wide **Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Planning Effort**. The Town has engaged a third-party consultant to develop a prioritized action plan of facility improvements, infrastructure projects and recommendations for programs and policies to improve and extend the existing bicycle and pedestrian network. Join us for our second public meeting on the project on Tuesday, June 20th at 7:00 p.m. at the Avon Senior Center. The public will receive a presentation on the Plan's preliminary recommendations and provide feedback. We anticipate that the Plan will be completed this fall. Visit the project StoryMap site here: <https://arcg.is/0851im>.
- The installation of **Trail Improvements and Amenities** along the Farmington Canal Heritage Trail including four Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons at trail crossings, two bicycle repair stations, fencing, a painted mural on the Route 44 underpass, public restroom facilities at the Avon Village Center, and the relocation of a section of the trail out of the Town Hall parking lot.
- The appointment of a dedicated **Traffic Officer** by the Avon Police Department to address resident concerns relative to traffic such as speeding and distracted driving.
- The implementation of a robust **Programming Schedule** held throughout the year including bike rodeos, trail clean up days, sponsored group rides and hikes, bike to work and school days, and used bicycle collections.
- The launch of a **Bicycle Education** program for fourth graders attending the Avon Public Schools.
- OFS Optics Avon and Riverdale Farms Shopping designated as bronze-level **Bicycle Friendly Businesses** by the League of American Bicyclists.

There are also a number of bicycle and pedestrian related projects in the works at this time. The Town will be improving a section of existing sidewalks along the east side of West Avon Road this summer and a multi-use trail is included as part of the Old Farms Road (North/South Section) Phase I relocation project that was approved at referendum in December 2022. Additionally, the Town is excited to finalize the Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Planning effort and begin to implement its recommendations in the coming months and years.

“Avon's Bronze-level designation reflects the League's recognition of the Town's accomplishments over the last several years,” say Fran Gurtman and Steven Mitchell, co-leaders of BikeWalkAvonCT. “It speaks volumes about the commitment of our elected officials, Town staff and volunteers to make our town safer for cyclists and pedestrians alike. We are so pleased that the community is excited about what we've done so far, and that the Town is committed to continuing the current momentum.”

“The Town of Avon is so proud to be a Bicycle Friendly Community,” said Town Manager Brandon Robertson. “We are even prouder that this designation is the product of a true community effort. We are very grateful to BikeWalkAvonCT and all of our dedicated community partners, without whom these projects and initiatives would not have been possible. Thank you for your tenacity, perseverance and enthusiasm. You are helping the Town to ensure that Avon continues to be a great place to live, work and play.”

More than 860 communities have applied for recognition by the Bicycle Friendly Community program, which provides a roadmap to making biking better for communities of all shapes and sizes. While the award process considers very visible elements such as bike infrastructure, other essential elements include efforts around adult and youth bike education, encouragement through events like bike to work day, evaluation mechanisms, and enforcement all through the lens of equity. The rigorous application process is an educational tool in itself and includes an opportunity for local bicyclists and active transportation advocates to provide input on their experiences and perceptions of bicycling in their community.

The five levels of the BFC award – diamond, platinum, gold, silver and bronze, plus an honorable mention category – provide a clear incentive for communities to continuously improve. Awarded communities must renew their status every four years to ensure that they not only maintain existing efforts, but also keep up with changing technology, national safety standards, and community-driven best practices. To learn more about the BFC program, visit www.bikeleague.org/community.

About the League of American Bicyclists

The League of American Bicyclists leads the national movement to create a Bicycle Friendly America for everyone. With a history dating to 1880, the League is committed to engaging diverse communities and building a powerful, unified voice for change around protecting and promoting bicyclists’ rights. Learn more at www.bikeleague.org.

About BikeWalkAvonCT

BikeWalkAvonCT is a volunteer organization in Avon, CT that works with community partners to promote safe, attractive and more accessible paths for biking, hiking, running and walking. Learn more at www.bikewalkavonct.org.