



DEALER TOUR ATLANTA

City's tightening BeltLine a boon for retail community

By Steve Frothingham

ATLANTA — BRAIN Dealer Tours have been held in famously bike-friendly communities and in some that are famously unfriendly. In all of them, local advocates can point to recent successes and plans for greater things.

But rarely — or never before — has a BRAIN Dealer Tour visited a retail market where store managers gushed so much about increased business activity that they attribute directly to recent improvements in bike facilities.

In shop after shop, especially inside Atlanta's I-285 Perimeter ("ITP" in the parlance of Atlantans), dealers said the recently expanded BeltLine multi-use path system has led to increased bike use, especially by families and commuters. Besides the BeltLine, retailers pointed to recent improvements citywide, such as the addition of sharrows, designated bike lanes, and a cycle track along busy Peachtree Street downtown.

Atlanta Mayor Kasim Reed has set a goal for Atlanta to make *Bicycling Magazine's* Top 10 bike-friendly city list by 2016.

"We are seeing huge growth in hybrids and family bike sales," said Jeremy Leifheit, a manager at Atlanta Cycling, an ITP shop. "There is a buzz about cycling in Atlanta right now. The BeltLine is crowded all the time and there's a very cool energy. It's a changing demographic."

Atlanta Cycling, known for its higher-end road and mountain bike offerings, has recently increased its selec-

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tion of Electra Townies and similar bikes to respond to the changes, Leifheit added.

Outside the Perimeter (“OTP”), a handful of shops, including Smyrna Bikes, owe their very existence to the Silver Comet Trail, which opened its first sections in 1998. The Silver Comet rail trail goes straight west 62 miles to the Alabama border, then continues 33 miles as the Chief Ladiga Trail to Anniston, Ala.

Combined, it is the longest paved trail in the country, and sections continue to be added. Advocates hope to eventually connect the Silver Comet to the BeltLine and other ITP trails.

The OTP bike shops serve a different demographic than many of the ITP shops — there are more recreational riders, both mountain bike and road, in the suburbs outside I-285. And there is room to spread out for retailers like sprawling Roswell Bikes, whose owner has always seen it as a destination store.

BeltLine is key

The BeltLine idea began as a graduate student’s thesis in 1999; the project

first received federal funding in 2007 and the first trail openings were the following year.

The BeltLine’s most notable feature is a 22-mile former rail corridor circling the city that has been turned into a multi-use path, with miles of offshoots to connect neighborhoods. The complete BeltLine plan includes the development of parks, affordable housing and an eventual light rail system along the corridor.

Some gaps remain in the trail system, and during our tour the Atlanta Bicycle Coalition’s Cole Smith often stopped to show us potential trail connectors and additions that the cycling community would like to see. The entire BeltLine project won’t be done for decades.

But progress continues on a nearly weekly basis, adding to the buzz that Leifheit mentioned. During our Dealer Tour, Mayor Reed announced the launch of the city’s first bike share program, which will include 500 bikes. And on March 17 (just after this issue of BRAIN goes to press), Atlanta voters will decide whether to approve a quarter-billion-dollar infrastructure bond that includes many bike-friendly improvements. Local cycling advocates are pushing for 15 percent of the bond to be used for bikeways and Complete Streets — road designs that are friendly for cars, public transit, walking and bikes.



Dealer Tour participants saw much to celebrate riding Atlanta’s roads and bike paths.

Still Atlanta

While Atlanta is in the midst of a great improvement in bike friendliness, it’s still got a ways to go.

“Atlanta has always been challenged for bike infrastructure. It’s like a generation behind some other regions,” said Mark Gernazian, owner of CycleWorks, which has stores in Roswell and Duluth. Gernazian noted that relatively new mountain bike trail systems near his Roswell store have led to increased mountain bike sales at that location.

Back inside the perimeter, Brothers Sharif and Ezz-Eldin Hassan operate The Spindle, an Atlanta store that

sells only casual, commuter-friendly and urban-style cycling clothes — “No tights!” Sharif said. The brothers strive to make The Spindle a welcoming hangout and are the only source for many of its brands for hundreds of miles around. The store supports many bike events and causes, and the brothers joined part of the BRAIN Dealer Tour.

While The Spindle sounds like something straight out of Portlandia, when quizzed about the business, Sharif had to remind us, “You have to remember this is still Atlanta, not Portland or Seattle. It’s still very much a developing scene here.” **BRAIN**

Peachtree Bikes

Employees: Buckhead: 9 full and part time;

Sandy Springs: 5 full and part time

Sales floor space: Buckhead: 2,600 square feet; 5,200 altogether; Sandy Springs: 4,200 square feet plus storage for total of 6,000 square feet; Serenbe: 200 square feet; relocating soon to bigger store

Years in business: 40; under current ownership for past 9 years

Emphasis: Road, mountain, comfort and kids’ bikes

Main brands: Specialized, Felt, Pinarello, BMC, Pegoretti, Santa Cruz

Owners: Mike and Alexa Wagaman



The Wagamans were set to celebrate one year at their Buckhead store when the BRAIN Dealer Tour stopped for a short visit in early March. Husband and wife Mike and Alexa Wagaman moved to the two-story brick house built in the early 1900s on Peachtree Road after a fire burned down their original location in December 2013.

The Buckhead store is their flagship location, having been in business for 40 years in the area. The Wagamans opened a second full-service store in Sandy Springs five years ago. For the four months that the Wagamans didn’t have a Buckhead store, the Sandy Springs location absorbed those sales and business.

A third store in Serenbe, a rural community south of Atlanta known for its rolling terrain and sought after by road cyclists on weekends, currently is only open on weekends. It does mostly bike rentals and accessory sales. But that store will move into a larger 1,400-square-foot building this summer, start selling bikes and also host a bike club.

Alexa and Mike revamped the interior of the new Buckhead store before moving in, a two-month build-out that involved tearing down walls. While they say it remains a “work in progress,” the downstairs sales floor

and service area was well merchandised, lit and laid out during our visit. The second floor has office space and storage for boxed bikes and bikes in for repairs or service.

A year after the move, Mike said business was back to normal. “We’re seeing a lot of new traffic and old customers coming back,” he said. “We’re right back at it.” Still, the fire dealt them a big setback. Inventory lost amounted to \$500,000. Mike said he’s still working with the insurance company on the claim settlement. “They don’t realize the price tag on bikes,” he said.

Before buying up the business nine years ago, Mike worked as a sales rep for brands including Pearl Izumi, Felt, Sidi and Raleigh. He also worked at a bike shop part time while attending the University of Cincinnati.

The Buckhead store’s sales skew heavily to high-end road, which make up 60 percent of dollar sales. Mountain bikes make up 30 percent and the remainder is flat-bar comfort and kids’ bikes. The store is be-



Owners Alexa and Mike Wagaman relocated after a fire destroyed their previous store.

hind the Garden Hills community of Buckhead, a large urban forest neighborhood between Peachtree and Piedmont roads with historic Craftsman, Tudor and Georgian homes. “Corporate executives live around here — and they’re the guys buying \$10,000 to \$15,000 bikes,” Mike said.

He said the store also attracts many professional athletes and celebrities come through its doors. Atlanta has a burgeoning film industry, and the store has provided bikes for various projects and sold bikes to actors and singers who own vacation homes in the area or are in town for work. **BRAIN**

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Atlanta Cycling

Employees: 25

Sales floor space: 8,000 square feet (Ansley location); 3,800 at Vinings store

Years in business: 40

Emphasis: Higher-end road and mountain bikes, family and commuters

Main brands: Trek, Moots, Electra, Cannondale

Owner: Don Dutson



Once called Atlanta Schwinn Cycling & Fitness, Atlanta Cycling still has just a taste of an old-school Schwinn dealership, heavily updated with modern touches like a roomy bike fit area with a Guru Dynamic Bike Fit machine and an extensive clothing and footwear department that is complete with try-on room, shoe-fitting benches and a Brannock Device foot measurement tool.

The store's mission is to "Build Better Cyclists," said Jeremy Leifheit, the store's staff development, marketing and HR director. Leifheit joined the store after serving in a similar staff development position with L'Oreal. A lifelong cyclist, the position with Atlanta Cycling allowed him to combine a passion for retail staff education and bike riding.

The training shows in the store's

friendly and well-dressed staff, who makes a point of greeting each customer as he or she comes in the front door. Every bike customer is offered a free pre-test ride bike fit on the Guru DBF, which makes test rides more comfortable, Leifheit said. Sixty to 70 percent of the staff is trained in doing fits, using an in-house fit system that guarantees all staffers fit riders in a uniform way.

The Ansley location the Dealer Tour visited was expanded about three years ago as the store took over the whole building after another tenant moved out. Atlanta Cycling has a second lo-



Jeremy Leifheit, the store's development, marketing and HR director

cation in Vinings, near Smyrna. The stores also have a close relationship with two Great Escape Bikes locations in South Carolina, where Leifheit also works. **BRAIN**

Decatur Bikes

Employees: 4

Sales floor space: 1,200 square-feet

Years in business: 7; 4 years in present location

Emphasis: Family and commuting

Main brands: Jamis, Fuji, KHS, Public

Owner: Mark Scarbrough (currently general manager in the process of buying the store)



Decatur Bikes is a long way from its triathlon shop origins. But Mark Scarbrough believes you have to remain flexible to survive. When large anchor stores like Target moved away from the shop's first location, drop-in traffic slowed and sales flattened.

So the shop moved to downtown Decatur, where population density was greater. Scarbrough and owner Dave Wilson tried to double-brand the store initially, continuing to carry high-end triathlon products as well as providing basic bike shop products and service to neighborhood cyclists.

"But the tri product really scared people. They thought they had wandered into a shop with nothing to offer them. So we started to move the tri stuff to the back of the shop to make it more welcoming, but in the end we gave up the tri stuff altogether," Scar-

brough said.

Decatur Bikes' bread and butter is commuter and hybrid bikes from \$500 to \$1,500, but the shop also gets roadies in from suburbs outside the perimeter highway.

The shop's Groupon program has been its most effective outreach to local cyclists. The \$41 service tune-up coupon gets a lot of new customers through the door, and Scarbrough said many riders will also add new tires and tubes to the service.

Decatur also sells consignment bikes, as well as a few used bikes. They prefer consignment as it doesn't tie up cash flow and allows them to keep interesting bikes on the floor.

The shop recently added Public, the brand's only shop in Georgia, and



General manager Mark Scarbrough

the bikes have sold well with many customers visiting the shop after finding them on Public's website.

While the shop's proximity to the BeltLine and Atlanta's light-rail system, MARTA, brings them customers, it also is raising rents — somewhat of a mixed bag for the small shop. **BRAIN**

CycleWorks

Employees: 9 full time, 9 part time

Sales floor space: 5,000 square feet

Years in business: 30

Emphasis: Family, road, cruisers

Main brands: Trek, Electra, Devinci

Owner: Mark Gernazian



After moving to several locations over its long history, CycleWorks' Roswell store is back in the same shopping center that it once occupied in the 1990s.

Owner Mark Gernazian moved the operation back into the location last year, and built it out based largely on his own plans. It features an open service area with bar seating so customers can watch their bikes getting fixed and chat with mechanics. It also has a private bike fitting area with a door, and a living room-style waiting area with a couch and a coffee table made out of an old tri-spoke wheel.

Over its 30 years in business, Gernazian reckons CycleWorks has carried about 25 brands, but is down to just two now: Trek (plus Trek-owned Electra) and Devinci. He said he was reluctant to bring in Electra but has found the brand's Townie bikes to be "a gold mine — sales are off the charts."

The Roswell location is near bike paths frequented by families — thus the Townie sales. It's also close to a mountain bike trail system, so the store does more high-end mountain bike sales than CycleWorks' other location, in Duluth, with is more road-oriented.

Gernazian is a roadie at heart and enjoys the store-led rides in the North Georgia mountains in season. About six group rides leave the Duluth store each week, he said.

Gernazian conceded that the past six years have been challenging — the recession hit Atlanta hard, which made all retail difficult. That's one reason CycleWorks has trimmed back the number of brands it carries. But Gernazian, a former NBDA board member, was



Owner Mark Gernazian

all grins when reminded that the operation will celebrate 30 years in business this year. **BRAIN**



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Intown Bicycles

Employees: 2 full time
Sales floor space: 1,900 square feet
Years in business: 33; 20 years in current location
Emphasis: Family and commuting
Main brands: Raleigh, Jamis, Electra
Owner: Mike Goodman



Intown Bicycles, started more than 30 years ago in Mike Goodman's garage, is one of the many Atlanta-area bike shops whose business is growing as the city's BeltLine, a 7-year-old bike path project, expands. For most of its life the shop focused on the cycling needs of the working-class and affluent neighborhoods that surround it. Now it also caters to commuters and recreational cyclists using the bike path.

"We've never catered to the sport of cycling, just helping people get on bikes who want to do a little riding," said Mike Goodman, the shop's owner. "But as the Belt-Line has grown in popularity, our weekend and evening business has picked up with commuter and recreational sales."

Most of Goodman's sales are bikes and service. He has tried

clothing off and on over the years with little success. As he notes, it's difficult to add on a \$50 pair of shorts to a \$400 bike purchase.

Goodman has tried selling e-bikes over the past few years without much success either, feeling their cost is too far in excess of his normal \$400 to \$600 bike sale to interest his customers.

Electra Townies and hybrid road bikes are his bread and butter. Goodman has tried bringing in a few up-market bikes and frames to see if he could interest some of his more affluent customers, but he has been unable to move away much from his core price points.



Owner Mike Goodman

The increasing commuter sales to people using the BeltLine mean his offerings of racks, baskets, packs and locks have picked up and he is devoting more floor space to them. **BRAIN**

Outback Bikes

Employees: 10 full time
Sales floor space: 6,500 square feet
Years in business: 29
Emphasis: Road, mountain, track, commuters, fixies
Main brands: Specialized, Bianchi, Felt, Pure Fix
Owner: Pete Wicker



Outback Bikes is smack in the middle of Atlanta's Little Five Points district, and is right at home among the record stores, New Age shops, tattoo parlors and skate shops in the area. It features a psychedelic graffiti-style logo painted on the outside of the building.

Inside, you'll find owner Pete Wicker, often wearing his trademark stuffed fox hat and kilt.

"It's always been a little weird around here, and I just blend in in this neighborhood," Wicker said.

Don't let Wicker's eccentric wardrobe fool you — he runs a tight ship while maintaining a vibe that lives up to the store motto: Ride What You Dig.

The store supports an increasing number of commuters, as well as urban-style fixie riders and genuine

trackies (the Dick Lane Velodrome is about 8 miles away, and Outback offers track bikes from Bianchi and Felt). For the mainstream road, mountain bike and multi-speed commuter market, Outback goes deep with Specialized.

For years, Outback carried Trek (first Gary Fisher) and Specialized, but went all-in with Specialized a few years back.

"At one point our rep said, 'Neither of us [Specialized or Trek] is going to be happy until we have 80 percent of your business.' So nobody forced me, but I had to choose. At the time, Trek had



Owner Pete Wicker

50 to 60 dealers in Atlanta, while we were the only Specialized dealer inside the perimeter. So we decided to go with Specialized." **BRAIN**

Smyrna Bicycles

Employees: 4
Sales floor space: 2,000 square feet
Years in business: 13; 5 years in current location
Emphasis: Family, fitness, high-end road
Brands: Fuji, Giant, Electra, Litespeed, Blue
Owners: Tom Butler, Brown Loper



Bicycle retail is a second career for shop owners Tom Butler and Brown Loper, who met while riding. Looking to combine their passion with business, the pair eventually pooled their money to open a store. And after an expansion to a second location and a few moves, the owners now focus on the one location next to northwest Atlanta's Silver Comet Trail.

The brightly colored Smyrna Bicycle school bus out front is surprisingly effective in bringing the shop local customers, as well as weekend trail riders. The shop's fleet of 45 rental bikes is all checked out during the busy summers.

With a variety of race teams calling the shop home — road, cyclocross and mountain bike — the product mix caters mostly to neighborhood families, and the owners say women account for half the shop's business.

"We have strong Liv Giant sales. That Giant is run by a woman, Elysa [Walk], makes a connection with our customers and is a great story to tell. It's not just women's bike sales — we sell women's helmets and clothing," Loper said.

The shop had sold products over its website but pulled the site down because to remain competitive online meant pricing products at MAP limits, which undercut their own in-store prices. Including installation and other service labor with in-store pricing did not offset higher prices in customers' eyes.

Unlike other Atlanta-area shops close to bike trails, Smyrna Bicycles does not have much commuter business, so its selection of racks,



Owners Brown Loper and Tom Butler

baskets and packs is smaller than other stores visited. And while the shop has a sizable racer customer base, it custom orders team clothing and shoes but does not stock high-end enthusiast clothing in the store.

"Kids' sales have been a slow upward trend for us. It starts with a father getting a bike to ride on the trails, then later he returns and may buy his wife or kids bikes. So our kids' offerings from \$400 to \$799 sell pretty well," Loper said. **BRAIN**

Bicycle South

Employees: 7 full time

Sales floor space: 4,000 square feet plus 2,000-square-foot basement four doors down

Years in business: 43

Emphasis: Commuter and family

Main brands: Giant, Raleigh, Brompton

Owner: Fred Boykin



Fred Boykin was a junior at Emory University in 1972 when he and two friends opened a bike shop near campus.

"It was right before the bike boom and people were importing bikes like crazy," said Boykin. A friend with a connection in New York began sending French Gitane bikes to them by bus. The New York stores were Bicycle West and Bicycle East, so they named their store Bicycle South.

The family-oriented retailer now sells mostly commuter and road bikes from Giant and Raleigh, and as the only Brompton dealer in the Southeast, Bicycle South has customers travel from miles away to purchase the folding bikes.

On the Decatur city commission since 2000, Boykin has been instrumental in bringing bicycle transportation and advocacy issues to the forefront in local and state politics.

He started a bicycle safety program that offers a week's worth of safety training to fourth-graders in the Decatur school system. He also was responsible for the first Safe Routes to School pilot project that became a model for the entire state. And he has seen the impact of those programs.

"You used to see zero bike racks; now there are bike racks all over town," Boykin said. "At the high school, it used to be it was not cool to ride a bike; now you can't find a place to park a bike."

Boykin plans to continue to promote bicycle advocacy when he retires later this year at age 65.

He will turn over the keys to



Fred Boykin has been in retail since 1972.

Brian Dunne, his store manager who has worked for Boykin since 1994 when he was attending Emory.

Dunne will take over running the business in December, and will transition ownership over the next 10 years.

"We see eye to eye," Dunne said. "Fred will be involved — if I need him, he'll be there." **BRAIN**

Free-Flite Bicycles

Employees: 32 (all three stores)

Sales floor space: 4,500 (Sandy Springs store)

Years in business: 37

Emphasis: Full service locally owned three-store chain

Main brands: Trek, Niner, Santa Cruz, Electra

Owner: Dan Thornton



In local lingo, "OTP" refers to the shopping boundary around Atlanta that those "outside the perimeter" don't cross. Two of the Free-Flite Bicycles locations are OTP, but its newest location in Sandy Springs is just "inside the perimeter."

"We knew if we came in here, we would be getting those customers that wouldn't cross I-285," said Dan Thornton, Free-Flite's owner.

That store, an existing bike shop Free-Flite bought two years ago, grew sales 35 percent last year.

"The only way for us to expand is to take over operations in existence. We tried to go in cold two times and it didn't work. This has been really positive," said Thornton, noting a former location in the high-rent Buckhead shopping area that never made enough money to offset the cost per square foot.

Profitability is a cornerstone Thornton focuses on as part of his participation in one of the NBDA's P2 groups, a group of 20 retailers that confidentially share information to benchmark and improve their businesses.

The P2 group helped form his purchasing philosophy as well. "We've for many years been just in time. We don't have any back stock. We don't buy 10 to make 14 cents. You'll never see us bring in more just because it's on sale," said Thornton.

A committed Trek dealer by volume, though not officially a concept store, Thornton relies on Trek to fill in product. "As long as they can fill what we need, I'm OK with it. There is trust there," he said, noting a long-term relationship with Trek that goes back nearly to the shop's beginning on Canton Road in Marietta, where he and his father opened a skate shop in



Owner Dan Thornton

1976. It placed its first order for Ross bicycles two years later.

Thornton, now 56, spends most of his time working on advocacy, big-picture expansion opportunities and his exit plan. In September, he named his son Daniel as general manager. "It's a great feeling," Thornton said. "He's all in." **BRAIN**

Performance Bicycle

Employees: 20

Sales floor space: 10,000 square feet

Years in business: 10

Emphasis: Beginner riders

Main brands: Fuji, Ridley, Diamondback

Manager: Teresa Sylvester



On a busy frontage road next to a Guitar Center, Performance Bicycle of Atlanta is not the easiest location to access by bike. But its visible central location — the largest of four Performance Bicycle stores in the greater Atlanta area — makes it appealing to new and experienced cyclists alike.

One of three Performance Bicycle stores that opened in Atlanta in 2005, it reaps the benefits of being part of a local and national chain.

"There is a lot of inventory transfer so we can take care of customers in a unique way," said Clayton Johnson, Southeast district manager for the Chapel Hill, N.C., company.

Johnson said having multiple locations in Atlanta and elsewhere also provides growth opportunities for staff. "It offers legitimate career

opportunities," said Johnson, who manages Performance locations from Charlotte, N.C., to Florida.

Performance also hires staff that reflects the diversity of the urban Atlanta population around the store, which has a high Jewish, Hispanic and African-American concentration. "We try to make associates representative of the demographics of our customers," Johnson said.

Reflecting that diversity, Performance supports the Metro Atlanta Cycling Club, an African-American cycling club. Performance employees recently participated with MACC members in the Montgomery Bicycle Club 50th anniversary Selma-to-Montgomery ride to commemorate the historic civil rights march.

Johnson, who was managing



Clayton Johnson, Southeast district manager for Performance

Full Cycle in Tucson, Ariz., when it was acquired by Performance in 2002, said Performance still struggles to let cyclists know that it is more than just an online store.

"I came from a mom and pop shop, so I've seen both sides of it," he said. "This is just another bike shop." **BRAIN**

All3Sports.com

Employees: 14-16
Sales floor space: 4,500 square feet of retail plus an 8,500-square-foot warehouse
Years in business: 13; 6 under current ownership
Emphasis: Multisport — swim, bike, run
Main brands: Cervélo, Quintana Roo, Louis Garneau, Pearl Izumi, Sidi, Mavic, Fizik, Zoot, Hoka, Newton, Mizuno
President: Morgan Clark; owned by Clark’s family, which makes up the board of directors



All3Sports.com was founded in 2002 with an online focus. At the time, it was among the major online retailers in the multisport world like Arizona’s Trisports.com and San Diego’s Nytro Multisport. But that was before Amazon took notice of the opportunity in the triathlon category. “It’s really changed the marketplace,” general manager Sean Schnur said about Amazon’s growing impact on triathlon sales online.

Schnur, an avid triathlete, has been on a steep learning curve since coming on full time in December. A former chemical engineer for ExxonMobil and avid triathlete who began competing in 2007, Schnur left that career to head up All3Sports as Morgan Clark, his wife and president of the company, stepped back to focus on their family. The couple, who met at the Kona Ironman World Championships in 2012, dated and married eight months later. They welcomed their first son last fall.

Clark, who bought her first triathlon bike from All3Sports and was a loyal customer, became friends with the original owners. In 2008 when they were looking to sell and Clark, whose family owns a company that distributes Coca-Cola products and beer, were looking to diversify — she proposed buying the business. “[The fam-

ily] thought it was a little bike shop, but didn’t realize the e-commerce side of the business,” she said.

Her family bought the business — an online retailer with a storefront in the northern suburbs of Atlanta — in December 2008 during the heart of the financial crisis. “The store was predominantly e-commerce when I took over, but coming from the Coca-Cola business, which is very community focused, I knew I wanted to bring that to All3Sports. I spent the first three to four years meeting the triathletes in the local area and started doing a lot more expos and local events to get the store out there more,” she said.

She also expanded the retail show floor from 1,500 square feet to 4,500 square feet. More recently, she invested in a revamped website, which launched in November.

“I feel like the e-commerce business is a viable part of the business that will continue to grow and we’ve been pretty lucky with the brick-and-mortar side, too. We were up 12 percent last year,” she said. Her online sales re-



General manager Sean Schnur

mained relatively flat in 2014, mostly due to the transition from the old website to a new one.

Clark, 37, said that while triathlon participation trends seem to show a flat market, that’s not reflected in the traffic she sees through her store and website or in the number of triathlon stores that have opened recently in Atlanta.

“We’re constantly seeing growth in our customer database,” she said. “People leave triathlon but new people also come in. We want to be the source of education for beginners, for them to feel comfortable coming into the store and educating them on what they need to know for their first race.” **BRAIN**

Roswell Bicycles

Employees: 25-30
Sales floor space: 30,000 square feet (entire building)
Years in business: 35, 29 at present location
Main brands: Giant, Scott, Specialized
Emphasis: Family, racing
Owner: Todd Kaib



When Roswell Bicycles moved into its current location there were three other shops nearby. As the shop’s business grew the other shops closed, but as owner Todd Kaib notes, cycling in Atlanta is growing so strongly now that even with nine bike shops within five miles of his store, his business is as robust as ever.

While the shop’s location and owner haven’t changed for years, Kaib’s retail strategies have. Lucky to lease space in a freestanding business park, Kaib was able to expand his floor space without a lot of drama as the business grew.

His first retail gambit was starting a coffee shop inside the store. Noting that men shopping with their significant others felt a little rushed as they shopped, Kaib thought the coffee shop would give wives and girlfriends a nice place to relax while the guys shopped. The café was so successful it grew into a well-respected Roswell restaurant over a few years.

But employees hired to work in the bike shop didn’t enjoy having to also serve food and coffee when the restaurant was short staffed.

“The only thing harder than running a bike shop is running a restaurant, and finally I’d had enough and wanted to return my focus on bikes,” Kaib recalled.

He also went strongly into triath-

lon in the ’80s and grew a sizable business, but the market changed and now triathlon gear is a very small part of his business.

One retail strategy change he is particularly proud of is breaking off his service department as a separate business entity.

“I was shocked at how hard we had to work in service to break even. The department had to pay what its square-foot lease would be and payroll against the cost of labor and parts sold,” he noted.

With six full-time service employees, he tweaked his commission and bonus structure, upped incentive volume and adjusted hourly rates. He also moved parts inventory — replacement and aftermarket — into the service department so employees could up-sell their service customers.

“It’s quite a profitable department now, but it wasn’t easy getting there,” he said.

Roswell Bicycles pays 100 percent of its employees’ health care, and while it currently is a six-figure hit to the bottom line, what bothers Kaib more is the 35 percent increase in cost he saw last year. But good benefits are key to keeping employees a long time, which Kaib says is a



Owner Todd Kaib

big part of the shop’s success. The shop floors bikes selling from \$330 to \$15,000 and has 800 to 1,000 bikes in the showroom at any time.

Giant is the only brand the shop carried since the beginning. Raleigh and Cannondale were longtime brands at the shop, though they are no longer carried. And this is Roswell Bicycles’ third time carrying Specialized.

“My brand philosophy is pretty simple: A brand has to provide price, service and selection, and give me an adequate territory. If they don’t get me product when I need it and are not aggressive developing new bikes, I’ll drop them and move on,” Kaib said. **BRAIN**






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Trails bring sales in Atlanta

At PeopleForBikes, we believe in a version of the “Field of Dreams” adage: “If you build it, they will come.” For us, the “it” is better places to bike. So I naturally paid a lot of attention to the role bike paths and trails play in relation to bike shops during the recent BRAIN Dealer Tour of Atlanta. Riding through one of the South’s largest cities and visiting bike shops of all shapes and sizes led me to realize that the saying could very well be: “If you build it, they will BUY.”

The Atlanta metro area is a rising star for bicycling and bike infrastructure, benefiting from the hard work of advocacy groups, engaged retailers and a variety of individuals who are dedicated to making a difference in how Atlanta experiences bicycling.

Throughout the Tour, the one story that we heard consistently was that the shops located on or near key bike paths and lanes are increasing their sales and their customer bases. The theme was nearly identical near the Atlanta BeltLine, along the Silver Comet Trail and close to the Big Creek Greenway in Roswell.

Stores located close to new trails and paths are now carrying more and different products to sell to customers looking for better ways to get around their neighborhood. Talk about a productive circle: This sales growth has also encouraged retailers to back

advocacy efforts.

As Atlanta continues to develop a robust network of appealing bike paths and trails, the bike riding experience here should keep improving. More people are likely to start riding, and the people who already bike should ride more. All of this should be good for local bike retailers.

Is this heaven? No, it’s Atlanta.



Nikki Javurek
Campaign strategist
PeopleForBikes Coalition

Atlanta is working toward becoming a cycling city

Is Atlanta a great cycling destination? Absolutely. Atlanta may be widely known for its professional sports teams and the 1996 Summer Olympics, but it’s also quietly become a city worthy of cycling attention. Atlanta proves that cycling can and should be an important part of city planning (large or small) and deserving of resources and funding.

Cycling in Atlanta is the sum of its parts with no one event or initiative defining its personality. Great retailers small and large, cooperative advocacy spread across neighboring communities, and cycling infrastructure supporting a fast-growing commuting population all add up to a vibrant cycling metropolis.

The common denominator in the “Atlanta Cycling Equation” is clearly the retailers. After visiting 13 area dealers, it was evident that their individual and collective efforts to gain trail access, build bike lanes, and to fight for resources and funding are leading to a substantial and supportive cycling community. Not surprisingly, all the retailers said their own growth and prosperity improved as these parts continue to add up.

Atlanta may not have 10,000-foot mountains to climb or the commuting ease of Portland (yet), but what it does offer is cycling in a big city with Southern charm. You

can ride on roads worthy of a ProTour race (Tour de Georgia) or a 100-mile trail ending in Alabama. Get to Atlanta with your bike. You won’t be disappointed.



Roy Hough
General manager
Hutchinson Tires North America

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Meeting other riders a treat for Dealer Tour first-timer

So, you ride bikes?

In the bike world, this question is one I've become quite familiar with after joining the action sports industry a few years back. It's a question that brings together people from different walks of life. I had the pleasure of exchanging this phrase with some amazing people in Atlanta on my first BRAIN Dealer Tour.

Cole Smith of the Atlanta Bicycle Coalition, our local guide, rides bikes. He met his wife while riding at a local Atlanta event, Seersucker Social. In every conversation I had with Cole, his drive and dedication for making Atlanta a friendlier biking city was infectious. It's inspiring to see someone talk so passionately about the improvements that the city has made, and all the plans for future expansion of bike culture and accessibility.

Megan Tompkins, publisher of BRAIN, is also an avid road cyclist who enjoys dabbling in mountain and 'cross racing. Julie Kelly, special projects coordinator at BRAIN, also rides bikes. She prefers sprint-type riding and competes on a race team.

These conversations were shared between us while riding bikes and whipping down Atlanta streets carefully avoiding potholes as well as drivers who aren't used to

sharing the road with cyclists yet.

For me this question has become something I cherish. I've seen and experienced how it brings two strangers together, creating a common ground that you stand and ride on together.

To all the awesome people I had the pleasure of getting to know while on the Atlanta Dealer Tour, thanks for riding bikes with me.



Elizabeth Hung
Associate product marketing manager
Bell Helmets

City holds promise for biking as infrastructure makes gains

While the Atlanta Dealer Tour was the rainiest I've been on, it was also the best example of a city primed for cycling. Many big cities have been allocating larger parts of their budget toward walking and cycling for the last decade or longer and already have a great number of bike lanes and paths. Atlanta has only begun that transformation, but with the help of advocacy groups like the Atlanta Bicycle Coalition and passionate IBDs, it's a city on the rise.

A key to the citywide cycling transformation is the work of local and national advocacy groups. Cole Smith of the Atlanta Bicycle Coalition explained that every time a new road goes in or gets repaved, it's reviewed and often receives a bike lane. This helps create miles of safer cycling every year. These efforts, along with the creation of the BeltLine trail around the city and the expansion of the Silver Comet Trail (which extends from Atlanta to Alabama), the streets are becoming safer for cyclists and there are more paths that make commuting and long-distance riding easier.

Almost every shop owner and manager we spoke to talked about how they supported the work of the ABC and were involved in activities ranging from Ride to Work Day to teaching elementary and middle school children how to ride and take care of a bike. The local shops not only supported advocacy but

became advocates for their own community. Shops hold events of their own, train their customers to care for their bikes and support local rides. Every shop we visited was truly focused on making cycling better in Atlanta.

While there were still many drivers who felt blowing their horn was the best way of reminding us they were there, cycling in Atlanta has become safer and easier. With the growing number of bike paths, the proposed expansion and connection of the Silver Comet Trail, and a passionate group of retailers, Atlanta is destined to become a great cycling city.



Derek Goltz
Marketing manager
Finish Line Technologies Inc.

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The Dealer Tour got off to a soggy start. Riders got drenched on the first day as they made their way to Intown Bicycles, the first shop visit.



The crew is all smiles despite the wet and cold weather that kicked off the week of store visits and riding in Atlanta.



Outback Bikes owner Pete Wicker tries to blend into his eclectic Little Five Points neighborhood as best he can. LFP is likened to San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury.



These platform pumps outfitted with clipless pedal cleats were a big hit at Peachtree Bikes.



Nothing like seeing your name on a billboard. That's the welcome we received at Atlanta Cycling.



A Dealer Tour first, our group visited specialty retailer Big Peach Running Co.'s Decatur store to learn about how it does business in the competitive Atlanta market.



This bus sits in the parking lot of Smyrna Bicycles and serves as its major form of advertising. The shop also takes it to races.

DEALER TOUR ATLANTA



Hutchinson general manager Roy Hough and Interbike's Justin Gottlieb may butt heads here and there, but they get along most of the time.



Finish Line's Derek Goltz took Organic Transit's Elf, a solar- and electric-powered bike-car, for a test ride, uh, drive, in the Performance Bicycle parking lot. The Elf draws a lot of interest and sparks conversation with customers at the store.



Rained out on the final day of the Dealer Tour, riders satisfied their need for speed during a lunchtime break at the Andretti indoor kart racing track, which was next door to longstanding retailer Roswell Bicycles.



Mechanics earn nicknames early on at Roswell Bicycles, and they're displayed on name plates at their work stations.



ASI director of marketing Kaitlyn Phillips, ASI Atlanta rep Brady Rogers and People-ForBikes' Nikki Javurek kept the #braindealertour feed going with photos and posts.



Free-Flite staff (from left) Greg Gaffney, Aaron Budsock, Gregory Paine, owner Dan Thornton and son Daniel Thornton Jr. hosted our Dealer Tour reception at their recently renovated Sandy Springs store the last night.

Running retailer hits stride amid stiff competition

Mike Cosentino worked at Coca-Cola for seven years handling manufacturing and distribution. It was while working for the Atlanta-based beverage company that he became intrigued with retail.

"I had the good fortune of working with good retailers and thought, 'I want to be in retail,'" Cosentino said. "This has been a great opportunity for me to match my personal interest in running with my professional passion for retail. If I wasn't doing this, I would still be doing retail somehow."

Cosentino, who at press time was preparing to travel to Los Angeles to run in its annual marathon, founded Big Peach Running Co. in 2004 and has grown the specialty running business to seven stores in the Atlanta metro region.

He often speaks at conferences on the topic of retail, including the IBD Summit last year. He will be on a panel at the upcoming Bicycle Leadership Conference in Monterey, Calif., on the growth of the running market.

The BRAIN Dealer Tour visited his Decatur store, the smallest location both in physical footprint and sales volume. The 2,100-square-foot store is Big Peach's only stand-alone store, in an old brick building; the others are in dense shopping environments or strip centers. It's on the east side of Atlanta, and although it's in a small community, Cosentino said it allows him to reach customers in Stone Mountain and east of the I-20 Interstate.

"A higher percentage of sales come from a greater number of ZIP codes in that store," he said. "It's an influential community in Atlanta."

Manager Neli Manova moved to Decatur a year ago to manage the store from Big Peach's Brookhaven location. "Our customers know us by name," she said. "We're a com-

munity store. People get fitted and buy shoes here."

The store includes a free fitting session with every shoe purchase. Staff members assess a customer's foot shape, determine gait and analyze running form to recommend a specific shoe.

Unlike Big Peach's other stores, it doesn't have to compete with chains like Dick's Sporting Goods or running stores at malls, but with a Fleet Feet store nearby, it still contends with local competition. Store events and clinics are a core tenet of its business model. Its monthly calendar is filled with everything from twice-a-week group runs to core strengthening sessions, race nutrition clinics, stretching sessions led by physical therapists and running seminars on improving form. Big Peach also sponsors local races,

and stores offer packet pick-up for events.

Cosentino said his stores strive to take the intimidation factor out of running. And while he realizes that he can't win the price war — either online or with other brick and mortars — he focuses on areas where he can: customer experience and convenience. His stores deliver to more than 80 ZIP codes in Atlanta, and Cosentino is a big believer in more stores over larger stores.

"Convenience is the battleground," he said. "If we bring someone in for a group run or clinic or seminar we feel confident that if they need nutrition or shoes, if they're standing in front of our store or inside our store, it's tough to be more convenient. It's very intentional. We believe that sales will follow." **BRAIN**



Big Peach Running Co.

Employees: 6 at the Decatur store

Sales floor space: Decatur: 1,800 square feet for sales floor; 2,100 total including stock room

Years in business: 7 at Decatur; 11 total for the retail business

Emphasis: Running shoes, apparel and accessories

Main brands: Adidas, Asics, Brooks, Mizuno, Pearl Izumi, New Balance, Saucony

Owner: Mike Cosentino

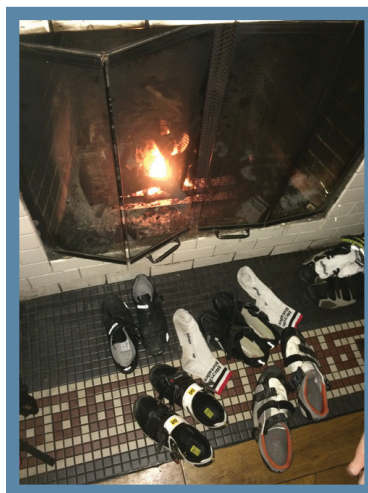


BEST OF SOCIAL MEDIA

For more candid photos from the Atlanta Dealer Tour: [#braindealertour](#)



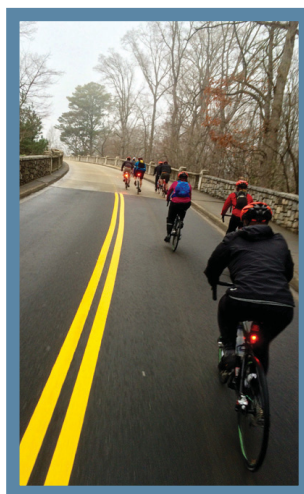
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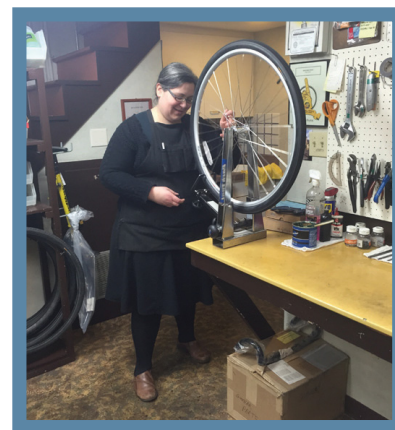
Riders dry their wet shoes and socks by the fire during lunch at The Marley House on the first day.



The final stop of day one was Bicycle South, which greeted wet riders with towels.



Atlanta and its surrounding suburbs provided a rolling terrain of steep but short hills, including this section on the Emory University campus.



Amy Plasman, of Intown Bicycles, is a Jacquelyn of all trades. She speaks with customers about all things bicycle and is pretty good with a wrench. She also manages the inventory, does displays, and takes care of the myriad details involved in running a bike shop.



PeopleForBikes' Nikki Javurek and ASI director of marketing Kaitlyn Phillips enjoy the wet weather.