



Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago

Press Release

Allison Fore

Public and Intergovernmental Affairs Officer

312.751.6626

allison.fore@mwrdd.org

100 East Erie Street, Chicago, Illinois 60611

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Bike commute underscores MWRD pledge to clean air and good health

Known for an unwavering commitment to the water environment, staff at the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) also pledged their support for clean air by cycling through the streets of Chicago like few other workplaces around town. The MWRD finished atop the leaderboard for public agencies competing in the Active Transportation Alliance's 26th Annual Bike Commuter Challenge (BCC), which took place over two weeks this summer.

The MWRD collected 9,527 points, based on a combination of miles logged and bike trips taken. The MWRD team finished fourth behind teams from Northwestern University, Lurie Children's Hospital, and the Art Institute of Chicago & School of the Art Institute of Chicago, but ranked highest in team standings for public agencies.

"We are proud of our many cyclists who participated in the Active Transportation Alliance's Bike Commuter Challenge," said MWRD President Mariyana Spyropoulos. "Our staff chooses active lifestyles to complement their hard work, and whether it's in the workplace or riding to work, they are actively committed to reducing energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions."

The annual BCC encourages new and experienced cyclists to enjoy the many benefits of commuting to work by riding a bike. The BCC was held conjointly with Chicago Bike Week, which offers a variety of cycling-related events and workshops, and also urges Chicago area residents to use bicycles for recreation and transportation.

Team MWRD collectively logged a total of 4,209 commuting miles during the two-week challenge, representing over a thirtyfold reduction in energy consumed per mile traveled, and over a tenfold reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, by comparison to travel in a standard gasoline-powered motor vehicle.

"Our organization is largely about creating better options for people to get around without having to own a car," said Ron Burke, executive director of the Active Transportation Alliance, "and public agencies like the District organizing an incredible team like this ultimately helps us move in that direction."

More than 60 employees of the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) accepted the Bike Commuter Challenge, either using their bicycles for transportation to or from



The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago Board of Commissioners recognized staff with a resolution, honoring them for finishing first among public agencies in the Active Transportation Alliance Bike Commuter Challenge.

work, or using their bicycles as a means to access other forms of public transportation. They recorded their trips and mileage for the purposes of the competition.

"Our team's remarkable performance in the Active Transportation Alliance's 2017 Bike Commuter Challenge demonstrates that getting to work can be more environmentally sustainable and healthier for all of us both individually and collectively, and hopefully a lot more fun," said MWRD Commissioner Debra Shore, who presented a resolution to staff cyclists participating in the BCC. "We don't just talk the talk at the MWRD. We also push the pedals."

Cycling or walking to work, referred to as active commuting, is not the most common form of transportation to work, but studies show various benefits. Cyclists enjoyed a 24 percent lower risk of death from all causes, a 32 percent lower risk of developing cancer and a 36 percent lower risk of dying from cancer, according to a study published in the British Medical Journal. All of the observed benefits for both cyclists and walkers increased with the distance traveled. Even if riders live too far from a job to cycle all the way to work, a short Divvy ride or bike share program that is part of the commute can also lead to health benefits.

Based in Chicago, the Active Transportation Alliance is a non-profit advocacy organization that works to improve conditions for bicycling, walking and transit and engages people in healthy and active ways to travel.

Recovering Resources, Transforming Water

Established in 1889, the MWRD (www.mwrdd.org) is an award winning, special purpose government agency responsible for used water treatment and stormwater management in Cook County, Illinois.