

SAN FRANCISCO  
**BICYCLE**  
**COALITION**

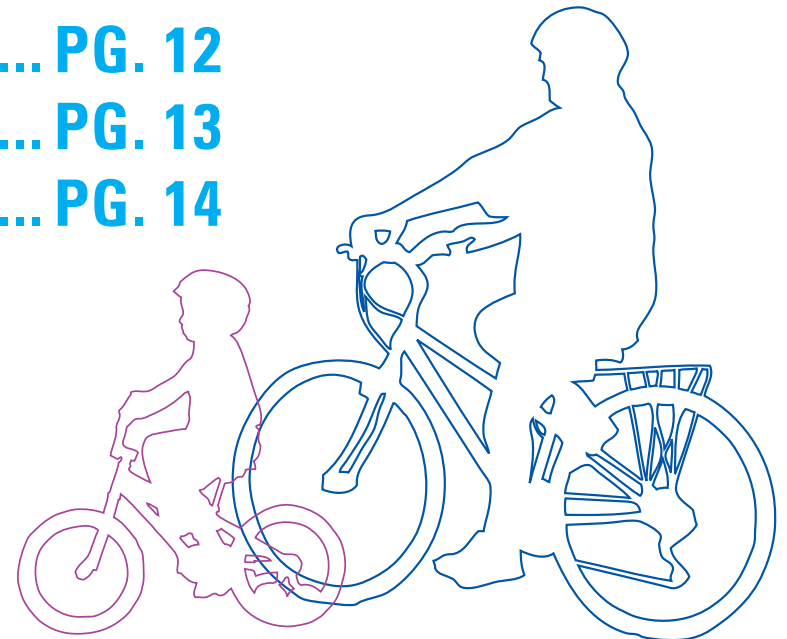
# REPORT CARD ON BICYCLING

SAN FRANCISCO 2006

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# FORWARD

San Francisco is considered one of the best large cities in the nation for bicycling. The City was recently designated a Gold level “Bike-Friendly Community” by the League of American Bicyclists, one of only 7 cities in the nation to receive this honor (the others are Palo Alto; Boulder, Colorado; Madison, Wisconsin; Portland, Oregon; Corvallis, Oregon; and Tucson/East Pima County, Arizona); this is only one level below the highest ranking of platinum (held alone by Davis, California). San Francisco is also regularly named one of the top bicycling cities by *Bicycling* magazine.

Contributing to this bike-friendly image is San Francisco’s vibrant bike culture and active bicyclist community, strong local political support, its growing Bike Network of bike lanes and other safety facilities, and its temperate weather and beautiful setting. Thanks to all of these factors, bicycle commuting in San Francisco has doubled in the past decade, a trend that runs contrary to most American cities’ experiences.

But talk to the average bicyclist on the street and you are likely to hear a different story. Biking in San Francisco often means dealing with the hazards of potholes and rough pavement, stop-and-go bike lanes, fear of bike theft, and,

too often, the threat of aggressive driving. As these problems have been improved, particularly by adding more bicycle lanes and educating drivers and bicyclists to share the road, and as people consider the health, environmental, and economic benefits of biking, more people are choosing to bike for transportation.

Who is biking? Why are they choosing to bike? What are the challenges they face on the city streets? What could San Francisco do to encourage them to ride more often and more safely? And how could we encourage more people to try biking?

We asked bicyclists these questions in order to create this, the City’s first Report Card on Bicycling Transportation. In April 2006, 1,151 individuals responded to our survey. In the pages that follow, you will find out why bicyclists rate San Francisco only a slightly-above-average (B-) city for bicycling and what we could do to improve this grade.

We intend to update the Bicycle Report Card at least every two years. This initial report is released on Bike to Work Day 2006 with pride and hope for a better biking city.

Happy Bike Commuting!



# SUMMARY

Our City leaders have set ambitious and appropriate goals to improve our environment and our public health, to lessen traffic congestion and parking issues, and to expand affordable and socially beneficial transportation choices. Central to these goals is improving and increasing bicycle use for everyday transportation. The City's official Bicycle Plan, approved unanimously by the SF Board of Supervisors and the Mayor in May 2005, sets a goal that 10% of all trips should be made by bicycles by 2010.

The San Francisco Bicycle Coalition's Report Card on Bicycling Transportation, the city's first, is intended to measure progress toward these goals. It is also an instrument to hold our local decision makers accountable for their stated commitments to boosting bicycling rates and safety and making biking a mainstream transportation mode.

We asked the people who know best — bicyclists — how they think San Francisco ranks as a bike-friendly city. 1,151 individuals responded to our survey.

Overall, survey respondents graded San Francisco as a just-above-average bicycling city: B-

Respondents told us that the most important areas to improve the bicycling environment are through adding more bike lanes, improving the street pavement quality, reducing cars overall in the city, and encouraging better behavior among motorists. (See p. 7)

Not surprisingly 90% of respondents said they prefer to ride on streets with bike lanes rather than those without.

Poor pavement quality is a top complaint of bicycle commuters in San Francisco (as it is for many people riding transit and driving, as well). Survey respondents' satisfaction with pavement quality earned a D+, the lowest grade in the report card. (See p. 7-8)

Respondents felt fairly safe biking on San Francisco streets, earning a C-grade for safety (See p. 9)

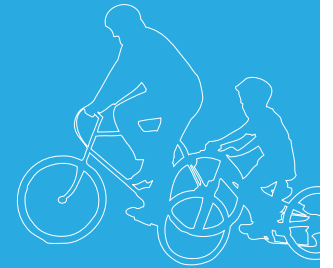
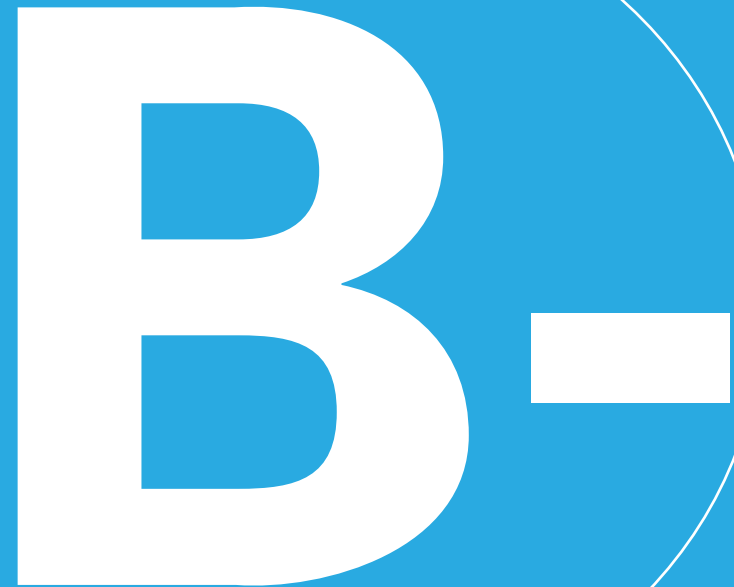
Transit connectedness with bicycling earned fair-to-good grades, with Caltrain service earning a B among bicyclists, and Muni and BART service both receiving C grades. (See p. 11)

A distressing number of respondents reported having a bicycle stolen in the past two years — 25% — and reported having been in a collision with a motor vehicle in the past two years — 26%. Police response to both issues rated a D+. (See p. 9-10)

This Report Card includes these survey results and others showing how bicyclists on the street perceive the San Francisco bicycling environment.

Based on these results, the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition urges the city's leaders, planners, and the bicycle community to amplify our efforts to upgrade San Francisco to a world-class A+ biking city. (See p. 12)

## SAN FRANCISCO AS A CITY FOR BICYCLING:



Attaining this goal will result in a cleaner environment, a healthier populace, a more affordable transportation system, safer streets, and more livable neighborhoods. The San Francisco Bicycle Coalition is committed to these end results and eager for this Report Card to serve as an important tool toward progress.

# WHO IS BICYCLING IN SAN FRANCISCO

The top goal of the official San Francisco 2005 Bicycle Plan is to make bicycling an integral part of daily life in San Francisco, with these key objectives:

- Increase safe bicycle use
- Triple the daily bicycle trips in San Francisco to “10 percent by 2010”
- Reduce the rate of bicycle-motor vehicle collisions as bicycle use age increases

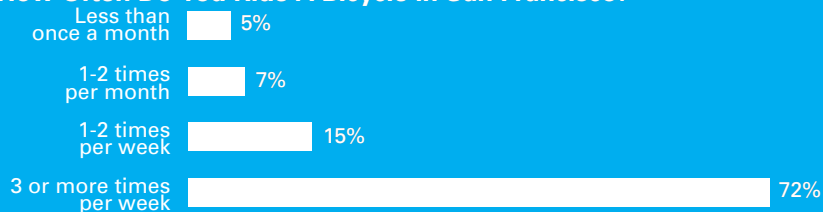
It's 2006 – how are we doing? What percentage of daily trips are taking place by bicycle? How close are we to that target? Sadly, we still don't have updated mode share estimates or intersection counts to give a reliable idea of how many people are bicycling regularly in SF. Our most recent official estimates are from the 2000 U.S. census, which showed San Francisco trips to work by bicycle at 2.1%, and the RIDES 2000 study which showed 2.8%. It's time for the city to make serious evaluation of bicycling and bicycle facilities a part of their routine.

## Survey Demographics

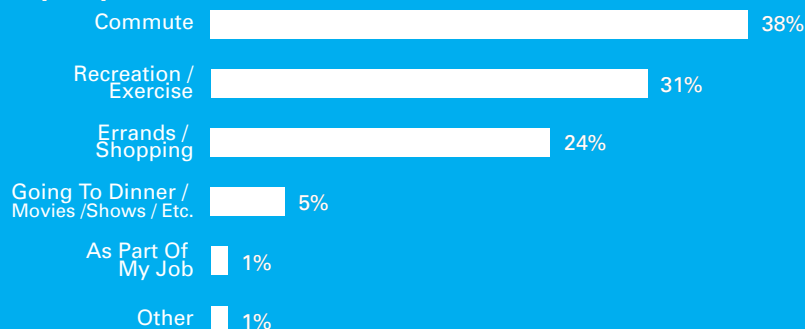
Age: respondents ranged from 16 years old to 72 yrs old.

Gender:  
61% male  
38% female

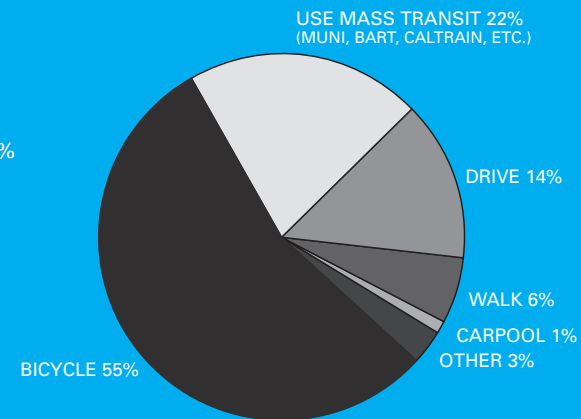
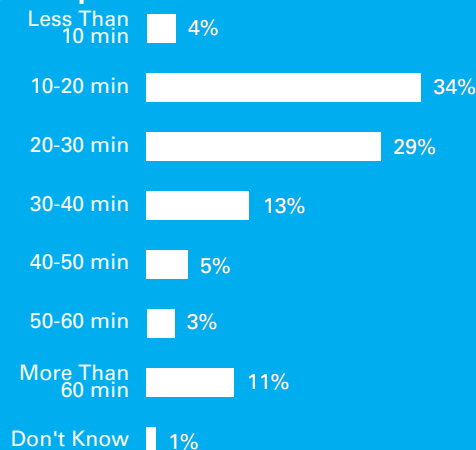
## How Often Do You Ride A Bicycle in San Francisco?



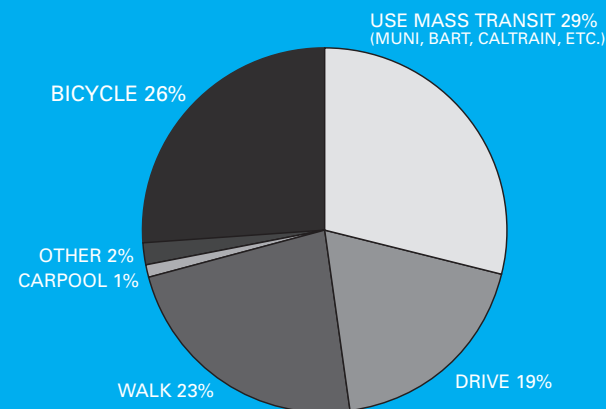
## What are the Primary Types of Trips You Make By Bicycle in San Francisco?



## What Is The Travel Time For Your Most Typical Bicycle Trip In San Francisco?



PRIMARY MODE OF TRAVEL



SECONDARY MODE OF TRAVEL

# BICYCLE ENVIRONMENT

The San Francisco City Charter (Section 16.102) declares that “bicycling shall be promoted by encouraging safe streets for riding, convenient access to transit, bicycle lanes, and secure bicycle parking” and (Section 8A.113) charges the Municipal Transportation Agency with “develop[ing] a safe, interconnected bicycle circulation network.” So what is a “safe, interconnected” bike network, and how are we doing in developing such a network? And what are the concerns and challenges for bicyclists in San Francisco, on and off the network?

## Reasons that keep cyclists from riding a bicycle more than they already do

- 15% weather
- 14% worried about bike theft
- 13% worried about safety
- 10% can't carry enough on a bicycle
- 9% street conditions (potholes / tracks / etc.)
- 8% I ride as much as I want
- 6% not enough bike lanes
- 6% too far to travel where I need to go
- 5% too hilly
- 4% bike lanes don't go where I need to go
- 3% too busy / no time
- 7% other



These are the routes of the official San Francisco bicycle network.

# BICYCLE ENVIRONMENT

What would make San Francisco a better city for bicycling?

- 21% more bike lanes
- 18% better-behaved motorists
- 18% better street pavement
- 13% fewer cars
- 8% better bicycle parking

Respect shown to you by motorists when bicycling in San Francisco: **C+**

## Bike route completeness

Satisfaction with San Francisco bicycle routes: **C**

## Bike lanes

90% of survey respondents prefer to ride on streets with bike lanes, rather than those without. 6% have no opinion

## Pavement quality

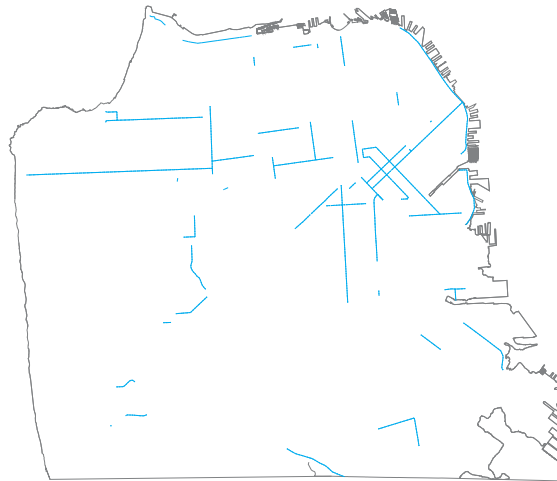
Satisfaction with pavement quality on San Francisco streets you ride a bicycle on: **D+**

## BIKE SPACE - THE CITYWIDE BICYCLE NETWORK

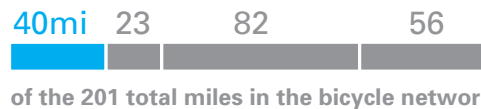
Distance - mileage of lanes and routes as of January 2006

bike lanes:	40 miles*
bike paths:	23 miles
bike routes (signed):	82 miles
wide curb lanes	56 miles
Total designated bike network:	201 miles

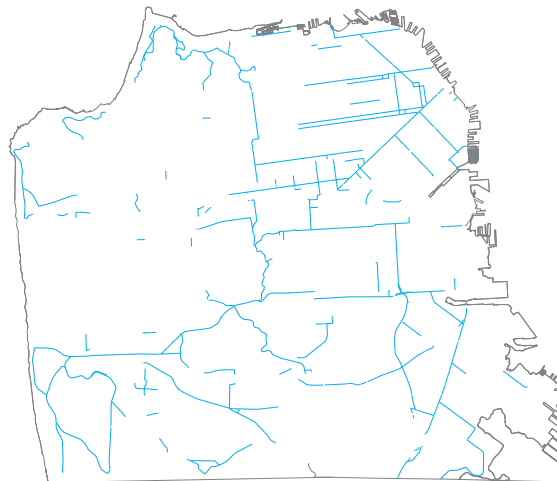
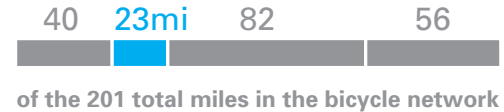
\*For comparison, the city of Chicago has more than 100 miles of striped bicycle lanes



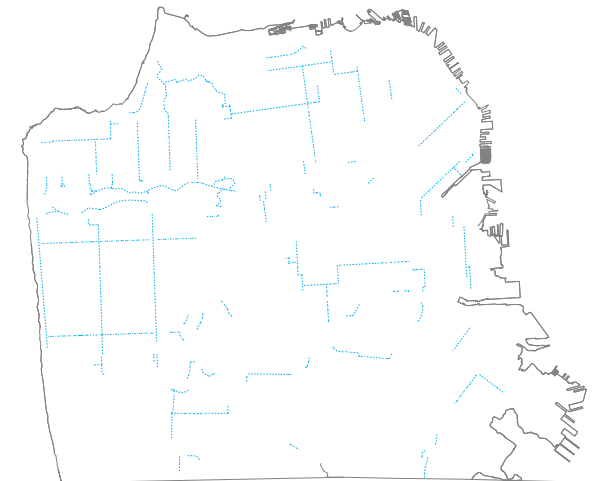
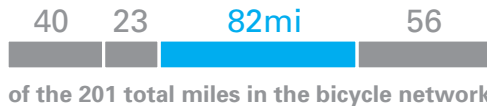
**Bike Lane** – A portion of a street reserved for use by bikes, usually separated from general purpose lanes by a stripe of paint and signage.



**Bike Path** – A path segregated from motorized traffic for the use of bikes, sometimes shared with pedestrians. The Panhandle is a good example.



**Bike Route** – A street signed for bicycle use by sharing the roadway with motor vehicle traffic.

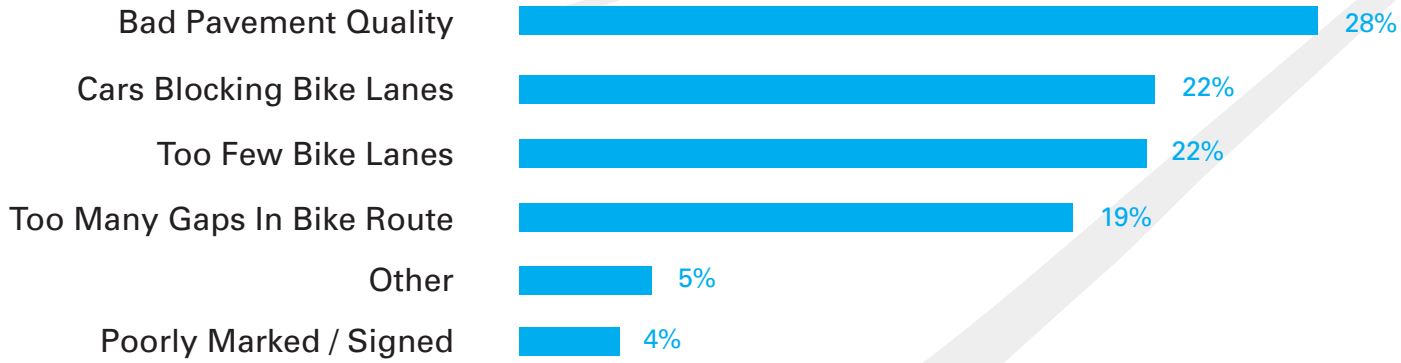


**Wide Curb Lane** – An outside lane of a roadway that is wide enough to be safely shared side by side by a bicycle and another vehicle at the same time.



# BICYCLE ENVIRONMENT

## Main problems with San Francisco bicycle routes



a little bike traffic tidbit:

**5/18/2006**

**Market Street at  
Van Ness Avenue,  
eastbound, 8 am - 9 am**

**449 bicycles**

**525 cars**

**19 taxis**

**26 transit**

# SAFETY

Safety is the number-one concern of everyone working for better bicycling in San Francisco, but it can be an elusive thing to define and measure – how safe is safe, and how safe is safe enough? Looking at the gross statistics of bicycle injury collisions in San Francisco shows that in that realm, at least, our city's streets seem to be getting safer for cyclists over time, a trend we naturally take encouragement from.

Of course the perception of danger can be nearly as corrosive to increased bicycling as “actual” statistical safety problems – few acts of aggressive and careless driving actually result in a cyclist injury, but the menacing tone of motorized mayhem can be an enormous obstacle to bringing more bicyclists onto the roads, itself a powerful force for peace in the streets.



## COLLISIONS

**26%** of respondents say they have been in a collision with a car, truck, or bus while riding a bicycle in the past two years in San Francisco

**12%** of respondents say they were injured in a collision with a car, truck, or bus while riding a bicycle in the past two years in San Francisco

**22%** of collision victims say they filed/attempted to file a police report about their bicycle collision

Satisfaction with the response by the police (collision with a car, truck, or bus): **D+**

## HAZARDOUS ROADWAY SURFACES

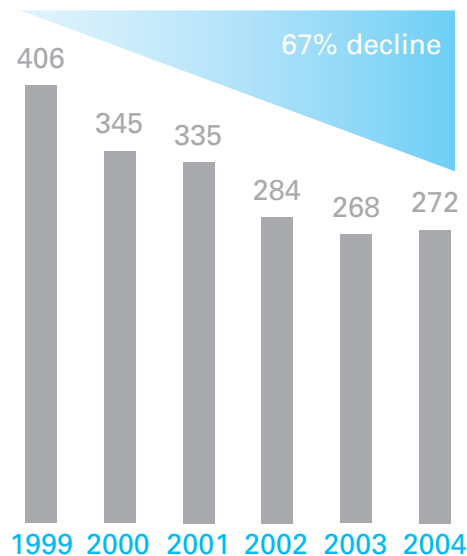
Respondents who say they had a serious fall while riding a bicycle in the past two years because of:

- 10%** broken/irregular pavement/potholes
- 10%** train tracks
- 3%** other reasons

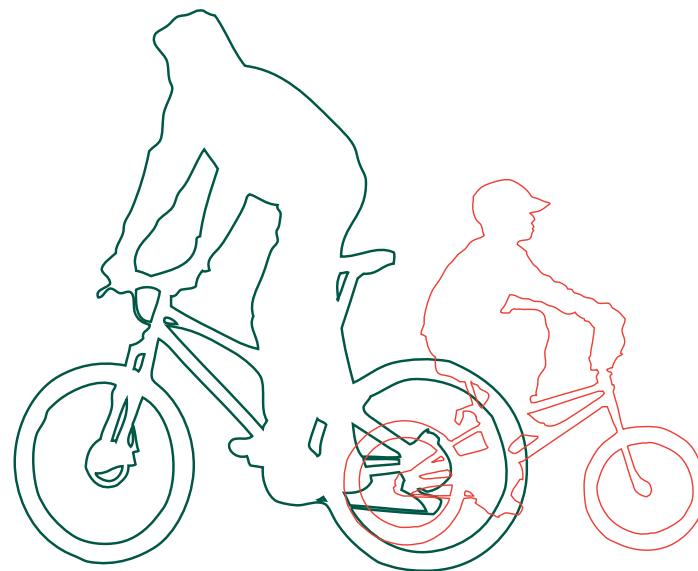
**15%** of all respondents say they were injured because of a fall caused by surface conditions

How safe do cyclists feel bicycling in San Francisco? **C- fairly safe**

## BICYCLIST INJURY TOTALS\*



\*These official numbers are probably under-reporting injury collisions



# THEFT

The threat of losing one's bike is a chilling factor as we work to encourage more people to bicycle in San Francisco regularly. As in any large city, bike theft is an all-too common property crime (a quarter of our respondents say they had a bike stolen in the past two years), one which is rarely solved or resolved.

## SFPD reported bike thefts:

2003	852
2004	1048
2005	598

The best approach to preventing bike theft is secure bike parking, watching your bike yourself or having someone else watch it in a safe, locked space. San Francisco presently has a secure bike parking facility in operation at the Embarcadero BART station,

and will have another secure bike parking facility at the Caltrain station at 4th and King by the end of the year. Other secure bike parking facilities can be found at SF State University's Bike Barn and UCSF's bike cage in their Parnassus Heights parking garage. Obviously, more secure bike parking must be provided, in more locations around the city, to provide a reliable system for cyclists to utilize.

Additionally, an enormous opportunity exists to enhance and extend bicycle access to commercial buildings. Numerous building managers already permit tenants and visitors to bring their bikes into their buildings to be parked inside, either in a corner of the office or a designated bike room. Expanding bicycle access to commercial buildings legislatively (as has already been accomplished for parking garages via Planning Code reform) should be a priority for the city.

25%

of survey respondents say they had a bicycle stolen in San Francisco in the past two years

52%

of bike theft victims reported their bicycle theft to the police

6%

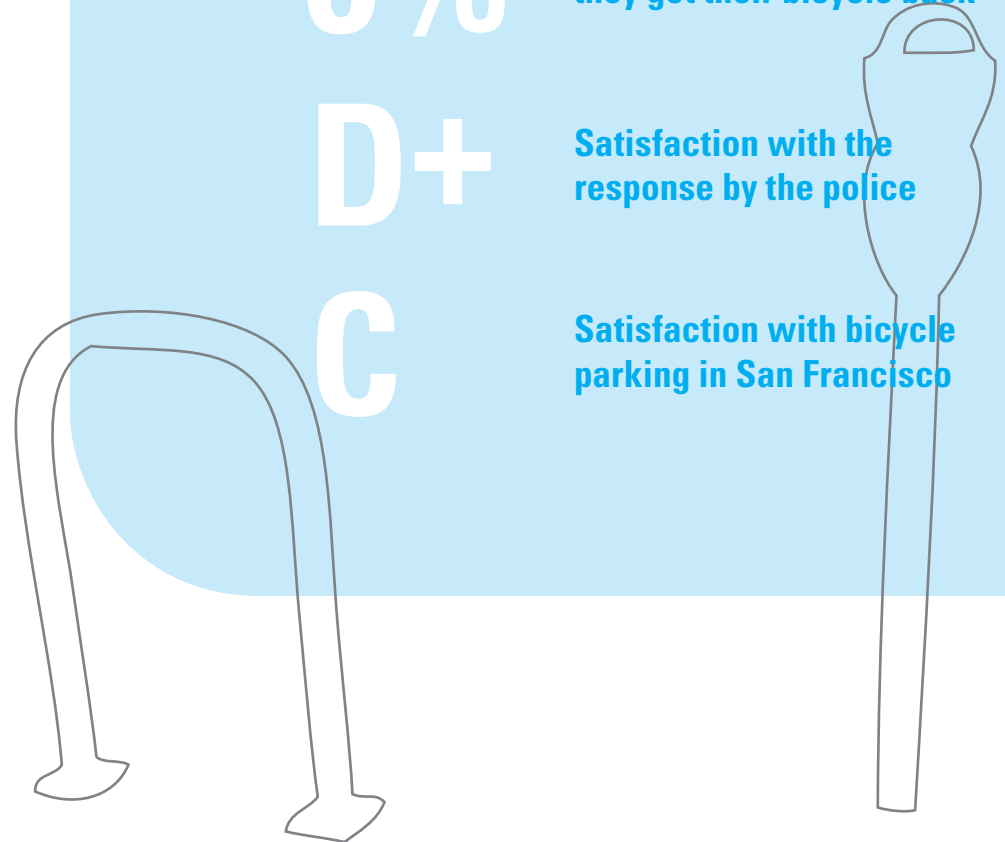
of bike theft victims say they got their bicycle back

D+

Satisfaction with the response by the police

C

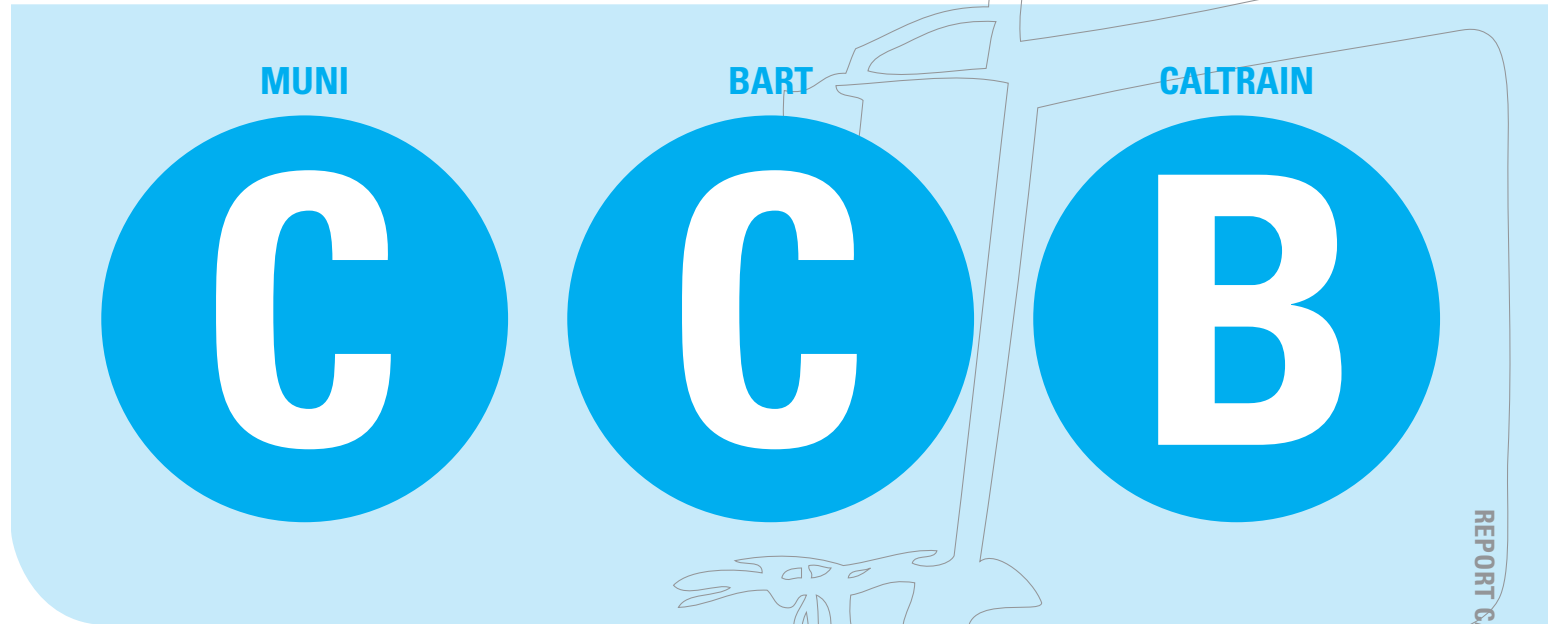
Satisfaction with bicycle parking in San Francisco



# TRANSIT CONNECTIONS

The Citywide Bicycle Network becomes much larger when it connects to transit – significantly longer trips can be made by combining bicycle and transit legs. Caltrain began “Baby Bullet” service on the Peninsula last year which offers room for up to 48 bicycles on each run, and BART’s system is widely accessible except at peak commute time between certain stations (unfortunately, those are some of the most useful connections for cycle commuters). San Francisco’s Muni system provides 2-spot bicycle racks on the front of almost all of its buses, but does not yet permit bicycles on its light rail vehicle (LRV) lines (a trial is promised and overdue).

## Grade of Satisfaction With Bicycle Service On:



# CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

Bicyclists rank San Francisco as a B- cycling city, overall. This is not a failing mark, but then again, it is not a grade that our mothers would likely be proud of. San Francisco should be and could be an A+ bicycling city.

Given the city's density, landscape, temperate climate, environmental awareness, and strong bike culture, we should be in the same echelon as the best biking cities in the world — cities such as Amsterdam with 39% of trips by bike and Copenhagen with 36% of trips by bike. By comparison, San Francisco is estimated to host 4%-5% of trips by bike.\*

Any one who knows the city will see that San Francisco has made a great deal of progress on the bicycling front. San Francisco's investment in the past 10 years in creating the citywide Bike Network through more bike lanes, paths, and safer shared lanes is paying off. Today twice as many people bicycle for transportation as a decade ago. Anecdotally,

many people tell us they feel safer now biking than in the past. City surveys show that bicyclists — and other street users — are safer on streets with bike lanes

**We call on the city's leaders, including the Mayor and members of the Board of Supervisors, to act on the recommendations above by next year's annual Bike to Work Day in May. These are key first steps toward becoming an A+ bicycling city.**

Footnote:

\* This is based on 1998 poll data, the most recent figures available. We strongly urge the City to invest in annual tallying of riders and monitoring of conditions and experiences.

**The Report Card shows us where more energy needs to be expended to become an A+ city. The SFBC urges city leaders to take the following actions:**

## 1. Improve pavement quality

Action Items: Prioritize streets on the Bicycle Network for repaving and develop a much-needed funding plan for more road maintenance and repair.

## 2. Fill gaps in the Citywide Bike Network with new bike lanes, paths, and traffic-calming

Action Item: Implement the Top 20 Bike Network projects within the next two years (see [www.sfbike.org/bikeplan](http://www.sfbike.org/bikeplan)), prioritizing the following three crosstown routes: Bay-to-the-Beach, Civic Center to City College, and the Golden Gate Bridge-to-Candlestick Park routes.

## 3. Better educate drivers to share the road safely and courteously with bicyclists

Action Items: Include safety information with all S.F. residential parking permits and air road safety messages through radio and TV PSAs.

## 4. Improve S.F. Police Department's response to bicycle collisions and bike thefts

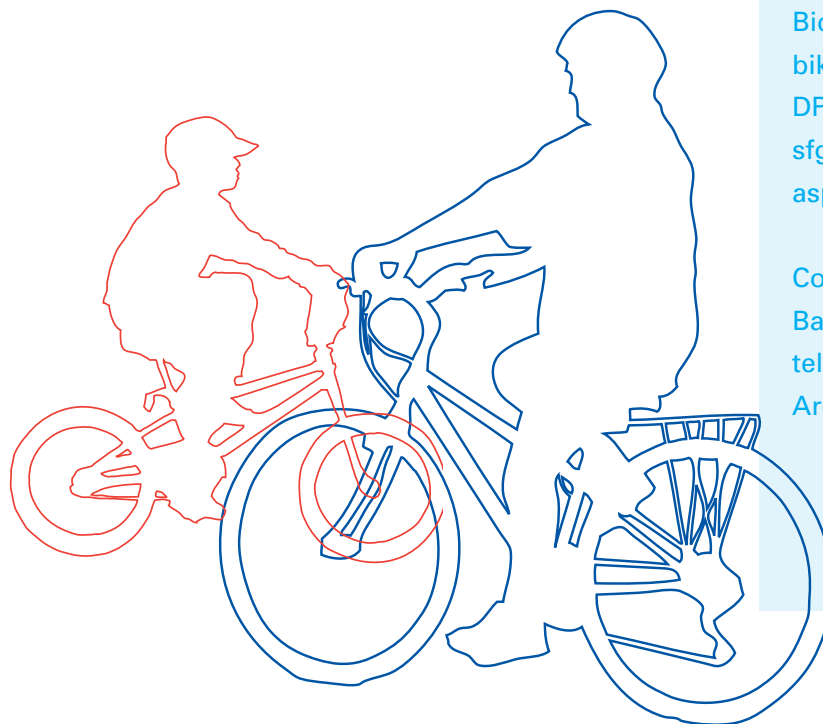
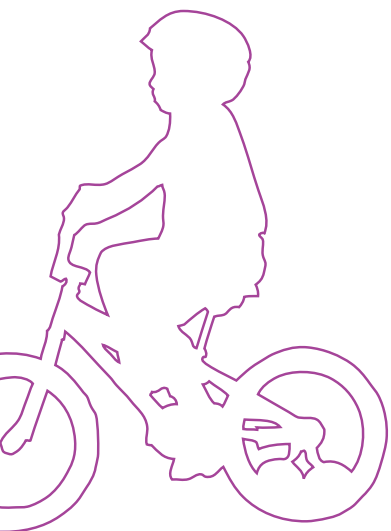
Action Item: Add bicycle safety components to police officers' regular training, including a long-promised training video.

## 5. Increase enforcement of cars blocking bicycle lanes

Action Item: Designate parking control officers to bicycle lane beats, particularly during rush hours.

# SOURCES & DISCLAIMERS

We recognize that the 2006 Report Card of Bicycling in San Francisco is an imperfect analysis of the state of cycling in San Francisco, due to missing and/or unreliable information from official sources and our own limitations in gathering cyclist opinions, but nonetheless feel it provides an authentic and useful account of bicyclist sentiment and opinion. We look forward to a fuller and more reliable process of evaluation and analysis by official agencies in the City as we go forward towards 2010.



The 2006 SFBC Survey of Bicycling in San Francisco was conducted April 1 - May 2, 2006 (web version online 4/18/06 to 5/2/06)

We received 1151 complete responses (80 paper responses, 1071 web responses)

San Francisco Bicycle Coalition members:

65%	yes
32%	no

Bike theft statistics supplied by SF Police Department

Bicycle injury collision statistics, bike network mileage, from DPT Fact Sheet: [http://bicycle.sfgov.org/site/dptbike\\_index.asp?id=3178#Info](http://bicycle.sfgov.org/site/dptbike_index.asp?id=3178#Info)

Commuter Profile 2000, RIDES for Bay Area Commuters, random telephone survey of 3,600 Bay Area adults, March-April 2000

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & CREDITS

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Design by  
Fabian, George and Mark







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