



Representing thousands of San Franciscans working to improve the City's transportation network

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Wednesday, August 29, 2007

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Disproportionate Funding of Walking and Biking Linked to Death on Sofas, and on Streets

**New report shows investment in walking and bicycling improves safety
on our streets, and can help reverse nation's obesity epidemic**

SAN FRANCISCO – Following recent news of an alarming local spike in pedestrian fatalities and a disturbing increase in national obesity rates, a report released today offers some hope of how American communities can walk and pedal toward safer streets and healthier, longer lives.

“Investing in walking and bicycling is a wise public health investment toward encouraging active lifestyles and reversing this nation’s obesity epidemic,” concludes *Bicycling and Walking in the U.S.*, which compares 50 states and the 50 most-populous U.S. cities on walking and bicycling. Prepared by the Thunderhead Alliance, a national coalition of state and local pedestrian and bicycle advocacy organizations, and funded in part by the Centers for Disease Control, the benchmarking report reveals an inverse relationship between walking and biking levels and obesity levels during the past 40 years. As walking and biking levels have plummeted, overweight and obesity levels have soared.

“This report also shows that far too many Americans are dying as a result of our underinvestment in safe walking and biking conditions,” says Andy Thornley, Program Director of the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition (SFBC). “A record number of pedestrians are dying in sudden cruel collisions on our streets, and a record number of people are dying slowly but prematurely as physical inactivity fosters poor health and a shorter life. Whether death comes suddenly at the curb or slowly on the couch, we have a responsibility to prevent these premature deaths by investing in communities that are safer and more encouraging for walking and biking.”

The report points out a major discrepancy between the meager public investment in walking and bicycling facilities, relative to the significant overall share of walking and biking trips and the hazards of such trips. The data suggest that while 9.6% of all trips in the U.S. are made by walking or bicycling, and 12.9% of all traffic-related fatalities are pedestrians or bicyclists, only 1.5% of federal transportation dollars are spent on walking and bicycling projects.

[more]

“At the national, state, and local levels, spending on walking and biking is disproportionately lower than for the motoring public, and this has resulted in disproportionately more injuries and deaths on our streets for those of us walking and biking,” says Manish Champsee, President of Walk San Francisco. “If we are serious about reversing the obesity trends by encouraging more people to incorporate physical activity into their lifestyles, we must first reverse the trend of terror on our streets by making them safe places to walk and bike.”

In San Francisco, in the first eight months of 2007, the pedestrian fatality count has already surpassed all of 2006. According to the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, there have been 35 traffic fatalities, of which 23 – or 66% – have been pedestrian deaths. In 2006 there were 13 pedestrian deaths. Comparing major cities, the benchmarking report cites pedestrian fatality rates of 53% for New York City and 33% for Los Angeles when averaged over the last three available years.

Nationally, 40% of all pedestrian fatalities are either elderly or under 16 years of age, according to the report. In just one recent week in August, two of the three pedestrians killed in San Francisco were over 65 years old.

“The silver lining in this report is that we *can* avoid premature deaths by making our communities better places to walk and bike,” says Tom Radulovich, Executive Director of Livable City. “A few things become clear in looking at statistics from across the nation. First, ‘If you build it, they will come.’ – investing in walking and biking infrastructure draws more people to walking and biking. There is safety in numbers – improving biking and walking encourages more biking and walking, which further improves biking and walking safety. And of course land use is important – cities that are compact – fine-grained and pedestrian-friendly – are healthier places.”

The City’s major transportation advocacy groups – the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition, Walk SF, and Livable City – are calling on City leaders to prioritize safety on the streets and to lower obesity levels in the following ways:

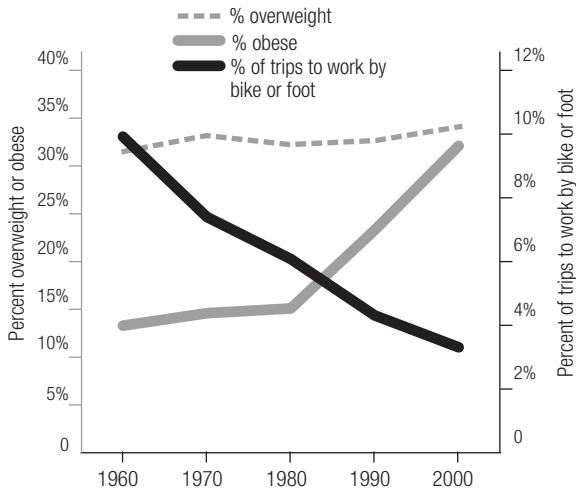
1. Fixing the most dangerous intersections for pedestrians and cyclists within the next three years;
2. Increasing funding levels for pedestrian and bicycle facilities; and
3. Reduce excessive traffic speeds by setting lower speed limits, redesigning streets to calm traffic, and carrying out consistent enforcement efforts.

To download a copy of the *Thunderhead Alliance Bicycling and Walking in the U.S. Benchmarking Report 2007* and supporting graphics suitable for publication, visit the SF Bicycle Coalition website:

sfbike.org/reportcard

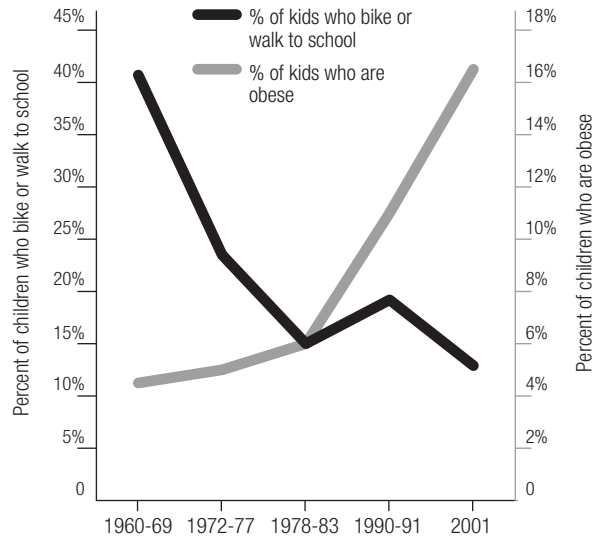
As adults and kids bicycle and walk less, they are becoming obese:

Change in bicycling and walking vs. adult overweight and obesity



SOURCE: Thunderhead Alliance Benchmarking Report, 2007; National Center for Health Statistics; ACS

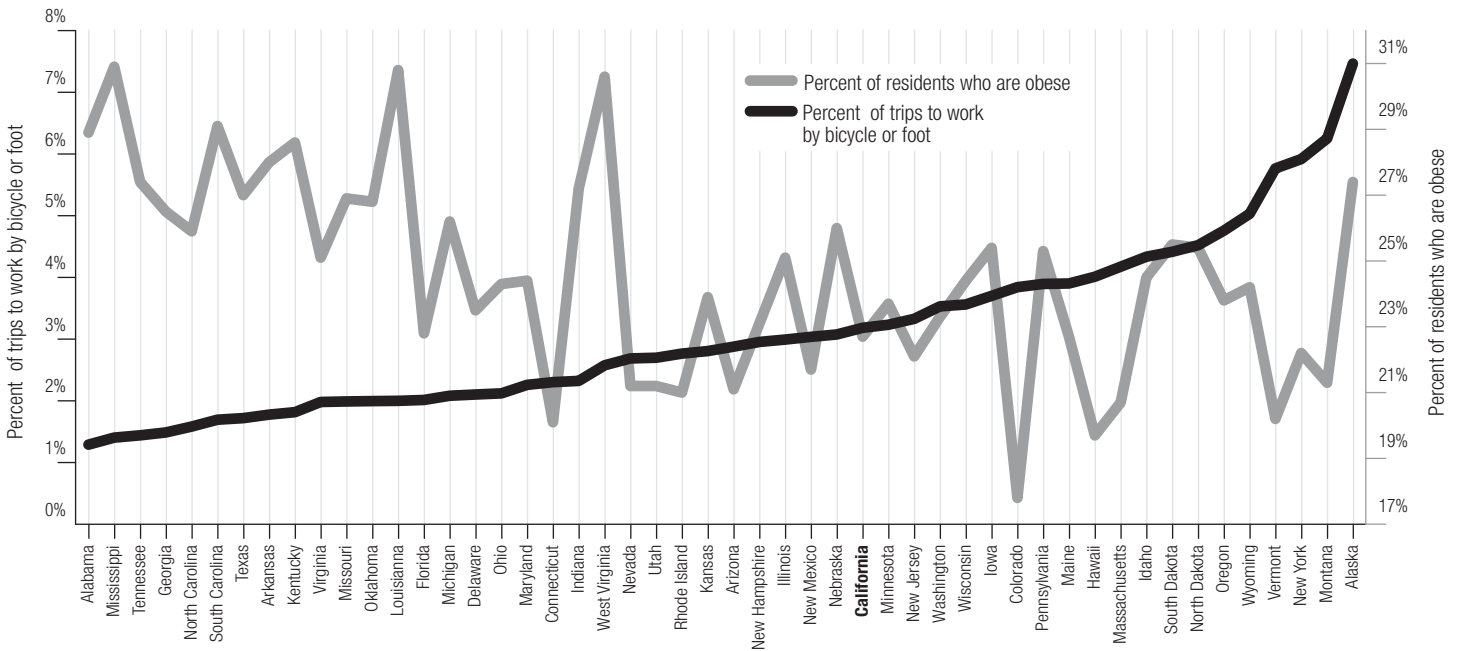
Trend in obese children vs. rate of biking and walking to school



SOURCE: Thunderhead Alliance Benchmarking Report, 2007; CDC; NHANES, McDonald, Noreen (2007)

States that walk and bike more are less obese:

Comparing bicycling and walking to obesity levels in 50 states



SOURCE: Thunderhead Alliance Benchmarking Report, 2007



Charts produced by the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition to accompany our August 30, 2007, press release, "Disproportionate Funding of Walking and Biking...". "Bicycling and Walking in the U.S." Benchmarking Report 2007 released by the Thunderhead Alliance, (<http://www.thunderheadalliance.org/benchmarking.htm>). For more information, and for Illustrator CS2 versions of these charts, go to www.sfbike.org/reportcard. Contact: Gus D'Angelo, SFBC Communications Director, at 415-431-2453 x308.

Pedestrians and cyclists are at a disproportionate risk for being a traffic fatality:

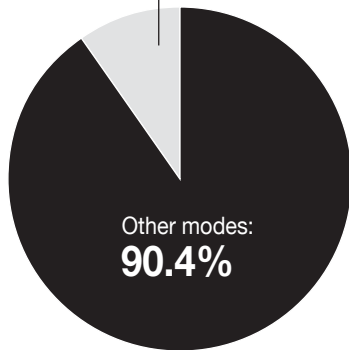
While 9.6% of all trips are walking or cycling and 12.9% of all traffic-related fatalities are pedestrians or bicyclists, only 1.5% of federal transportation dollars are spent on walking and bicycling projects:

Trips by foot and bike

Percent of total trips

Pedestrian and bicycle trips:

9.6%

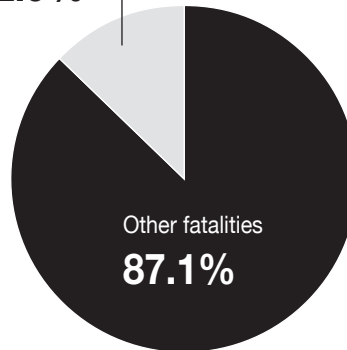


Pedestrian and bicycle fatalities

Percent of traffic fatalities

Pedestrian and bicycle fatalities:

12.9%

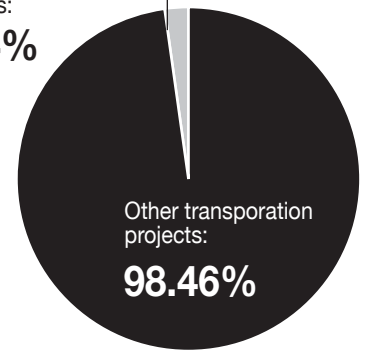


Federal funding for walking and cycling

Percent of federal transportation dollars to walking and bicycling

Bicycle and pedestrian projects:

1.54%

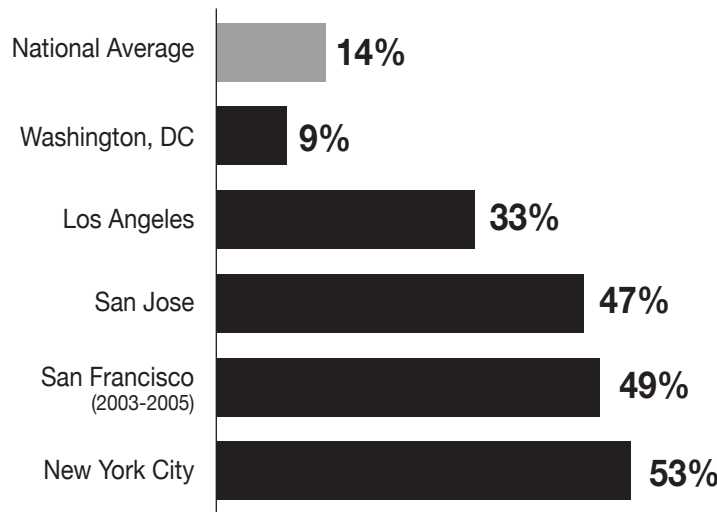


SOURCES: Thunderhead Alliance Benchmarking Report, 2007; Federal Highway Administration (2001-2006)

2007 a dangerous year for San Francisco pedestrians:

Pedestrian fatalities

As a percent of total traffic fatalities, average over the last available 3-year period...



And for San Francisco in 2007 so far...



SOURCES: Thunderhead Alliance Benchmarking Report, 2007; California Highway Patrol SWITRS reports; The San Francisco Bicycle Coalition



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