

Local / State

Biggest bike problems are speeding, parking

Students study complaints

By CATHIE FEIGHL
Battalion Reporter
Speeding, congestion and illegal parking on campus are some of

the bicycle problems brought up by a Texas A&M University transportation engineering class. Since March, students in Civil

Engineering 307 have observed and identified problems confronting bicyclists, as well as pedestrians, on campus.

Instructor Steve Richards said his students have collected data on their own time out of class. The final summaries and findings will be turned in to him Friday.

Richards said he initiated the class project because bicycle travel has caused problems on campus.

"There have been studies done before on how many bicycles are registered," Richards said, "but there has never been an actual count of the number of bicycles on campus."

Student Larry Pechacek said the study was done to find out exactly how many and what kinds of problems exist with bicycles.

"I'm going to summarize all the data and state the students' findings," Richards said. "I'll then make the information available to the University Traffic Panel."

The University Traffic Panel is a committee of eight students and 13 faculty members that handles problems associated with traffic movement and parking on University property, along with vehicle registration and traffic control.

Richards, who designed the project, said he divided his 39 students into nine groups. Each group was assigned one area of campus and was asked to inventory all bicycle facilities, such as racks and lanes, in that area, he said.

Richards said he also asked the students to compile a list of problems in that area from the points of

view of both the bicyclist and pedestrian. A bicycle count to establish the number of parked and illegally parked bicycles was taken at various times of the day, he said.

In the students' preliminary reports, pedestrians complained of speeding and illegally parked bicycles, congestion on campus and a cluttered appearance from too many bicycles, Richards said. Bicyclists complained of a lack of parking spaces and lanes, bicycle thefts and hazards due to slick sidewalks.

Richards said the number of bicycles on campus on a given day is totally dependent on the weather. "We estimate that on a sunny day there are about 3,000 bikes on campus."

If it is slightly cold or raining, he said, the number of bicycles on campus drops 50 to 70 percent. He said the highest bicycle traffic is around the library and the Academic Building, and weekday mornings are the peak hours.

Richards said the students also found in some areas there was often a large number of bicycles parked near doorways or propped against trees when there was sufficient parking space available in nearby racks.

Richards said he and his students will not make any recommendations to the University Traffic Panel, but will only submit their data and findings. The findings could be useful to the administration for their planning and design purposes, he said.



Congestion is just one of the problems confronting bicyclists on campus as they combat rush hour traffic. Transportation engineering students who studied bicycle problems as a class project also brought up speeding and parking problems.

Photo by Wang Borchers

Vietnam veterans fight lift of Agent Orange ban

United Press International
AUSTIN — Chemical companies are trying to make "guinea pigs" out of Vietnam veterans and have mounted a stepped-up nationwide effort to lift the ban on the chemical in Agent Orange, the president of the Brotherhood of Vietnam Veterans, Inc. said Wednesday.

"I don't know how the rest of the country feels, but I don't appreciate the chemical companies making guinea pigs out of us," Dan Jordan told a news conference on the Capitol's south steps.

"We are mad, and we are as frustrated as hell," Jordan said. Chemical companies and special interest groups are lobbying the Environmental

Protection Agency to remove the ban on 2,4,5-T, a chemical in Agent Orange, so they can use the chemical around construction sites, public waterways and along railroads.

"There is a real push to lift the ban on it," Jordan said.

"No new research has been started or completed since doubts were raised by Vietnam veterans. The lobbyists are saying that there is no scientific data to prove these health effects."

Jordan, wearing an orange sticker in support of Agent Orange legislation, urged support for two bills in the Legislature to help Vietnam veterans suffering from ailments they contend result from Agent Orange poisoning in Vietnam.

"Thousands of Vietnam veterans await the legislative decision — the disabled, the ill, the children born with birth defects or perhaps the most important of all, the unborn child," Jordan said.

"The Vietnam veteran asks who the body count from Vietnam is not ended. They ask if they survived Vietnam. Their crime seems to be that of loving this country so much that they are still dying for it."

Jordan held the news conference to announce a welcome home parade and rally Friday in Vietnam veterans. The activities will commemorate Vietnam Veterans Day proclaimed by Gen. Bill Clements.

"It's eight or 10 years overdue but it's a beginning," Jordan said.

Court threatens SW Bell with lower rates, refunds

United Press International
AUSTIN — Southwestern Bell Telephone Co. must roll back its rates and begin making refunds to customers by June 1 unless the Texas Supreme Court rules the company can legally charge rates higher than those approved by the Public Utility Commission while it appeals the commission decision.

The 3rd Court of Civil Appeals upheld a trial court decision Wednesday requiring Southwestern Bell to comply with a Feb. 28 PUC order limiting the interim rates charged by the telephone company to the \$114.3 million set by the commission.

Since November 1980 Bell has been collecting rates amounting to an increase of \$152.8 million annually, and argues it should be

allowed to continue charging those rates until the courts finally have settled its appeal of the PUC rate decision.

Bell initially filed a request in July 1980 for a rate increase totaling \$326.3 million. The PUC staff recommended an increase of \$152.8 — the rates Bell implemented pending the PUC decision on the rate case.

Telephone company officials said Wednesday they were disappointed at the Civil Appeals Court decision, and spokesman Gray Kerrick said the company has not yet decided if it will appeal the ruling to the Texas Supreme Court.

Along with questioning the PUC order concerning its interim rates, Bell is challenging in court the commission's denial of the full

\$326.3 million rate increase. Court hearings have not yet begun on the merits of the full rate increase.

The telephone company contends if it is required to reduce its rates June 1, then ultimately prevails in the appeal of the rate case, it has no way to recover the revenue it would have earned if the higher interim rates had remained in effect.

But the Court of Civil Appeals said Wednesday if Bell eventually wins its appeal of the rate case, the appellate court can send the case back to the PUC for adjustment of the final rate to allow recovery of any revenues lost by the telephone company between the time of the PUC's initial order and the time the appeal is finally settled.

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