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Visitors to a past Downtown After 5 concert park their bikes at a bike corral. The city will get its first permanent bike corral April 28 on Haywood Road.

New bike corral designed for alternate commuters

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ASHEVILLE - A corral is finally hitting the streets of Asheville.

But this corral will hold bikes instead of horses, make room for pedestrians and make alternative commuting a more pleasant affair.

A bicycle corral is a series of on-street bicycle racks that can provide parking for at least 15 bicycles. Asheville on Bikes, the advocacy organization focused on advancing Asheville's urban and commuter bicycle culture and infrastructure, will hold a public celebration of the first bicycle corral Thursday, April 28, at the Westville Pub.

The City of Asheville, N.C. Department of Transportation, West Asheville Business Association, and AoB have partnered over the past year to explore the option of a bicycle corral on Haywood Road.

The idea first came about in the

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summer of 2014, when AoB director Mike Sule and Barb Mee, the city's pedestrian and bicycle coordinator, presented the concept of a bike corral to the West Asheville Business Association, since Haywood Road has some of the highest bicycle counts in city.

"During a once a year count, from 5-7 p.m. last September, we counted 67 bikes and 323 pedestrians - it's one of the highest counts in the city," Mee said. "This is the first in-street bike corral. It makes a difference to everybody. There's going to be more room

on the sidewalk like West Asheville, where sidewalks might not have been a big deal 10 years ago, they're much more precious now. This is going to make a difference for commuters, shoppers, residents, customers. It makes a difference for people in cars and trucks because there's one place rather than random places.'

"Following the presentation, everyone supported the addition of a bike corral. Generally, there are a few skeptics. It just goes to show, there is tremendous support for advancing active transportation throughout the business community," Sule said.

Once WABA had endorsed the corral, the city was required to secure an encroachment agreement from NCDOT because Haywood Road is an NCDOT-

maintained highway.

"NCDOT was pleased to have worked collaboratively with the community on the bike corral project, we understand that this is a project of local importance. We were pleased to provide the encroachment agreement," states Kristina Solberg, NCDOT Division 13 Planning Engineer.

"NCDOT, Asheville's transportation department, and the business community were incredible to work with. Each agency understood the value and worked diligently to respond to the need. The bike corral is a clear example that Asheville is a community that knows how to work well together. I appreciate the spirit of cooperation and inclusion throughout this project. I'm also ready to celebrate," says Sule

Vice Mayor Gwen Wisler, who is a bike commuter herself and has been active in Asheville's cycling advocacy, will serve as the city's dignitary at the ribbon cutting.

"We are excited for the addition of our first on-street bike corral - installing multimodal infrastructure like this is one is a step toward meeting Council's vision of a well-planned and livable community, and of transportation and accessibility. The City is also thrilled to have business support of this project," said Wisler.

Following the ceremony, Westville Pub continues the celebration with music by DJ Jut Rut and a portion of New Belgium Brewing and Catawba Brewing Co. sales going to support Asheville on Bikes.

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