

Hey yall (I have to say "yall" now instead of yinz...)

How's it going up there? I'm currently writing from Austin, Texas... my new favorite place. While I haven't decided certainly yet, it's looking it might be my next home. If that reality does come to pass, I can honestly say that I will miss Free Ride! more than anything. Free Ride! has been such a huge part of my development as a person and it has given me so much... but that's a whole other letter. That can wait for now.

I'm writing at the moment, however, with a more urgent topic. BIKES ACROSS BORDERS!!!

Bikes Across Borders is based out of Austin, TX. Check out the details on their website:

www.bikesacrossborders.org I met some of the fab folks at their recent Friday night meeting. I am thinking I'm going to bike with them this year! It's quite a haul--between 300-400 miles, and 2 full weeks!--but I can think of no finer way to get my ass into Mexico (which as some of you know, have been my plans for how my ass will spend January and February 2010). This year BAB has a great project to give to located in Monterrey, MX--a bona fide start-up anarchist bicycle collective. However, BAB doesn't have as many bikes as they've had in previous years. They don't even think they'll have enough extra bikes to warrant getting a truck! They're struggling to have bikes fixed up & solid for the trip down, even just for the people planning to do the ride.

This is where our beloved Free Ride! crossed my mind. I don't know what's going on up there right now and where yall heads are at, and how much money there is to spare (did that meeting to go over last year's expenses happen yet?), but...

Bikes Across Borders could use some help. They could use any number of fixed up bikes, of any type, any size including kids. They could probably use donations of GOOD parts and tools too. They could use the financial help to transport the bikes from the 412 to the 512 (Pittsburgh to Austin). They could also use financial help probably beyond that--help with the rest of the transport if FR could spare it. They will be having a benefit in early December that will raise some money, but it's unclear how much they'll need after that--especially if a sizeable delivery from Pittsburgh is on it's way!

Here's what I can immediately identify as being the pros and cons of Free Ride! offering mutual aid to Bikes Across Borders:

PROS

Unlike with the Zimbabwe project, where bikes were allegedly not distributed to the community in a manner in keeping with Free Ride's own ideals, this is a SOLID project that can benefit from our excess. A start-up anarchist bike collective in Monterrey? If I may be blunt: fuck yes.

It's an opportunity to build and further strengthen the networks between bike collectives nationally and internationally. I don't know if other mutual aid partnerships have been established between bike collectives across such a far distance, but if not, this could set a precedent that really excites me, honestly.

Kids and adults on bikes, using them for personal transportation, resulting in greater personal and economic independence. I reiterate: fuck yes.

I can serve as a point person. I can verify the course of our bikes and where they end up, taking pictures along the way!

CONS

Unlike the Zimbabwe project, Free Ride themselves would be fielding the cost of shipping (and perhaps some other cash if they can spare it, so the bikes can make the rest of their journey).

You definitely have to weigh the environmental implications of sending X quantity of bikes, Y amount of miles using petroleum transportation...

So that's my proposal for now. Let me know what you think!

Personally, I may be able to do more than just track the bikes... it's a possibility that I'd be coming back to Pittsburgh around the last week of December and could pick up some bikes (but not 20 certainly... more like 3-5). But that's such a remote possibility that I'd like it not to be included in the general proposal.

Here's your deadline for decision-making guidance: The ride leaves Austin on JANUARY 3rd.

Looking forward to hearing back from you. I MISS YALL!!!

in solidarity & amor,

Caroline