As the newly elected chair of Morgantown’s Municipal Bicycle Board, I want to commend the DA staff for your March 9th editorial “Becoming bicycle-friendly in W.Va.” The $1.1 million grant for Charleston will go a long way to promoting cycling in their city and should be celebrated accordingly.

The ever-increasing traffic congestion and deteriorating air quality in our area fuel widespread desire for increased cycling infrastructure in spite of Morgantown’s topography. Morgantown residents and city officials are aware of the unique challenges and are working in tandem to address them.

The bicycle board is comprised of voting members from every city neighborhood and the surrounding community – as well as ex-officio representatives from each transportation related department within the municipal government and even within WVU. Since the late 1990’s, this dynamic group has consistently advocated for and implemented cycling-focused traffic facilities and educational campaigns all in the name of making Morgantown more hospitable to cyclists.

In 2012, after a multi-year effort with stakeholders throughout the area, Morgantown was recognized as West Virginia’s first (and currently only) bicycle-friendly community as defined by the League of American Bicyclists. The League grants this designation for four years and we are currently in the process of reapplying to extend the recognition.

Spring and early summer will witness the installation of covered bicycle racks at many bus stops. Further, we will install a network of on-street lane markings and signage specifically designed to better communicate updated cycling laws that no longer require cyclists to ride as far to the right as practicable. These projects are all results of grant funding partially matched by the city of Morgantown. Low-cost Confident City Cycling classes are regularly held for anyone interested in learning proactive techniques of riding with traffic.

We were recently approved to seek funding for a nearly three mile long multi-use path and bike lanes to serve the growing number of residents east of WV705 through the federal Transportation Alternatives Program. These programs add to a long list of amenities available to Morgantown cyclists including bike racks on 100% of city buses as well as our extensive rail-trail network.

The enthusiasm in our local planning and engineering departments as well as our champions on city council lead me to find Morgantown one of the most bicycle-friendly places I’ve ever lived. Our history demonstrates a creativity with limited resources and a dedication to improving the environment for all transportation users. We should be proud of our designation as a bicycle friendly community.

We value any input regarding needs and desires for Morgantown’s cycling community and would like to invite you to our monthly, public meetings. We meet every first Thursday from 6:30-8:30pm in the Public Safety Building on Spruce Street – we hope to see you there!

Sincerely,

John “Drew” Gatlin

Chair, Morgantown Municipal Bicycle Board

Student, WVU – Civil and Environmental Engineering