

1st

PORTLAND, OREGON pop. 529,121 (see page 64)



Top to bottom: High above Denver's plains, the riding is stunning but lung-busting; Seattle is set up for in-town trips, such as to the Pike Place Market.

2nd

DENVER, COLORADO

pop. 554,636

WHY: The city is flat, with mountains nearby, creating easy commutes and great rec riding; 2005 BikeTown **MUST-RIDE:** Cherry Creek Trail **COOL EVENT:** Moonlight Classic; moonlight-classic.com **HANGOUT:** Handlebar and Grill; handlebarandgrill.com **LOCAL INFO:** Denver Bicycle Touring Club; dbtc.org **BIKE SHOP:** Cherry Creek Bike Rack; cherrycreekbikerack.com

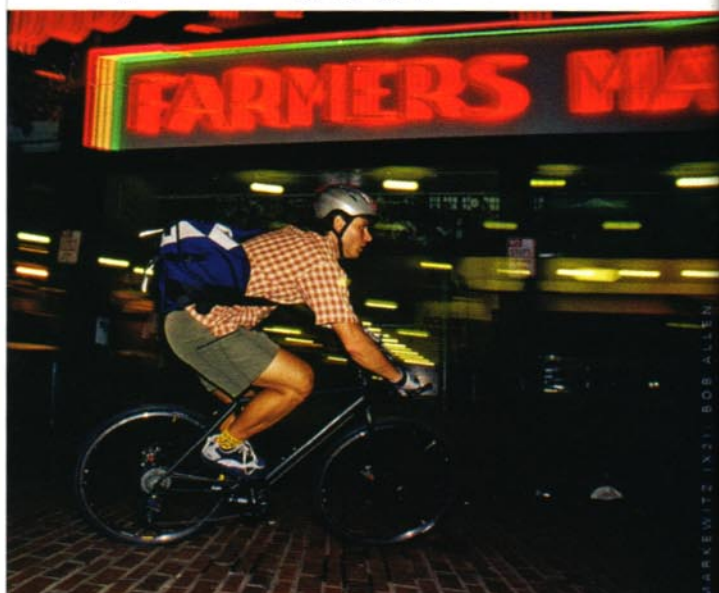
The two most visible examples of the city's unyielding velo passion: the artfully designed \$3-million bike bridge to be built over I-25 this year, and the annual Velo Swap, a.k.a. the world's largest bike garage sale, which last year drew more than 15,000 people.

3rd

SEATTLE, WASHINGTON

pop. 563,374

WHY: Bike-friendly, but still raising the bar; 2005 BikeTown **MUST-RIDE:** 14.1-mile Burke-Gilman Trail **COOL EVENT:** Seattle to Portland; cascade.org **LOCAL INFO:** Cascade Bicycle Club; cascade.org **BIKE SHOP:** Gregg's; greggcycles.com



HONORABLE MENTIONS



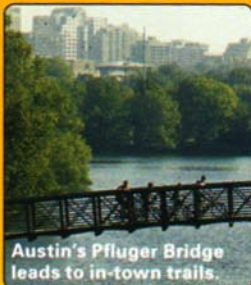
Nothing says San Francisco like a 20-percent grade.

San Francisco, CA pop. 776,733

WHY: Diverse cycling community; classic riding in town and over the Golden Gate Bridge; 2005 BikeTown **MUST-RIDE:** Tiburon Loop: Head north from the bridge for 35 miles of rolling hills, forests and views of the Bay **COOL EVENT:** Bay in a Day double century; bayareabikes.org **LOCAL INFO:** Western Wheelers; westernwheelers.org **BIKE SHOP:** American Cyclery; americancyclery.com

Austin, TX pop. 656,562

WHY: Bike lanes galore; Lance's home turf; 2005 BikeTown **MUST-RIDE:** The Dam Loop, 35-50 miles with views of Lake Travis **COOL EVENT:** Ride for the Roses; livestrong.org **HANGOUT:** Chuy's (where Jenna Bush got busted); chuys.com **LOCAL INFO:** Austin Cycling Association; austincycling.org **BIKE SHOP:** Bicycle Sport Shop; bicyclesportshop.com



Austin's Pfluger Bridge leads to in-town trails.

Seattle earned its spot with one word: creativity. What to do with 1.5 acres of unused-but-sheltered land under I-5? Build a mountain bike park, now under construction. And then there's the Chief Sealth Trail. Set to open this summer, the 3.6-mile paved path connects neighborhoods in southeast Seattle to the light-rail system; construction costs were prohibitively high—nearly \$10 million—until the city struck a deal to use leftover dirt from a light-rail project. Cost savings: \$7 million. Results: priceless.