

## Future Bicycle Improvements May Come From New Lincoln Company

Wes Trout wants to do more than use a bike—he wants to make bikes more useful. And he has just the talent and imagination to get it done through his company, Shifting Gears ([www.sgbikeco.com](http://www.sgbikeco.com)).

A native of Waverly now living in Lincoln, Wes is capitalizing on the green energy movement in a unique way. "As my knowledge of environmental issues grew I became more and more frustrated with the lack of new ideas and actions being taken to combat our energy dependence," says Wes. "I wanted to do something useful, yet simple. Something that wouldn't take billions of dollars and years to develop. Since we're essentially talking about energy efficiency, I figure the most efficient machine ever built (the bicycle) should have a seat at the table. And that is why I started Shifting Gears."

Wes wants to see more out of bicycles than recreation and commuting, but he is no mere dreamer. His garage and basement are crowded with bikes, partial bikes, bike parts and the prototypes of modifications that he is developing.

At first, his thoughts went to cargo-carrying modifications for bicycles, particularly since existing carriers didn't work well with heavy or bulky cargo. Searching for alternatives led him to Xtracycle ([www.xtracycle.com](http://www.xtracycle.com))--a California-based company--and he ordered a "free radical"--basically an extension kit for a bike that permits greater use in hauling items. That was all it took to get his imagination shifting into high gear, and on to Shifting Gears!



"As I searched (for bike improvements) I thought more about the possibilities of cargo bikes, and the potential impact that bikes have on transportation, the environment and general mental and physical well-being."

Initially he developed a double seat for his daughter and her friend and then started improving cargo platforms to haul cargo...and his daughter! He shifted his thinking from looking at recreational improvements to actually using bikes for business purposes. He developed a "Mega-Rack" as a base for his cargo-carrying ideas, and doubled the capacity to carry cargo. Pretty soon he was hauling groceries on his bike for four families in the neighborhood.



Add-ons developed for particular needs, with the Mega-Rack as the base, were a natural extension for

Wes. But a snow-shovel?

Using "existing technology" (a snow shovel) Wes developed a snow-plowing attachment for his bike, and it works! A video showed Wes slicing through snow with the plow on the back. He has also designed a "track breaker"--a front-mounted "plow" that can open a six-inch path for bike tires.



With ideas coming faster than he can develop them, Wes developed a universal hitch that will permit the additional of his innovations, both present and future. He has upgraded to Surly's "Big Dummy" bicycle from Xtracycle—an entire extended bike frame with greater adaptive cargo-carrying capabilities.

This year he is hoping to launch MBR—a "Mobile Bike Repair" shop mounted to a bicycle. Instead of taking your suddenly inoperable bike to the shop in a gas-burning vehicle, this shop comes to you! The MBR will have the ability to make minor repairs on site, or haul the bike away to a shop for extensive problems. An MBR might become essential on extended organized rides.

Wes is not unmindful of the some extra effort required by cyclists to operate bicycles with commercial applications, and he is enthusiastic about the development of "electric-assist" bicycles (see GPTN's previous newsletter for an article on such bikes). But he is constantly operating bikes with his modifications, and believes that the biggest hurdle is not extra effort—he is taking care of those concerns—but in convincing people to try something new.

And the future of Shifting Gears? "My objective is to replace gas power with pedal power when, and wherever possible. One primary goal is to work with business to make this change by studying operations currently in place, and identifying more efficient, cost effective and environmentally friendly approaches."

Just be careful stepping into Wes' garage or basement. That may be the future under your feet.

