




QBP



**LVP Coordinating Committee
MTB Presentation
Gary Sjoquist
Quality Bicycle Products**

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Who is Gary Sjoquist?

- 21 years as fulltime bicycle advocate for QBP
- QBP is the nation's largest distributor of bicycle parts
 - Owner of Salsa, Surly, 45NORTH brands
 - 40,000 parts in MN distribution center; DCs in NV, CO, and PA
- Founder of MORC, Co-Founder COGGS
- Co-Founder of Minnesota High School Cycling League
- Instrumental in getting Cuyuna funded and built
- 15 years as Director of the Minnesota Mountain Bike Series
- Still racing, too

Primary Questions from LVP Agenda

1. Why build mountain bike trails?
2. Is there a saturation point for having too many mtb trails?
3. Are mountain bike trails sustainable?
4. What are the maintenance costs for mtb trails?

Sjoquist Disclaimer

- My goal is to help the Iron Range leverage what's been built
- Not here to change Chisholm, or overpromise on mtb
- Instrumental in the evolution of mtb trail building for 30 years
- Redhead is purpose-built for mtb, professionally designed, built by multiple builders, with state-of-the-art textural strategies to utilize mine rock, natural surfaces, elevation, and scenic qualities
- It'll shed water quickly, making same day functionality possible
- It's astonishingly great

Disclaimer, cont.

- Cuyuna set a new bar for mtb, both in MN and nationally:
 - 2.5 hours from Twin Cities, making daytrips possible
 - New "flow" strategy trails at abandoned mine pit a huge draw
 - The community and the DNR responded due to influx of riders
- Redhead (and Tioga) will likely not draw as much in terms of same day use for Twin Cities riders; drive up, ride hard, and drive back to the Twin Cities
- Growth curve will be different than Cuyuna
- Chequamegon and Duluth also excellent, but built to a different standard

1. Why Build Mountain Bike Trails?

- ROI – great return on investment in terms of economic and social benefits
- They're cost effective – low investment, high return
- It's a new, attractive community amenity
- Demographics for mtb riders are great
- Opportunity creation – good for existing and new businesses

Return on Investment

- Modest investment compared to long term economic and social benefits to surrounding communities
- In Duluth, about \$6 million invested in building the Traverse returns between \$30 and 40 million annually in both direct and indirect economic benefits
- Cuyuna proved this; so have Fruita (CO), Moab (UT), and Bentonville (AR)
- Dual Usage – can be used for trail running events and fat bikes

The MN High School Example in Mankato

- 2018 Economic Impact Study by People for Bikes and NICA
- 2018 MN League Championship took place in Mankato (40,000)
- 1065 racers, but about 2000 total (coaches, spectators, volunteers)
- Survey per participant: Lodging (\$140), F&B (\$100), Trans (\$50)
- Total Lodging = \$200,412
- Total F&B = \$206,239
- Total Trans = \$84,885
- Total Economic Impact for Weekend = \$491,536.00

Cost Effective

- At Cuyuna, where a handful rode mtb before 2011, now 30,000 riders come 8 years after it opened
- What does 30,000 riders look like for a small community?
 - Say 10,000 are locals, so figure 20,000 visitors come to the area
 - 20,000 folks spread over 6 warm weather months (May thru Oct)
 - 3,333 per month breaks down to 775 new folks coming per week
 - Let's say 600 of the 775 spend \$300 while in town that week (\$180,000)
 - \$180,000 x 4.3 weeks = \$774,000 per month spent (new income)
 - 6 months at \$774,000 per month = \$4,644,000.00 economic impact
 - What other investment in the area could bring this return?

It's New Community Amenity

- You're creating a new healthy outdoor recreational activity hub
- Not only a national destination, but a new outlet for locals of all ages
- Kids will start riding, which will get their parents riding
- At Cuyuna, the mtb trail is used to recruit new surgeons and new teachers
- People may choose to move here; home prices will seem very reasonable
- Also may choose to move their businesses here

Demographics for MTB are Excellent

- 2014 Survey of Trail Runners and MTB Riders, Sawyer County, WI (Hayward/Cable area of northwest WI)
 - Household Pretax Incomes of \$128,000+
 - 80% have Bachelors or higher
 - 70% have professional or managerial vocations
 - Age Ranges of Riders:
 - 19 to 22 12%
 - 23 to 44 49%
 - 45 to 64 26%
 - 65 to 70 3%
 - 46% are female

2. Is There a Saturation Point for Too Many MTB Trails?

- No – we actually need many more
- Emergence of the MN High School Cycling League has increased need dramatically
- Iron Range's trails (Tioga, Redhead, and Giant's Ridge) will become a destination not just nationally, but for MN riders with a badly needed option

Need For More Mountain Bike Trails

- In the Twin Cities, there's about 100 miles of really good mtb trails for about 100,000+ riders who live in the metro
- Due to the MN high school league, especially during the fall, this is not nearly enough (teams have 100+ riders)
- Mountain bikers want singletrack – not interested in gravel roads, forest dual track, ATV trails, or paved trails
- New trails are emerging (slowly) in the metro area, but 10 or 12 miles of trail at a time in city or regional parks is not enough
- Parking is often the biggest issue

Iron Range Will Now Become an MTB Destination

- Tioga, Redhead, and Giants Ridge will further what Cuyuna started in terms of drawing riders
- These 3 will nearly double the available mileage in metro, which doesn't have the elevation, scenery, or "wow" factor of these Iron Range trails
- Duluth's Traverse is great, but not beginner friendly, and is incomplete; connections via neighborhood streets are common
- Tioga is different than Redhead, and Giant's Ridge is also different and focused more on downhill rather than cross country (XC) riding
- Redhead is like Cuyuna on steroids; more elevation, more scenery, longer trails, more options longer paved trail riding

3. Are Mountain Bike Trails Sustainable?

- In the old days, mtb riders simply rode where we could:
 - Old nordic trails; often low, muddy, grassy areas normally frozen
 - Old dual track, long straight dirt trails and gravel roads
 - Big issues with erosion, mud, trail damage, dangerously high speeds
- Now, with professionally designed and constructed trails that use state-of-the-art construction techniques, trails can withstand increased numbers of riders year over year
- Construction strategies include:
 - Rock-based overlays won't degrade and shed water effectively
 - Use of existing "slick rock" (exposed rock surfaces) keep maintenance costs low

Quick Clinic on MTB Trail Construction

- Concepts:
 - Singletrack – narrow, natural surface trail (24 to 36")
 - Flow – utilizes sustained momentum instead of elevation
 - Contours – trails go across slopes instead of down fall line
- Strategies:
 - One-way trails – allow increased riders with reduced conflicts
 - Bermed corners – keeps speeds low, but fun. Can be two-way
 - Rollers – 3 ft. mounds built into the trail surface help build speed
 - Rock features – flat rocky surfaces link trails across wet areas
 - Trails ranked by skill – beginner, intermediate, and expert trails allow riders to build skills safely



4. Leveraging MTB Trails for Economic and Social Gains

- Those mountain bikers can't spend money; their bike shorts don't even have pockets!
- For economic gain:
 - Opening festival and race – need to create a big buzz
 - Invite the bike industry/press – will generate a ton of media
 - Annual MN Mountain Bike Series Race – will bring 400 to 500 families for a weekend event. Event could generate \$4000 for host organization
 - MN High School Cycling League race – weekend event will bring 3500+ and generate more than a half million of economic impact to community
 - Creating the need to return – if blown away by the experience (includes hospitality by surrounding communities) riders will book lodging as they're leaving town

Leverage Mountain Bike Trails, cont.

- For social gain:
 - New outdoor healthy activity will get locals riding, getting fitter, often triggering an overhaul in lifestyle
 - Family activity – mtb creates a new activity that literally all members of the family can participate in (unlike traditional ball and stick sports)
 - Riding clubs – will form, giving residents a new option for weekends and weeknight rides, linking folks who don't normally hang together
 - Especially for girls – riding mountain bikes provides an antidote for teenage girls challenged by gender and beauty norms. They can be accomplished, fit riders who often find a sense of purpose often lacking in high school or through other sports activities

Most Important Point About Leveraging Redhead

- Riders must be feel welcomed to the community
- Items like signage in town to trailheads, bike wash stations, hotels that allow clean bikes in rooms; it's a vibe that says bikes are welcomed
- Onsite at MDC; easy trailhead access, restroom facilities, picnic benches, changing stations, repair stands, rentals
- Post ride, they need to get into towns to poke around, eat, shop, hang out
- They'll need to find campgrounds, good food, beer, bars and eateries that welcome mountain bikers instead of ignoring them
- If these are not found, they'll just turn east or west on 169 to head home

FAQs on Mountain Bike Riding

- Is it dangerous?
- Is it expensive?
- How about not having a bike?
- Is it like those Redbull Rampage shows where riders are leaping off huge cliffs and doing backflips in mid-air?
- Other questions?

Thank you!

Gary Sjoquist
garys@qbp.com



Mountain Bike Racing in Minnesota

- Two separate, independently run programs
 - The Minnesota Mountain Bike Series (MNMBS or "the Series")
 - The Minnesota High School Cycling League (MHSCCL) or "the high school league or MN League")

Minnesota Mountain Bike Series (the Series)

- Program's been running since the late 1980s in MN
- Volunteer-led by a 5-member Executive Committee
- Series, usually 9 or 10 races, runs from early May to Labor Day
- Small races are 350 racers; larger races approach 600
- Daylong program, usually on Sundays
- Venues typically include St. Croix Falls and River Falls (WI), Rochester, Duluth, Wirth and Lake Rebecca in Twin Cities, Detroit Lakes, Maplelag, sometimes St. Croix and Mankato

More on Series Races

- Series races include the following categories;
 - Kids Comp (under 12, easiest course, parents can accompany)
 - Citizen (Beginner level, usually one lap or 40 minutes)
 - Marathon (4 hours nonstop),
 - Sport (skilled but not fit enough for longer than one hour),
 - Comp (skilled and fit, but not pro level, usually one lap less than Elite)
 - Elite (Pro level skill and fitness; 2+ hours, toughest course, top finishers get cash)
- Men and Women race together in all classes
- "Waves" of racers launch based on age groups (29 to 39, etc)
- Ages range from 8 years old to 70+

More on the Series

- The Series is structured so the host community or organization (Promoter) gets a percentage of fees collected to maintain the trails used for the race
- Series provides guidance and resources to the Promoter to maintain consistency, meet expectations and ease burden on volunteers
- Promoter provides venue, parking, volunteers
- Promoter also provide information on lodging, eating, etc.

Series Provides to the Promoter

- Promoter's Agreement is clear and concise so all terms and responsibilities are clearly laid out and agreed upon prior to race
- Series provides for each race event:
 - Online registration
 - Insurance on each racer
 - Issues number plates
 - Provides all start and finish line infrastructure
 - Onsite timing and scoring
 - Points accumulation
 - Provides race-day awards

What Promoters Receive from Series

- Pre-season:
 - Sample "End of Race Day" accounting sheet showing fees collection, what the Series pays for, what the Promoter might earn based on number of racers present on race day
 - Help with setting up race lengths, technical obstacles, infield set-up
- Race Day:
 - A structured full day of racing, professional level timing and scoring, guidance on race lengths start/finish line set up
 - Chief Referee to handle scoring disputes, race starts, waves, finish/lapping procedures
 - An awards podium for individual race awards
 - Help with distributing cash awards to Elite racers

What Promoters Receive, Cont.

- Percentage of online registration for each racer who registers
 - Online registration begins in late March; all events
 - Individual race registration typically ends Thursday 8 pm prior to race
- All proceeds brought on through individual race day sponsorships
 - Many promoters collect sponsorship fees from local businesses
 - Sponsorship fees set by individual promoters
- All "day of race" registrations kept by Promoter
 - Online registration typically \$15 to \$35
 - Day of registration is highest; \$35 plus

How to Proceed for a Series Race

- Sjoquist offers to act as "Co-Promoter" in conjunction with IROC/Discovery Center for first year if Series agrees to race here
- We'd contact the MNMBS Executive Committee about 2020
 - We'd think through potential dates, a course, start/finish line set-up, concessionaire, volunteers, sponsorships, etc.
- Executive Committee member would visit and verify set-up
- Redhead could be added to the Series for 2020 season



Minnesota High School Cycling League

- Launched in 2012 with 155 racers over 4 races
- 2019 – 2000+ Jr. and High School racers over 7 races
- MN League operates under umbrella of NICA (National Interscholastic Cycling Association) as a statewide league
 - Not governed by the MN State High School League
- MN League handles all registration, insurance, race operations, scoring, timing, volunteer recruitment and training
- Venues chosen provide race course, parking, room for teams
- Sjoquist is President of Board of Directors for MN League

Getting Kids on Bikes

- The MN League functions to get kids riding bikes
 - Using mountain biking as a “gateway” into cycling for youth
- Parents often become coaches (need to be certified and pass background check)
- Events are run by Core Staff with help from volunteers
- Weekend events have Middle School races Sat; High School races on Sundays
 - Currently, all teams have 2 mandatory “bye” weekends to keep size manageable for staff

MN League Teams

- Teams operate as a “club sport” within schools
- Generally two types of teams:
 - School based team
 - Composite team – students from area schools combine
- Other info:
 - 80% of students gain varsity letters for participation
 - Beginning teams can be small as 2 or 3 students
 - Larger teams are 100+ students
 - About 30% female participation; teams with girls score more points
 - High percentage of parents also become mountain bikers

Race Course Venues

- Singletrack loop trail, 4 to 6-miles, with passing zones (dual track) and an uphill start if possible
 - Not as technically difficult at Series races – all racers do same lap
- Paved trails occasionally used to complete loop
- Need huge flat area for Pit Zone (team tents)
- Parking for 800 vehicles (RVs, campers, buses)
- Courses need to be spectator friendly
- Typically bring in concessionaires for F&B

MN League Provides Set-Up

- League Director Josh Kleve and Core Staff handle all infield set up and course markings, signage, restroom facilities
- League brings all registration and volunteer materials
- Medical, Chief Referee, Timing and Scoring, Awards Podiums all handled by MN League staff
- Each race requires about 130 volunteers to help as crossing guards, course marshals, start/finish line, parking, etc.
- Venues offered at no cost or minimal cost to MN League
- MN League staff evaluate all potential sites

Race Schedule 2019

- Race 1 – Austin, MN
- Race 2 – Delano, MN
- Race 3 – Hayward, WI
- Race 4 – River Falls, WI
- Race 5 – Detroit Lakes, MN
- Race 6 – Duluth, MN
- Race 7 – Mankato, MN (Oct. 26/27)

Next Steps for MN League Coming to Iron Range Sites

- MN League staff will carefully evaluate venues for site fit for all parameters (Evac, parking, lodging, weather, etc.)
- 2020 schedule close to being finalized, so 2021 possible?
- Attend Season Championship in Mankato if possible to learn more about site viability
- I'll offer to help launch a team for this area

Website Addresses

- Minnesota Mountain Bike Series www.mnmtbseries.com
- Minnesota High School Cycling League www.minnesotamtb.org
- NICA www.nationalmtb.org
- Gary's email is garys@qbp.com
- Please call or email with questions
- Gary's cell 612 386-9630



Gravel Addendum

Gravel Racing

- The fastest growing sector of the bicycle industry over past decade
- Gravel racing is long distance races and group rides on gravel roads linked by paved roads or bike trails
- Hundreds of events added every year throughout U.S.
- New events typically double in size each year after launch
- Low competitive vibe – mostly about great scenic long rides without traffic, traffic lights, trucks, distracted drivers
- Great for couples, too, due to “ride your own pace” focus

Gravel, Cont.

- Gravel roads everywhere, and mostly public with low traffic
- Perfect for events with mileage ranges; 50, 75, 100+
- Sjoquist did unPAved on Sunday in Lewisburg, PA
- 800 riders, 1500+ total people in town for 3-day event combined with Fall Festival
- Lewisburg Chamber of Commerce estimates weekend economic impact at \$750,000 for unPAved event
- Hosting a gravel event using MDC/Redhead and the Mesabi Trail to link area gravel roads into long loops a perfect setup



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