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March 30, 2006

Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Mayor of San Francisco  
City Hall, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place  
San Francisco, CA 94103

**RE: SUPPORT FOR HEALTHY SATURDAYS IN GOLDEN GATE PARK**

Dear Mayor Newsom,

I am writing on behalf of the 5,300-member San Francisco Bicycle Coalition (SFBC) to urge you to publicly support the Healthy Saturdays legislation to expand safe, recreational open space in Golden Gate Park on a trial basis. I, along with a coalition of supporters, would also like to request a brief meeting with you to discuss this issue.

**This effort is directly in line with your public endeavors to increase opportunities for physical activity in San Francisco.** As you know, this issue is urgent, particularly among children. Lack of physical activity is the #1 cause of disease killing Americans today – greater even than tobacco-related illnesses or gun-related deaths. As elected leaders, you and the Board of Supervisors have a responsibility to act to curb this problem.

Based on the thousands of people using JFK Drive in Golden Gate Park on Sundays, (thanks to the car-free space established 39 years ago), there is a demand for *more* safe, recreational space in our dense city. Creating this space on Saturdays is an easy, practically free way for the city to provide more recreational opportunity and to invest in our citizens' health.

**This effort also supports your high-profile efforts to keep more families in San Francisco.** We understand that this is an expensive city, which can be a challenge to families. The Healthy Saturdays initiative will provide *free* recreational opportunities for San Francisco families.

We are proud that the San Francisco Youth Commission unanimously supported this Healthy Saturdays legislation. At the hearing, several Commissioners announced that they learned to ride bikes in Golden Gate Park on Sundays, thanks to the car-free space.

Another little girl from the Bayview/Hunters Point neighborhood spoke at the hearing, sharing her family's experience of regularly loading their bikes onto the car to visit Golden Gate Park on Sundays, where she and her sister are learning to ride.

Where else can these kids learn to ride? To skate? To run wild in a park, as kids should be able to do? If their families attend church on Sundays, or work on Sundays, or have other obligations on Sundays, they do not have these opportunities easily now.

**This initiative has important economic & social justice benefits for San Franciscans.** For those families who cannot afford to travel to Lake Tahoe or Yosemite or even Marin for family recreation, Golden Gate Park provides a convenient, healthy — and free — outing for the family.

The Healthy Saturdays legislation calls only for a six-month trial. We expect Saturdays to function as Sundays have for the past 39 years, but in case there are differences between the days, the trial will highlight any issues, which can be addressed. After the trial ends, there are required hearings and reports on analysis by the Departments of Parking & Traffic and Recreation & Parks. *Only after* this information has been reviewed and the Board and Mayor have weighed in, could Healthy Saturdays later be extended or made permanent.

**Healthy Saturdays ensures access for people driving, people visiting the museums and other cultural institutions, and for disabled visitors.** Please don't be misled by misinformation being spread.

It is important to remember that this initiative would only apply to 1.5 miles of roadway in Golden Gate Park, just like on Sundays. This leaves *more than 15 miles* of roadway in the Park totally accessible by cars. There is, of course, a new 800-car garage directly under the museums, which is fully accessible from outside the Park. People with disabled placards in their cars *can* drive on JFK Dr. during the road closure on Sunday, and in the Saturday proposal, so there is no limit on disabled access. Our proposal also calls for adding 5-6 *new* disabled-only parking spaces near the Conservatory of Flowers and adding ~ 50 new general parking spots for Conservatory visitors within a two-minute way from the entrance.

It is highly disappointing that representatives of the deYoung Museum, the Academy of Sciences, and the Parks Trust (formerly Friends of Recreation & Parks) have misled the public on this issue. *All* of these groups publicly expressed their support for car-free space on JFK Dr. on Saturdays *after* the garage was built. (Please see the attached ballot arguments from six years ago, when all of these groups supported Proposition G, calling for car-free Saturdays on JFK Dr. after the garage was built.) Now, the garage is built, and the institutions are trying to move the goalposts. This is not an example of acting as good Park neighbors.

We are proud to have Supervisor Jake McGoldrick sponsoring this legislation, as Golden Gate Park is in his district. We are also proud to have 5 additional Board co-sponsors. While we have secured the votes to win Healthy Saturdays at the Board, some people fear a mayoral veto. I have faith, Mayor Newsom, that you will do the right thing by supporting Healthy Saturdays for a better Park and a healthier San Francisco.

Thank you. And we look forward to talking about this issue with you soon.

Sincerely,

Leah Shahum  
Executive Director

P.S. I hope you will read the attached page of Frequently Asked Questions about Healthy Saturdays. It should address other issues that may be raised.