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Lafayette cyclists ride in honor of Mickey Shunick and in support of the city's bike lanes

BY KAILEY BROUSSARD | Special to The Advocate

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Advocate Photo by BRAD KEMP Bike riders gather around the Mickey Shunick ghost bike during the inaugural Mickey Shunick bike ride Wednesday July 7, 2016 along the Mickey Shunick Bike Loop in Lafayette, La.

BRAD KEMP

Local cyclists convened at Rotary Point in a memorial Thursday to the late Mickey Shunick, while celebrating Lafayette's burgeoning bicycling community and gathering signatures on a petition to save West Bayou Parkway's bike lanes.

The ride took place on the Shunick memorial bike loop.



First marker unveiled for Mickey Shunick Memorial Bike Loop in Lafayette

As cyclists trickled in from the parkway and coalesced in the front of the parking lot, Mark deCloud and Molly Richard, both with Forward Lafayette, a campaign spurred to save the bike lanes, prompted attendees to sign the petition. DeCloud said that since the bike lanes were introduced, the area has seen decreased traffic congestion, increased a sense of community and, ultimately, made West Bayou Parkway safer.

“This is a neighborhood, not a thoroughfare,” he said. “We shouldn’t have people going through it at 40 miles per hour.”

More than 100 cyclists pedaled down the winding West Bayou Parkway, two by two or three by three. The cyclists made a series of stops for sno-balls and water. Cyclists were encouraged to pay respects to Shunick at her ghost bike on St. Landry Street.

Forward Lafayette’s petition to keep the bike lanes went online on June 27. With a goal originally set at 2,000 signatures, the campaign was expected to have more than 2,400 signatures by Thursday night.

Forward Lafayette was created in response to a petition by George Latiolais and Randy Moity, who claimed the lanes worsened congestion and pose safety hazards.

The 8-mile loop was created in memory of Shunick, a University of Louisiana at Lafayette anthropology student who was kidnapped during the early hours of May 19, 2012, and found dead three months later when her killer, Brandon Scott Lavergne, led authorities to her shallow burial site near Mamou.



THE ACADIANA ADVOCATE

Convicted Lafayette killer Lavergne loses another round in court

The loop touches roads such as Roselawn Boulevard, St. Mary Boulevard and Bertrand Drive. The path comprises both existing and new bike routes and marked the route Shunick frequently used.

DeClouet said the end of the campaign coincided with the one-year anniversary of city-parish council's 9-0 decision to create the bike loop. He said the next step is presenting the petition to City-Parish President Joel Robideaux. In its first day online, the petition garnered 700 signatures and support from BikeLafayette.

DeClouet said the cost of removing the lanes would cost more than painting them in the first place.

Rebekah Hebert-Theriot, a cyclist from Lafayette, said part of the pull to Lafayette is its bicycling community. "There's not a community in Louisiana like this," she said as she prepared to depart on her mint-green bicycle with wood-like handlebars. "We are heavily dependent on the things that make us stand out in other communities, and one of them is biking."