



September 19, 2006
NEWS

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City Urged to Step Up Commitment to Better Bicycling in Face of Lawsuit

San Francisco's bicycle community responded to today's Superior Court hearing on the City Bicycle Plan by urging local and state leaders to step up their commitments to dramatically improve and increase bicycle commuting.

"At a time when elected leaders are, justifiably, focused on lessening damage to our environment and improving public health, we expect to see a strong and swift reaction to this unfortunate delay which penalizes sustainable, healthy transportation," says Leah Shahum, Executive Director of the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition (SFBC), a 5,900-member nonprofit group promoting bicycling for everyday transportation.

Judge Peter Busch's actions today further delays implementation of parts of the city's official Bicycle Plan. The lawsuit was brought by two anti-bicycling advocates against the City, based on an ironic and cynical application of the California Environmental Quality Act.

The SFBC is urging public officials to take four immediate actions:

- Dedicate all needed resources to fight the lawsuit;
- Accelerate planning work on the Citywide Bike Network, as planning is not barred under the ruling;
- Craft and issue a five-year, measurable Action Plan for progress on bike improvements, as other cities have done; and
- Address the abuse of environmental laws by ensuring that environmentally beneficial transportation modes, such as bicycling and walking, are not judged by the same standards as polluting motor vehicles.

"While this is a frustrating delay, we are confident that it will ultimately be just a bump in the bike lane as we expect to see San Francisco step up its commitment to better bicycling for more people," says Shahum. "This is a chance for our public leaders to make good on their commitments to improve our community's environment and public health by taking meaningful steps to make San Francisco a first-rate bicycling city."

Better bicycling conditions are favored by a vast majority of San Franciscans. According to a July 2006 poll conducted by David Binder Research, 73% of San Franciscans support the City encouraging more bike trips by creating more bike lanes and designated space for cyclists. And 33% would ride their bikes more often if the City created more bike lanes, designated more space for bicyclists, and improved the surface of roads. Currently, 5% of San Franciscans use bicycling as their primary mode of transportation to work or school, resulting in 40,000 bike trips each day.

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