

UNIVERSITY CITY Review

Digital Skills And Bicycle Thrills Pilot Receives Grant To Continue Program

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The Mayor's Commission on Literacy (MCOL), the Office of Transportation and Infrastructure Systems, KEYSPOt, Indego, the Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia and the Better Bike Share Partnership (BBSP) celebrated the completion of the second cohort of Digital Skills & Bicycle Thrills (DSBT), with a finish line celebration at Diversified Community Services' Dixon House on July 19, 2016.

The partnership was formed by the Innovation Working Group to increase the number of safe and healthy bike riders on Philly streets in low-income neighborhoods and simultaneously increase participants' digital literacy skills. The program's concept is based on the ideas that digital literacy skills are more readily adopted when they are embedded within content-based learning goals and that learning is a social process that happens best in collaboration with others.

Beginning June 14, 2016, the second of the cohort-based, community education program provided 21 Philly residents, 18 years and older with free online bike safety certification at select KEYSPOt computer labs near Indego locations. The four-week online course combines self-paced assignments with flexible due dates, high-interest weekly discussion topics generated by the facilitator or participants of the program and group bike rides, led by BBSP Bicycle Coalition staff, to reinforce lessons in a supportive setting and build a community of users.

"We're really excited to see sustained interest in this program. Each one of our partners brings unique expertise to the table, and together we'll be able to help tackle some of Philadelphia's biggest challenges. This cohort we've seen people with no digital skills go from making their first email account to generating PDFs with bike routes," said Jennifer Kobrin, director of digital initiatives at MCOL and project lead for DSBT.

Participants shared their appreciation of DSBT for providing them with the opportunity to learn the rules of the road, lose weight, gain basic computer skills and become more confident on bikes. Participants took more than 700 Indego rides during the six weeks of the course. "It's been a joy watching the participants of Digital Skills & Bicycle Thrills try new things and take full advantage of the tools we've provided. It's important to Indego that we offer opportunities like this so that everyone has access to Philadelphia's newest public transportation option," said Claudia Setubal, Indego access manager.

To congratulate them for their completion of the DSBT course, participants received six months free membership to Indego provided by the BBSP, a JPB Foundation funded project designed to create socially replicable and equitable bike share models in low-income communities. "This class let me brush up on digital skills. Now, when I go back to school I'll be ahead of the game. I also know the rules of the road making me a smarter resident of Philadelphia. I have learned more than I thought I ever would," said a DSBT participant. During the finish line celebration Carniesha Kwashie, the BBSP grant manager who oversees the program, announced BBSP, a JPB Foundation funded initiative, will increase its funding to add additional DSBT cohorts. Course locations will be determined with community input and engagement.

"In addition to a September 2016 cohort, we will host in North Philadelphia, we will offer three more cohorts throughout 2017. Our partnership with the Mayor's Commission on Literacy and KEYSPOt is part of our ongoing commitment to promote digital literacy, bike education and awareness of the city's new public transportation option, Indego. We've had a high course completion rate and we will continue to work with the community to improve the effectiveness this course. A special thanks to the team and our participants who have proven that digital literacy and bike share can work well together!" said Kwashie.

By participating in this program, a greater number of residents will gain digital fluency while integrating safe biking practices into their daily lives. Program graduates will then be in a position to become ambassadors for bike share to their friends and neighbors.



*Digital Skills & Bicycle Thrills participants celebrate at Dixon House in Philadelphia. Better Bike Share Partnership, a JPB Foundation initiative, announced increased funding to continue the innovative program.
Photo: Darren Burton*

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