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NEWS

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Sustainable Transit Advocates Call on City: Get Bike Plan Back on Track for Rapid Rollout

San Francisco — Supporters of sustainable transportation called for swift action from the City in response to the San Francisco Superior Court's ruling yesterday that the City did not comply with the procedural requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in reviewing its official City Bike Plan. This Plan, approved last year with unanimous support from Mayor Newsom and the Board of Supervisors, calls for the City to improve upon its infrastructure and policies to increase and improve bicycling.

"The City is on record as not only supporting bicycling for transportation, but also as wanting to significantly increase the number of trips made by bike in the City as a way to improve environmental sustainability and better health," says Leah Shahum, Executive Director of the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition (SFBC), a 6,000-member nonprofit organization which promotes bicycling for everyday transportation (www.sfbike.org).

"While it is unfortunate that the plaintiff is using the state's environmental regulations to delay positive environmental progress by slowing implementation of the Bike Plan, we have to act decisively to show our commitment to be a more sustainable and healthy City."

The SFBC calls on City leaders to move quickly, dedicating all necessary resources to resolving the lawsuit and moving forward with its ambitious plan to complete the Citywide Bike Network and reach 10% of trips by bike by 2010. The SFBC also urges City leaders to review its process for determining environmental impacts of transportation projects. Currently a Level of Service standard is used which focuses on impacts to motor vehicle travel time without adequate consideration of other modes of transportation, such as bicycling and walking.

"San Francisco should develop a multi-model Level of Service standard, as cities across the country are doing in order to ensure equitable consideration of our most sustainable and healthy modes of transportation," says Shahum. "Our local environmental review process is not very environmental. This court ruling highlights the problems in the system. If we are going to be a truly green city, we must update the way we make transportation decisions in San Francisco."

There is demonstrated public support for the Bicycle Plan's goals of improving and increasing bicycling. According to a David Binder Research poll conducted in July 2006, 73% of San Franciscans support the City encouraging more bike trips by creating more bike lanes

and designated space for cyclists. The same poll shows that one-third of San Franciscans say they would ride their bicycles more if the City created more bike lanes, designated more space for bicyclists, and improved the surface of the roads.

Bike safety improvements, such as bike lanes and other facilities for cyclists, are proven to increase bicycling. Overall, ridership increases 50% on streets with bike lanes, according to City counts. Specifically the number of bike riders increased 300% on Howard St. after bike lanes were striped, and there was a 144% increase on Valencia St. after bike lanes were striped.

“When it comes to bike lanes, it’s proven that when you stripe them, they will come,” says Shahum. Completing the Bike Network will increase bicycle trips in San Francisco and benefit our environment and public health.”

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