

# Ride's success shows value, need

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To the editor,

On Sept. 14 had the pleasure to participate in the 2019 Lakeshore Harvest Ride. The weather was exceptional, the event well planned, and the total experience was one I will remember and seek to repeat in the coming years. I commend Friends of The Blue Star Trail for making this event a success.

While my experience in the ride was positive, I admit I was uncomfortable with the sections that traveled local roads without bike lanes, alongside vehicular traffic traveling past at significant speeds, without slowing down to assure safe passing of bicyclists.

While traffic laws do give cyclists the right to utilize roadways, those laws are unfortunately not recognized by all. Drivers tend to believe and act as if they have more right to the road than cyclists, and seldom bother to consider the danger to a cyclist if he or she is hit by a 2-plus-ton vehicle travelling at even the posted speed limit.

I traveled from the Chicago area to participate in this event. I live most of the year in Sarasota, Fla., where I serve on the board of Friends of The Legacy Trail, an organization very similar to Friends of the Blue Star Trail. Our group works hard to support an existing 11-mile paved, multi-use, non-motorized trail in Sarasota County, encourage extending it and developing connectors to outlying areas and attractions.

I know from our experience in Sarasota that there is significant public support for projects of this nature. While visiting with members of Friends of the Blue Star Trail I learned that there are multiple opportunities available to connect several existing trails and reduce or eliminate the need for pedestrians and cyclists to travel on roadways to enjoy your lovely area.

Projects like this not only promote safety but increase tourism and property values, reduce parking concerns and support the communities and local businesses. Imagine visitors safely traveling within your area on foot or bicycles, utilizing bike racks instead of circling endlessly in search of parking spaces.

I strongly encourage that Friends of the Blue Star Trail not falter in their mission to make the connection for your trails. All local, county and state officials should commit to this project for the safety and well-being of their residents and the thousands who travel to enjoy your lovely area and spend their hard-earned dollars.

Rita Miotti - Sarasota, Fla.