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Bike the Spike lets city bicyclists celebrate the sesquicentennial

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Bike the Spike participants begin an art and history bike tour at Sugar House Park on May 10. (Spencer W. Belnap/City Journals)

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All across the state and around Salt Lake City on May 10, the railroad was celebrated and honored. It was the 150th year anniversary, or sesquicentennial, of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad.

Not to be left out, the city and arts council of South Salt Lake wanted to hold their own event tying into the region's railroad history. They came up with an active and different event for that evening that would involve both South Salt Lake and Sugar House called Bike the Spike. Dozens of people brought their bicycles out for a ride and tour along the Parley's Trail and S-line from Sugar House Park to Beehive Distilling. Along the way, riders stopped at several designated spots on the trail to check out pieces of art and learn about rail and local history.

"Since we have a train line, it's a big deal," said South Salt Lake Urban Designer Sharen Hauri. "We continuously keep telling stories about railroad history and migration, which is really part of the crossroads story of South Salt Lake. Even into Sugar House, which is commerce and industry. So much is happening today. We started planning our thing last year."

The event was free for participants and attracted all ages. There were several families biking together, as well as couples and solo riders. While South Salt Lake and Sugar House were the communities linking the tour, people came from all over the valley.



Riders take off in groups as part of the Bike the Spike event commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Transcontinental Railroad completion. (Spencer W. Belnap/City Journals)

“I thought it was really cool,” West Jordan City resident Jrzy Reo said at Beehive Distilling after the riding tour. “This was my first event with the commuter or biking culture in the city. I don’t usually ride over here, and I had no idea about the history and artwork along the trail. The guide my group was with was very knowledgeable. I liked that it was a free event and sponsored by local companies.”

The bike tour began in Sugar House Park, at the art and water overflow installation known as The Draw. All the cyclists received some insight and history about the project from one of the lead engineers involved. From there, they splintered into groups of 20 or so and departed from The Draw every five minutes or so. They then traveled to six different spots along the S-line and Parley’s Trail, stopping for a few minutes at each to learn about the specific art and history. Each location featured some sort of art piece, from sculptures with historic rails and interpretive panels to long murals on the sides of buildings.

At the end of the bike tour, there was an artist reception at Beehive Distilling (2234 S. West Temple). The distillery is yet to open to the public, so this was a sneak peek. In addition to the craft cocktails and beer people could sample, there was an edible cookie dough truck and sodas. Two Salt Lake-based artists, painter Trent Call and photographer Matt Gagnon, were selected to display some of their work incorporating railroad history. Gagnon’s photo panel will be at the Roper Rail Yard, and Call has a new mural on the north wall of Beehive Distilling, facing the TRAX line.

“I had a great time,” Deanne Coles, another Bike the Spike rider, said at the reception. “I enjoyed the mixture of the old and the new along the tour. As we went east to west, it was neat to see the refinished and the raw.”

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