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# FONDO DE RAFFLE

By [Erica Hobbs \(/erica\)](#) | June 3, 2013

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**UPDATE: The Gran Fondo has been canceled this year due to construction work along Woodward Ave. in Royal Oak. Organizers hope to reschedule to June 29, 2014.**

DETROIT—Despite losing city support earlier this year, Detroit's first ever Woodward Avenue Gran Fondo bike ride is still a go for Sunday, June 30, though with a few alterations.

The 54-mile bike ride along Woodward Avenue from downtown Detroit to Pontiac is now an organized raffle where, for \$20, participants can enter to win giveaways at seven points along the way.

The seven points, each at different bicycle shops along Woodward Avenue, can be reached via any means of legal transportation, though bicycling is encouraged.

"We're just going to do it this raffle way so they can't stop us," said organizer Jon Hughes, owner of the Downtown Ferndale Bike Shop. "You can drive your car, you can walk, you can take a Segway, you can take a street vehicle, we'll be riding our bikes, you don't have to ride a bike."

The original plan included an early morning race in addition to a leisurely ride and had the support of the Woodward Avenue Action Association and several participating cities that had planned to offer police assistance.

Safety concerns, however, from Royal Oak officials caused the Woodward Avenue Action Association and the rest of the cities to withdraw their support.

Hughes, along with his father Dale Hughes, decided to continue with the event anyway, though eliminating the race portion and transforming it into a raffle.

The ride starts at 8 a.m. and participants must register to begin at one of the seven locations including Shinola and Wheelhouse Detroit in Detroit, the Downtown Ferndale Bike Shop in Ferndale, D&D Bike Shop in Berkley, American Cycle & Fitness in Royal Oak, KLM Bike Shop in Birmingham or American Cycle and Fitness in Pontiac.

Each stop will include food and drinks and a drawing, with those who make it to all seven stops entered to win a grand prize luxury Shinola bicycle.

"If you do the whole route, you're going to get way more than \$20 worth of stuff," Jon Hughes said.

In regards to safety concerns, Jon Hughes said the ride will have support (broom/sag wagon) vehicles and volunteer riders (sweepers) available to fix flat tires or offer additional support.

But he said participants need to wear helmets and use common sense when bicycling down the roads. He said traffic should be lighter on Sunday mornings and there is safety in numbers.

"It's legal to ride on Woodward, if anything did happen, it's a criminal act by the driver," he said. "People need to understand that just because you're in a car you're not immune to the law."

But Royal Oak Police Chief Corrigan O'Donohue still disagrees. Though bicyclists are legally allowed to ride on the road, O'Donohue said high speeds and busy intersections along Woodward Avenue make the ride dangerous. He said places like the intersections at Woodward and Coolidge and Woodward and 13 Mile and the I-696 overpass are particularly dangerous, and Sunday morning church services could put more people on the road at that time.

"The promoters think people will just know to avoid the bikes and to slow down," he said. "And I think 90 percent of the people will know to do that, but it really just takes one person not paying attention and you could have a tragedy."

Birmingham City Manager Robert Bruner, who is also Vice Chair of the Woodward Avenue Action Association, said as long as cyclists obey the laws, it should be a safe event. He said he's excited for the ride.

"This is something the real dedicated hard-core cyclists have been doing for a long time," he said. "I hope that Gran Fondo can broaden the appeal for the more casual riders, and it's really, I think, consistent with what we're doing as a community and as a region to make Woodward Avenue more bicycle and pedestrian friendly."

Bruner said the Woodward Avenue Gran Fondo is not the first bicycling event to take place on Woodward Avenue. Past events have included the Annual Woodward Loop Ride, which started in 2008 with 50 riders.

Pontiac Mayor Leon Jukowski echoed Bruner's comments and said rider will be safe as long as riders follow the [rules of the road](http://bit.ly/18Mka6t) (<http://bit.ly/18Mka6t>). He said Pontiac does not currently have the resources to support the event, but it is something the city would like to do in the future.

Owners of some of the other participating bicycle shops said they're not overly concerned about the ride being dangerous.

Cullen Watkins, owner of American Cycle & Fitness in Royal Oak, said he's ridden along Woodward Avenue Sunday mornings and traffic and said "It's no problem at all."

"I don't think traffic's ever going to be an issue on the weekend, if it's an issue it's the afternoon," he said.

Frank Marciniak, owner of KLM Bicycles in Birmingham, recommended participants wear some sort of safety lighting, but said he wasn't worried.

"The groups are going to be big enough that it'll be a safe thing," he said.

Dale Hughes said he hopes to have more than 1,000 participants this year and said about 150 people have already registered. He said his larger goal is to have the [Woodward Avenue Gran Fondo](#) (<http://bit.ly/14bafnq>) eventually break the world record for having the most cyclists on the road at one time.

As for city support, he said he thinks the cities will eventually change their minds.

"We're pretty sure we'll have all the cities on board next year," he said. "Sometimes you've just got to prove it to people."

Tell us how you think the Grand Fondo measures up: TAKE OUR POLL (<http://bit.ly/130CY1V>).



About [Erica Hobbs](#) (/user/2120)

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