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## Bike tour rolls through Ames touting all things 'green'

By: Jeff Raasch

Tom Cook has pimped his bike.

The bells and whistles it has represent an alternative for future energy needs.

Cook and his \$800 bicycle, complete with a small electric motor powered by solar panels and a rechargeable battery pack, were part of the fifth Green Bike Tour that rolled through Ames this morning. The tour is meant to promote renewable energy and other "green" opportunities.

Cook, a professor at the University of Iowa, makes the 10-mile trip from his home to his office with his bicycle most days that weather allows. He figures he pays for 1 1/2 cents worth of electricity for each ride.

That adds up to more than 1,000 miles per gallon, he said.

Cook said the electricity produced takes some of the work out of the ride. Sensors detect how much Cook is pedaling and electricity is kicked in on a similar ratio.

"When I get to a hill, I punch a little button and I get maximum power assist that helps me get up the hill," Cook said. "It takes away the excuses for not biking."

Jim Cooper, of Ames, represented the Prairie Rivers Resource Conservation and Development program and had his recumbent bicycle on display. His solar panels fuel an iPod and two speakers in addition to the small motor.

Cook said the electric assist bicycles are widely used in Europe and Japan, where energy costs are higher than in the United States. Cooper said the electric assist bicycles are one of the many opportunities to conserve energy and combat global warming in the future.

The tour originated from the Iowa State University campus this morning and was headed to the city of Ames Resource Recovery Plant, where garbage is used to produce energy rather than being dumped in a landfill.

"Ames has been a leader in renewable energy for a number of years," Cooper said.

The five-state tour, which started in Waterloo on Sept. 21, ends tomorrow in Iowa City.



Andrew Rullestad/The Tribune Jerry DeWitt, left, director of the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, stands next to a solar powered electric assist bicycle as students file past during a stop by the 2006 Green Bike Tour on Iowa State University's central campus.

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