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Mile High Connects recognized for helping get protective gear to RTD, mobilizing local artists to produce more

2,000 masks and 240 face shields delivered to RTD, new grant enables artists to produce protective gear

DENVER – On Wednesday, the Denver Streets Partnership (DSP), a coalition of organizations that advocate for people-friendly streets, recognized one of their members, Mile High Connects, for their outstanding role in responding to the COVID19 pandemic. In the last week, Mile High Connects has been able to get 2,000 masks and 240 face shields transferred from Golden-based bicycle manufacturer Yeti Cycles to Denver’s transit agency, RTD, to be used by frontline workers. Mile High Connects also created a rapid response grant fund and has provided Redline Contemporary Art Center with a grant to kickstart a mask making business that employs their resident artists, and will produce hundreds of masks for the transit agency.

“We’re excited to recognize one of the Denver Streets Partnership’s core members, Mile High Connects, for their outstanding work in getting protective gear to the bus drivers and RTD employees who are providing an important service during this pandemic and for enabling local artists to produce protective gear that is in desperate need across Colorado,” said Danny Katz, Chair of the Denver Streets Partnership and director CoPIRG, a DSP member.

Recognizing that RTD, like so many agencies and businesses, was struggling to secure necessary protective gear for frontline RTD employees like bus drivers, Mile High Connects contacted Yeti Cycles, a local mountain bike company, who had surgical masks and face shields available. Within 10 days, Mile High Connects was able to get 2,000 masks and 240 face shields delivered to RTD.

“The Yeti PPE project has been a great way to help the community and first responders who have patched up Yeti riders for years.,” said Bill Mueller, the CFO of Golden-based Yeti Cycles. “We are fortunate to have a dedicated, multi-talented staff who could easily and willingly shift priorities quickly. We will deliver 20,000 shields and 24,000 masks into our local front range community by early May and have been overwhelmed by the need.”

“This contribution by Mile High Connects is only one way in which they have supported RTD’s riders and drivers over the past years, and I know that all of RTD is grateful,” said Kate Williams, RTD Director District A.

“While PPE was hard to secure, Mile High Connect’s thoughtfulness and creativity resulted in a delivery to RTD of 2,000 surgical masks and 240 face shields to protect our essential personnel,” said Shontel Williams, RTD Director District B. “We are truly in this together and MHC is a shining example of that continued partnership. Thank you for being transit equity leaders and living your values of service.”

Mile High Connects is building other community partnerships to provide PPEs for frontline workers. Through its COVID-19 Community Response Fund, Mile High Connects granted \$3,000 to Redline Contemporary Art Center, a local nonprofit art center and artist residency, to kickstart a mask making business that will employ 10 artists who have recently lost their jobs to create 600 masks to be distributed to RTD frontline personnel.

“RedLine is so honored to again work with Mile High Connects and partner to provide PPE to the essential drivers of RTD,” said Louise Mortorano, Executive Director of the Redline Contemporary Art Center. “We are working hard to find ways where we can pair a resource with a need and it can help multiple communities at once. The Makers for Masks Project invites artists to produce PPE gear for \$300/week for 8 weeks and the masks that they produce are donated to people on the frontlines. We see this an important approach to both an economic and a health crisis, collaborations like this will help our communities overcome COVID-19.”

While more needs to be done to ensure everyone has the protective gear they need to stay safe during this pandemic, the Denver Streets Partnership recognizes that Mile High Connects has taken action that is making a difference right here, right now.

“Transit is critical for so many people during this time, and we all need to do our part to ensure the health and safety of our community,” said Maggie Lea, Director of Programs for Mile High Connects. “We are proud to act as partners in helping RTD get the protection they need for their personnel on the frontlines.”

In addition to Mile High Connects work, The Denver Regional Mobility & Access Council (DRMAC) has a guide on current COVID19-related impacts to a wide range of transit agencies throughout the region who provide paratransit and alternative services coordinate COVID response. More at: <https://www.drmac-co.org/transportation-update-spreadsheet/>.

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The Denver Streets Partnership is a coalition of community organizations advocating for people-friendly streets in Denver. Their mission is to reclaim Denver’s streets for people walking, rolling, biking, and using transit, and to build safe, healthy, and equitable communities - www.denverstreetspartnership.org