

TUBE Dec '03 - Jan '04 TIMES



SAN FRANCISCO
BICYCLE COALITION

PROMOTING THE BICYCLE FOR EVERYDAY TRANSPORTATION



FREE



VOTE MATT GONZALEZ DECEMBER 9th

Bicyclists Make Difference in Election

His campaign bolstered by thousands of San Franciscans, including countless committed SFBC volunteers, Board of Supervisors President Matt Gonzalez has made it into a runoff election on December 9 against Supervisor Gavin Newsom. In another city transportation victory, Proposition K — the transportation sales tax that will provide \$60 to \$100 million for SF bike projects — was also approved by voters in November.

As President of the Board, Matt Gonzalez has strongly supported building the citywide Bicycle Network. He was a champion for the new Fell St. bike lanes, urging DPT to move forward expeditiously on this key gap-closure project. As Mayor, Matt would appoint department heads who understand the true meaning of the city's "transit first" policy.

Gonzalez and his organizers credit the SFBC's endorsement as a crucial boost to his early campaign. Bicyclists' voices really are making a difference! Visit www.sfbike.org/matt for things you can do to help the campaign in its final week. Read more about Matt's platform at www.mattgonzalez.com



www.sfbike.org

Get Comfy!

Riding your bike shouldn't be a pain, and simple changes can help.

Plus we have tips for winter riding.

A lot of people don't think comfort is part of bicycling. It's common to see racing bikes with tiny plastic saddles on tall seat posts, or mountain bikes with low handlebars that splay hands far from the body, or tourists on the Golden Gate Bridge practically hitting themselves in the chin with their knees. There are good reasons for riding bikes that aren't comfortable in the long run — you just might actually be a time trial cyclist, and very new riders want to get their feet flat on the ground for stability and aren't in much of a hurry. But biking shouldn't hurt.

If you don't feel at ease on your bike, or if you get recurring aches in your neck, shoulders, or back, don't suffer! Small adjustments in setup can make a real difference in how much you enjoy riding, and might just spare you severe injury.

To enjoy riding your bike enough that you'll continue riding, make fit adjustments on the bike before buying new accessories. I personally do not equate "comfort" with "accessories," such as gel saddles on suspension seat posts, shorts with pads as thick as focaccia, or front shocks, but if those solve a problem unrelated to fit for you, use them by all means.

The first few years I rode, I rarely lubed my chain and did not own a floor pump. You can ride without thinking about maintenance, and you can go a long way, too, and still have a barrel of fun — if you actually stick with cycling. Too many people get starry-eyed about cycling, then let their bike collect cobwebs as it begins to run less efficiently, and they discover fit problems that only long-term biking experience reveals.

Here are some simple things you can do to make biking more fun, so you won't wind up lamenting the flat-tired clunker taking up space on the back porch. The resources at the end of this article, or the folks at a good bike shop that caters to commuters, can help you make cheap fit adjustments and wise purchases. Realize that there is a lot of conflicting, misleading, and just plain wrong information about fit out there. Remember that you are the only expert on your bike. Listen to your own body more carefully than to anybody else.

Pump your tires, and lube your chain regularly

These are the two simplest and most important things you can do. Do them every time you remember,



PHOTO BY NICOLE MCMORROW

A comfy rider is a happy rider, as our model Julie will attest. If your bike fits you well, you should be smiling.

when a floor pump is handy, when your chain is looking dry or gritty. Do it even though the guy at the shop said your bike "isn't worth fixing up." Do it because the very next time you get on your bike, it will bring a smile to your face to spin your pedals so easily.

Raise your handlebars

Do you have neck, back, or wrist pain, or tired arms? Your elbows should be bent slightly and your wrists and arms should be relaxed in every riding position. If you're not sure that your handlebars are as comfortable as they can be, think about raising them at least up level with your seat, or

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MARKET STREET: More transit,
less cars, says study p. 9

An Open Letter to Our Next Mayor

Whether it is Matt Gonzalez or Gavin Newsom who takes office as the Mayor of San Francisco in January 2004, the SFBC looks forward to working with him and offers a few words of advice.

Dear Mayor,

On behalf of the 4,200-member San Francisco Bicycle Coalition (SFBC) and the estimated 30,000 people who regularly bike for transportation, I am writing to share our suggestions on how best to handle the city's pressing transportation problems.

During the next four years, you will have an unprecedented opportunity as Mayor to **make bicycling a viable transportation option for 60,000 more San Franciscans, which will in turn help to alleviate congestion and parking worries, improve air quality throughout the Bay Area, and literally save lives** as increased physical activity improves San Franciscans' health.

One of your first acts in office will surely be to appoint chiefs to various city departments to implement your vision. Your choices to lead departments that deal with transportation, neighborhoods, and planning should be well-versed in, or at the least open-minded to, bicycle issues. The heads of Muni and the SF Department of Parking & Traffic (which should be merged by now) should be prepared to **elevate the DPT Bicycle Program from its current lowly status and give it the resources needed to make a difference.**

And we urge you to empower the SF Departments of the Environment and of Public Health to play a more prominent role in bicycle education and encouragement. And while all eyes will be on your pick for Police Chief for a myriad of reasons, bicyclists also will be watching to see if the department can reverse its current image of being hostile toward bicyclists.

Next, you should call together the leaders in each relevant city department to insist that they work cooperatively to complete the citywide Bike Plan Update, which has the potential to double the number of bike lanes in the city. High-level leadership from the Mayor

early in 2004 is crucial to make sure that the draft Plan — scheduled to go before the Board of Supervisors for approval this summer — is passed and implemented fully. Thanks to the passage of Proposition K in November, funding for bicycle projects is not a major obstacle at the local level.

At the regional level, too, you will have the opportunity to demonstrate early leadership as the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) puts together its 30-year transportation plan for the Bay Area. Your MTC appointee should be prepared to fight for dedicated funding for bicycling at the regional level. (And don't worry about being alone on these issues, because the SFBC will rally the troops to support both the passage of the Bike Plan Update and Regional Bike Plan funding.)

In our opinion, the best way to solve the city's transportation problems is simple: **Use the city's transit-first policy to do big things that will make a difference.** Create true bus-only lanes that keep cars from blocking transit riders. Ban additional parking in transit-rich areas. Build denser housing along transit routes. Make sure that police enforce pedestrians' right-of-way by ticketing drivers who cut off pedestrians. Reduce the number of private autos on Market Street. Expand City CarShare. And, of course, build the complete citywide Bike Network.

Only a Mayor who begins his term with a commitment to creating a true transit-first city will be able to weather the inevitable little battles along the way to reach the end goal that will benefit all San Franciscans and leave a legacy for decades to come.

SINCERELY,

LEAH SHAHUM

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SAN FRANCISCO BICYCLE COALITION

are safer on the street than on the sidewalk.

GLORIA VALORIS

I must take issue with the Advice Pedaler's blanket admonition against riding bicycles on the sidewalk. I will readily admit to being one of those people who sometimes find it necessary to do this. The problem is not riding on the sidewalks per se, but the way that some cyclists do it.

A bicycle can be easily navigated with other users of the sidewalk by simply moving at the same speed as other traffic. The danger comes from riding at a speed much greater than the people walking. Joggers, skaters, skateboarders, shopping carts, and even motorized wheel

chairs can pose as great a threat if they are speeding and weaving through crowds of pedestrians. One could walk one's bike on the sidewalk, but this takes up twice the room and leaves the outside pedal exposed to passersby.

We must respect the hierarchy of sidewalk users, in which the pedestrian is paramount, but with a little respect there should be no problems with us occasionally sharing this safe refuge.

KURT SHUCK

A three-wheeled bike used in this way is like a wheelchair in stability and function, and it is entirely appropriate to ride a trike on the sidewalk.

Yes, it is possible for bicycles to be ridden courteously on a sidewalk. But the vast majority of

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The SFBC is a 4,200-member advocacy organization working to transform San Francisco's streets and neighborhoods into more livable and safe places by promoting the bicycle for everyday transportation.

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Bikes on Sidewalks

The *Tube Times* should not be the venue for frequent lectures on the evils of riding on sidewalks. Some of us do so for very good reasons, are courteous to pedestrians, and are extremely careful of others. As someone who uses her tricycle as a wheelchair and is one of those "grannies with a cane" when not on it, I know that most of the time I am much better off on the sidewalk. I simply cannot keep pace with bikes out in the bike lanes and would slow everyone else down out there or force them into traffic to go around me. It is not right to push the idea that cyclists

Letters

bikes are going faster than walking speed. We still hear a lot of vitriol from the senior and disabled communities about side-walk riding.

The Advice Pedaler tells us that if you can pedal as slow as a fast pedestrian, it's nonetheless more polite to hop off your bike and push it for a block.

Etiquette on and off Sidewalks

Lately I have come to regard bicyclists with as much trepidation and dislike as I do automobile drivers. Bicyclists ignore the rules of the road with as much abandon as any driver. I see bicyclists routinely ride on sidewalks, down one-way streets the wrong way, and run red lights. When I politely request bicyclists to show a little care, I am usually met with a rude snarl. I think that many

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Fell and Masonic Intersection: Improvements are on the way, and your input is needed

Look ahead ... Look right ... Pray. That's the current operating procedure for bicyclists and pedestrians crossing the intersection of Fell and Masonic. Westbound automobile traffic speeding down Fell Street often does not slow down when turning left onto Masonic, creating potential for collision with the hundreds of bicycle commuters and recreational riders who use the popular Panhandle bicycle path. To make matters worse, drivers' view of bicyclists approaching the intersection is impeded by a row of parked cars and a "recessed" crosswalk. It is no wonder that improving this intersection was one of the most popular suggestions during the SFBC's initial public outreach efforts.

Luckily, things are going to change. The intersection was selected by the SFBC, the SF County Transportation Authority, and the SF Department of Parking and Traffic's Bicycle Program as one of the first 20 priority projects for the city's Bike Plan Update. After months of design and engineering, the DPT's Bicycle Program recently unveiled three options for design improvements to Fell and Masonic.



PHOTOS BY DAVID GARTNER

Each option approaches the challenge of improving the safety of the intersection without seriously affecting traffic flow or pedestrian and bicycle cross time. All three would improve "yield to bicyclists"

signage, paint "zebra stripes" on the cross walk to increase bicyclist visibility, and move the automobile stop line back ten feet to keep northbound traffic out of the crosswalk. Where the plans differ is in potential effectiveness to avoid conflict with cars.

✓ Option 1 - Head start for bikes and peds

The first proposal creates an Advance Walk phase to the traffic light that will enable bicyclists and pedestrians to get a head start on traffic entering the intersection. Left-turning vehicles from Fell onto

Masonic will be held a few seconds to allow path users to establish themselves in the crosswalk. This option would also extend the red no-parking zone on Fell Street 60 feet

(three parking spaces) to increase visibility of pedestrians and bicycles on the Panhandle path. Additionally, "safe-hit" posts may be installed to encourage left-turning vehicles from Fell to make slower, wider turns onto Masonic.

✓ Option 2 - Calm the left-turning cars more

The second option would retain many elements from the first, but replace the red parking zone on Fell Street with curb extensions on both sides of Masonic Avenue on the south side of Fell. This would create a tighter turning radius for vehicles and effectively slow turning speeds. Reorienting the Panhandle path and crosswalk closer to Fell Street would also increase bicyclist and pedestrian visibility.

✓ Option 3 - Re-time the traffic lights

The third option is to re-phase and re-time the existing traffic light at Fell and Masonic to create a dedicated left-turn phase for cars and a protected crossing phase for bikes and peds. A left-turn pocket would be created from Fell Street onto southbound Masonic Avenue, and car traffic would be held (with a red turn arrow) during the dedicated bicycle/pedestrian phase. Then left-turning traffic would receive a green arrow or a flashing yellow arrow. Under the green arrow, motor vehicles would have the right-of-way and bikes and peds would not be allowed to cross. Under the flashing yellow arrow condition, motorists would yield to bicyclists and pedestrians using the crosswalk.



So, What Do You Think?

Each option has its pluses and minuses. A protected phase to the light decreases the likelihood of collision, but also decreases the amount of time bikes and peds have to cross. An advance phase light gives you a few more seconds to cross, but it increases the chance that a car will be there when you do. Public input will be key to determining which option to pursue. We strongly encourage your feedback on these issues.

This article provides just a brief overview of the project. Please visit www.bicycle.sfgov.org to download full project details and diagrams. Then stop by the Bike Plan Update public input page at www.sfbike.org/bikeplan and let us know what you think. I think we can change the standard operating procedure to look ahead ... look right ... bike!

BY DAVID GARTNER



20 TOP PRIORITY PROJECTS

The Fell and Masonic intersection is just one of 20 top priority projects included in the city's Bike Plan Update. The proposals stretch across San Francisco — from bike lanes down on Alemany to a bicyclist-activated flashing light up at the Broadway Tunnel.

As of press time, at least 6 of the 20 projects are available for public review and input. The DPT is working feverishly to prepare all twenty projects for public review. We encourage all neighbors and bicyclists to download the full project overviews and provide feedback. Please visit the DPT's Bicycle Program site at www.bicycle.sfgov.org and the SFBC's Bike Plan page at www.sfbike.org/bikeplan for full details.

We are starting to rally the volunteer troops to help meet with businesses, drop off flyers to neighbors, and write letters in support of the projects. Contact Bicycle Network Director Mary Brown at 431-BIKE x24 or mary@sfbike.org to help gather enough support to make these great bike improvements a reality!

CHAIN OF EVENTS



DEC - JAN '04

RIDES

The SFBC's Cultural History Tours and Recreational Rides are free to SFBC members (a \$5 donation is requested of non-members). Unless otherwise noted, call 431-BIKE x23 or email tours@sfbike.org (for bike tours) or reclrides@sfbike.org (for rec. rides) for more information. Or visit our online calendar at www.sfbike.org. Rain cancels rides.

VELO GIRLS NORTH BAY RIDE

Sat., Dec. 13 & Jan. 10 | 9am
Sports Basement, 1301 6th St

One of our favorite rides, we'll summit Mt. Tamalpais! Two options: 50 miles with only 2,300 feet of climbing (and out and back to Fairfax) or 63 miles with 5,400 feet of climbing. Optional meeting point at Sausalito Cyclery at 10am. Bring layers, as the weather is variable as you climb. Contact lorri@velogirls.com or see www.velogirls.com for more information.

SFBC WINTERFEST PARTY & AUCTION

Sun., Dec. 14 | 5:30 - 10:30pm
Somarts Gallery, 934 Brannan @ 8th
Don't miss the biggest bike bash of the year! See p. 12 for details.

STREET TROUBLE?

■ For potholes, construction hazards, and other dangerous street conditions, call 28-CLEAN and ask that they call you back to report the status of the hazard. Help keep our streets clear, especially in the dark and wet months!

■ For illegally parked cars (on the sidewalk, in the bike lane, etc.) call 553-1200 and DPT will send someone to issue a ticket.



CRITICAL MASS #136 & 137

Fri., Dec. 26 & Jan. 30 | 5:30pm
Justin Herman Plaza
(foot of Market St)

Lots of people riding together through the city makes it safer and more enjoyable. See new neighborhoods, and show off your new Christmas bike at the December ride. As always, sponsored by No One. www.critical-mass.org.

WEEKEND MATT MOBILIZATIONS

Nov. 29 & 30, Dec. 6 & 7

The all-important two weekends before the runoff election! See www.mattgonzalez.com for details.

MARIN HEADLANDS ROAD RIDE

Sat., Dec. 27 | 10am
McLaren Lodge, Fell @ Stanyan

Join us as we cross the Bridge to Conzulman Road and climb to Hawk Hill, then descend to Point Bonita Lighthouse, where we can stop for a snack or lunch. Next we'll head over to Rodeo Beach, and then ride back through the tunnel to the Bridge. 2-3 hrs, please wear a helmet.

MT. DAVIDSON MOUNTAIN BIKING TOUR

Sun., Jan. 11 | 10am - 1pm
McLaren Lodge (Stanyan at Fell)

This 16-mile ride will take us through Golden Gate Park, along

Sunset Blvd., up to the cross at Mt. Davidson, and back. The 1200-foot climb to the top is quite strenuous, but you'll be treated to some of the city's finest trail riding. Learn how SF trails could be expanded and improved. Bring plenty of water and a snack. Contact adt@sfmtb.com for more info. See approximate route map at www.sfmtb.com/sheets/MAP/mtdavidson_outback.htm.

OFF-ROAD LAKE RIDE

Sat., Jan. 17 | 10:15am
Ferry Building, Embarcadero at Market

An off-road stroll through the lakes north of Mount Tam. We'll ride from Larkspur Ferry Terminal to the town of Ross via the Marin Bike Trail and then onto dirt trails up to Phoenix Lake and Lake Lagunitas. Then we ride back down and return by ferry. Bring plenty of food and water, ferry is about 10 bucks. 6+ hrs. Email reclrides@sfbike.org for details.

SFBC VOLUNTEER NIGHT

Every Weds. night | 5-9 pm
SFBC HQ 1095 Market St,
Suite 215 (@ 7th)

A great opportunity to meet other friendly bikers, eat snacks, and stuff envelopes to your heart's content! Work on your stapling and folding skills, or dive into data-entry — we have plenty of things to do for everyone. As a bonus each Wednesday, volunteers vote on which type of hot dinner we'll order - Chinese, Indian, Vietnamese or the old standby, Pizza. We can use your help! For more info contact Michael at 431-BIKEx21 or calfee@sfbike.org.

SF MAYORAL RUNOFF ELECTION

Tues., Dec. 9
Don't forget to vote!

SFBC BOARD MEETING

Tue., Dec. 16 & Jan. 20 |
6:30 - 8pm
SFBC HQ 1095 Market St,
Suite 215 (@ 7th)

All members are invited to attend. Contact Leah Shahum at 431-BIKE x22 or leah@sfbike.org for the agenda.

SF BICYCLE ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

Wed., Dec. 17 & Jan. 21 | 6:15pm
City Hall, Room 408

Come and participate in the committee that advises the Board of Supervisors on issues related to bicycling in the city. Comment on items on the agenda, or agendaize your own item by e-mailing Andy

Thornley, board chair, at apt@scootdesign.com

URBAN BICYCLING SAFETY COURSE

Sun., Jan. 25 | 10am

Learn the tips and tricks of bike safety on SF streets. The SFBC presents a four-hour class on all aspects of utility bicycling — how to perform a bicycle safety check, fixing a flat, choosing a bike, dealing with cargo and clothing, bike parking, lighting, reflection, and foul-weather riding. Crash avoidance techniques will be discussed. Gain confidence by knowing you are riding legally and safely. Recommended for adults and children above 14. \$10 suggested donation for SFBC members, \$20 for non-members. Contact Bert Hill at echill@sffhills.org or 337-1156 with any questions.

EXCELSIOR DISTRICT COMMUNITY MEETING

Sat., Jan. 24 | 10am-12pm
Location TBD

Excelsior Street Safe presents a community meeting with Supervisor Gerardo Sandoval and other officials to present its Action Plan for Safer Streets. Meet with the decision-makers and let them know what bike and pedestrian-friendly changes are needed in the Excelsior. Excelsior Street Safe is a project of Coleman Advocates for Children & Youth working to calm traffic, improve our streets and sidewalks, and make it safer to walk and ride bikes in the Excelsior. For more info, email streetsafe@earthlink.net or call 239-0161 x24.

■ Jefferson Street Bikeway Alternatives Now Online

The Port and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission continue work on the Fisherman's Wharf Area Plan, which is looking at everything from transportation to open space to historic preservation in the Wharf area. The SFBC has been closely following the plans in development for Jefferson St. We currently favor alternative D, which would provide bidirectional bike lanes from Aquatic Park to the Embarcadero by putting Jefferson on a "road diet," reducing the street from two westbound lanes to one eastbound lane. This will result in a nearly continuous bikeway from the ballpark to the Presidio! To be kept in the loop about developments on Jefferson, e-mail Josh Hart at joshua@sfbike.org. View the plans online at www.sfport.com, click on Planning and Development then Fisherman's Wharf Area Plan.

■ Haight-Ashbury Traffic Circle Saga Drags On

The Department of Parking and Traffic (DPT) is attempting to make drivers yield to pedestrians at the new trial traffic circles, a major concern of the SFBC as well as Walk San Francisco and neighborhood groups. DPT plans to make crosswalks bolder, install clearer "flight of arrows signs" instructing drivers and cyclists to travel counterclockwise, and add "yield to pedestrian" pop-up signs in crosswalks.

Supervisor Matt Gonzalez has supported our efforts to get at least cross-street stop signs replaced in order to clarify right-of-way on Page St. Supervisor Gonzalez also has been working with the Fire Department to balance their concerns about emergency response times with reducing traffic injuries. Traffic circles are

a key element in transforming Page St. into a bicycle boulevard. Neighbors who live within a block of a proposed traffic circle will get to vote about it, probably in January if things go smoothly, which is unlikely.

■ Embarcadero Bikestation Introduces Maintenance Clinics

If you haven't yet visited SF's newest Bikestation, the free maintenance clinics are a great excuse to check it out. Located within the Embarcadero

BART/MUNI Station, the Embarcadero Bikestation has free daytime attended bike parking, repairs, accessory sales (pick up a light set!), route advice, and now free maintenance clinics. Clinics are happening every Thursday at 6pm. Make sure to bring your own bike, and your questions about maintenance. For more info, call Bikestation manager Dan Sankey at 834-1049. Brought to you by the SFBC and Mike's Bikes.

■ Glut of Car Parking Proposed Along Market

Transportation for a Livable City (TLC) is gearing up to prevent the construction of 1,854 car parking spaces at the Civic Center Muni/BART station at Market and 8th. A 250-unit apartment building proposed for 1160 Market would have 504 spaces. More than 1,300 spaces are part of a residential complex to replace the Trinity Plaza buildings along 8th Street between Market and Mission.

The SF Planning Department has



Quick Releases

Bigger, Better SFBC Website!

The cyber velorution takes a new turn with the introduction of the new and improved SFBC website! All the resources, up-to-date news, and happenings you've come to love are in a beautiful and easy-to-use format. Check

out the many new features, including

■ **Chain of Events:** upcoming events listing right on the home page, plus the latest Biker Bulletin headlines in one quick glance

■ **Member Services:** update your contact info and preferences online, add a



household member in one easy step, and request a bike trailer reservation

■ **Biking Resources:** improved and expanded information, helpfully organized and updated — your one-stop shop for how to bike in San Francisco!

All this and more — take a look at www.sfbike.org.

failed to insist on a sensible design; instead, they simply predict gridlock for the neighborhood. TLC is working with area stakeholders to stop this nonsense. Join the effort by signing up at www.livablecity.org.

■ SF Bicycle Advisory Committee Back on Its Wheels

After being dissolved for a year, San Francisco's Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) has been reconstituted with new members appointed by each of the 11 supervisors. The BAC's job is to advise the Board of Supervisors on matters related to cycling. Andy Thornley from District 1, a longtime SFBC member, has stepped forward as chairperson of the newly revitalized committee. "I am committed to making the BAC an independent voice in SF bicycle politics. I invite all bicy-

clists in San Francisco to come to our meetings and get involved."

■ Clear Channel Apologetic About Anti-Cyclist Comments

After a huge uproar from bicycle advocacy groups about comments made by DJs on Clear Channel radio stations in Houston, Cleveland, Raleigh, and other cities, Clear Channel CEO John Hogan has written a formal letter of retraction to Elissa Margolin, executive director of the League of American Bicyclists.

The comments were made by several Clear Channel DJs over the last year, telling motorists to open their doors in front of cyclists, throw bottles at them, and even run cyclists over. In each case, Clear Channel promised to fire the offending DJ's, yet in most cases they were only transferred to another Clear Channel station, continuing their hate speech elsewhere.

We are waiting to see solid evidence of Clear Channel's resolve, including PSA's reminding motorists that cyclists have a right to the road.



The SF Bicycle Advisory Committee, from left to right, with district represented: Dale Butler (6), Janice Voorsluys (4), Will Henning, not pictured (7), Jerry Ervin (8), Cynthia Powell (9), Casey Allen, not pictured (11), Diana Waggoner (3), Andy Thornley (1), and Rufus Davis (10). Note: Districts 2 and 5 still awaiting appointments.

Tips for Happy Riding

(We present one man's biking opinions — which range from common sense to curmudgeonly — excerpted from the **Rivendell Bicycle Works Catalogue**. The author owns Rivendell, a small Walnut Creek-based company that makes and sells fine bicycles and accouterments. Contact them for a current catalogue with the full list of tips; see www.rivendellbicycles.com.)

- Learn to keep the inside pedal up when you corner, and learn to ride safely in all conditions.
- Signal your approach to pedestrians, especially if they're old, and a bell is better than "On you left!" If no bell, try clacking your brake levers. If all you got is "on your left!" that's fine.
- Carry an extra tube you can donate to somebody with a flat tire and just a repair kit.
- If you're a guy, don't try to be a mentor to every female cyclist you meet.
- Don't wear clothing that makes your **sweat stink** even more.
- Don't think you'll go faster in a significant way if you and your bike become more aerodynamic.
- Don't ride until you're confident you can fix a flat.
- If you ride in a group, bring food for you and somebody who forgot to.
- If you pass another rider going up a hill, say more than "Hi."
- If you see another rider approaching you from the rear, trying to catch you, let it happen.
- Compliment other people's bikes, especially if they're new.
- Try long-sleeved seersucker shirts for hot-weather riding.
- If you buy a new widget, don't "swear by it."
- Buy the cheapest helmet that fits well.
- If you buy a rack, don't ask for free installation. Don't assume your bike shop is making money.
- Ride in weather that keeps other cyclists indoors.
- Never keep track of your pedaling cadence.
- In traffic, be visible and predictable.
- If you have several bikes, set them up with different equipment, but always ride the saddle you like best.
- If you buy a stock bike, do something to it that makes it the only one exactly like it in the world.
- Always bring a pump.
- Build at least one wheel.
- Don't ever describe any bike, no matter how inexpensive or dilapidated, as "a piece of crap."

BY **GRANT PETERSEN**

Get Comfy!

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

higher. Raising your bars can relieve stress on your arms, wrists, and hands. It opens your shoulders, keeps your neck straight and your spine in a gentle hump. If you already have pain from computers, injuries, or stress, this adjustment might be the one for you.

You might need to try a different stem on your bike to bring the handlebars higher or back closer to you. When I recently swapped out a good-fitting (for me) stem to a great one, the difference in handlebar position was much less than one inch. But the difference in my neck pain, and hence my stamina, has been amazing. Now a pause on a long ride is a restorative break rather than a temporary reprieve. Pain, even pain so mild that you dismiss it, as I did, is unbelievably draining.

If you have flat, straight handlebars, and raising your stem didn't help much, you might want to try curvy bars. Handlebars that sweep back toward you, just a little or a lot, will put your hands in a more natural, relaxed position.

Wear that helmet right!

Wear your helmet over your forehead, not blown back over the crown of your head. Keep your helmet straps tightened. Replace your helmet every few years, for fashion, and also because the styrofoam breaks down.

Raise your seat

For Pete's sake, don't ride around looking like a tourist! You don't want your leg flexed straight on the down stroke, but too much bend will surely result in injured knees. Your leg should be almost but not quite straight when the pedal is down.

Sit happy

The super-squishy seats that look enticing in the shop can quickly rub you raw or cut off nerves as they push back up against your body. Also, too-narrow saddles can be difficult to perch on. Get a sensibly padded saddle that's wide enough to support your "sitz" bones, such as a Brooks or Terry.

Panniers, baskets, and racks

Stuff your stuff into a pannier, strap it on a rack, or throw it in a basket. Make your bike—not your back—carry the load. Messenger bags might be OK for riding if they are fastened properly, but they're terrible for standing and walking, if you ever do that (some cyclists don't).

Lights, fenders, action!

Now is the time to equip your bike for dark and rain. Fenders, even cheap ones, are a great idea. Your wheels kick up at least as much water as the sky drops on you, and road water ain't clean. Fenders keep your chain cleaner and your butt and back dry.

Light-colored clothing makes you much more visible at night. Regardless of your fashion hues, bike lights are a must. Rear blinkies are cheap. The new white LED front lights are not just cheap, but bright (look for at least three bulbs) and they use little battery power. Some people like the extra-bright halogen lights with rechargeable battery packs, which are super when they don't break or run out of power before you get home. Speaking of batteries, ask a friend to check your rear blinky light — they dim as they remain on.

What about wet-weather equipment for you? Rain pants are very useful; nylon's OK but Gore-Tex or equivalent will resist more water and feel super. If you can wear wool, do. Wool will keep you warm even when it's wet. For warm, dry feet, try wool socks and leather boots, rubber booties over your shoes, carrying extra dry socks, or plastic bags with rubber bands in a pinch (keep them away from your chain).

Resources for proper bike adjustment

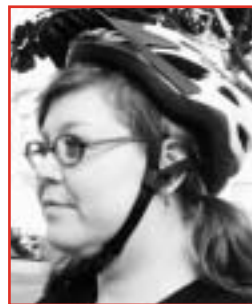
• The Rivendell Reader and Catalogues are perhaps the best place to learn about bike fit. Many articles are online at www.rivendellbicycles.com. They also sell durable, comfortable components, clothing, and accessories.

• Sheldon Brown is a widely acknowledged master of biking; www.sheldonbrown.com.

• Another venerable mind: www.peterwhitecycles.com/fitting.htm

• Fit philosophy from Jaquie Phelan, Bike fit a la Wombat: www.wombats.org/s95fit.html

BY **ANNA SOJOURNER**



↑No! Yes!↓



Creating Multi-Modal Transportation Standards

San Francisco Still Ranks Cars Above People

Have you felt like bicyclists are given second-class status when it comes to designing city streets? Ever notice how bike lanes end in the most inconvenient places? Or how simple safety improvements can take years to happen?

You're not just imagining things. One of the main reasons this happens is that San Francisco has Level of Service (LOS) standards for cars, but no comparable standards for transit, walking, and biking. Without verifiable standards, bicycle advocates must continue to work within city planning policies that discriminate against people traveling every way but in cars.

This alarming state of affairs has come into focus with the release of the San Francisco County Transportation Authority's Report on Level of Service Methodologies. LOS is a quantitative measure of the delay to automobiles at a given intersection. The LOS scale runs from A to F, with LOS A being free-flowing conditions and F representing total gridlock.

While auto transportation in San Francisco is protected by these detailed and verifiable service standards, the pedestrian and public transit standards are inadequate and inappropriate at best. For example, transit level of service is based on how crowded a bus is, not how frequently the bus comes, or how reliable the schedule is. Pedestrian level of service is based on how crowded a sidewalk is, not on the safety or visibility of street crossings. By the current standard, an empty sidewalk with dangerous wide crossings would score ped LOS A. City agencies have yet to create a LOS standard for bicycle facilities.

WHY WE NEED STANDARDS

The existence of standards is important when it comes to the

public process. The "objectivity" of the automobile LOS standard typically carries more weight with decisionmakers than the impassioned (yet subjective) pleas of safety advocates. As a result, the existence of automobile standards, and the lack of bicycle and pedestrian standards, places the convenience of motorists above the lives and health of pedestrians and cyclists.

For the past 50 years San Francisco streets have been designed for one purpose — to move more cars, faster. Sidewalks have been cut back to provide parking. Corners have been rounded to allow higher speed turning. Streetcar tracks have been removed to install more automobile lanes. The predictable result of all this is more cars, more congestion, more dangerous streets, and fewer transportation choices. Our system of planning and environmental review seems stuck with a 1950's assumption that people will choose to drive come hell or high water, despite evidence to the contrary.

The lack of bicycle LOS standards is a significant obstacle to full approval of the Bike Plan Update, expected to go before the Board of Supervisors in mid-2004.

Help Build Standards!

To read the TA's report on Levels of Service, go to www.sfcta.org, click on Data and Publications, scroll down to LOS SAR.

Important Dates

- Dec. 9: TA Plans and Programs Committee, 11am, City Hall Rm 263, presentation of Draft LOS SAR, will take action at this meeting
- Dec. 16: TA Board to approve report, 11am City Hall Rm 250
- Dec. 17: San Francisco Bicycle Advisory Committee Meeting 6:15pm City Hall Room 408

Action Item

Please write to your Supervisor, urging them to move forward in a timely manner to create new standards for transit and the safety of bicyclists and pedestrians on our city streets.

<Your Supervisor>
City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, CA 94102



Like here at Hayes and Fell, level of service standards give car traffic priority over pedestrians, who must cross three intersections to cross the street.

To obtain approval for projects such as the 5th Street bike lanes that will remove a lane of traffic, we must clearly articulate the benefits of encouraging bicycling in planning and environmental review processes. But the standards needed for those processes don't exist yet as part of SF planning guidelines.

The LOS report identifies a need for multi-modal standards but does not go into detail about how these standards should be created. The next step in rectifying the current biased methods of transportation planning is for the county Transportation Authority and city Planning Department to develop these standards with input from the community.

While it may be difficult to implement new LOS standards prior to approval of the Bike Plan Update, we can encourage our Supervisors to approve ambitious bike lane projects based on the significant environmental benefit of a citywide Bike Network, which will outweigh any localized impacts.

NEXT STEPS TOWARD A BIKE SERVICE MEASURE

During public hearings on December 9 and 16, the San Francisco County Transportation Authority is set to approve the LOS Report, and may consider next steps to correct this imbalance in city planning. Fol-

lowing these hearings, on Dec. 17, at 6:15pm in room 408 of City Hall, the Bicycle Advisory Committee (BAC) will consider the issue and make recommendations to the Supervisors about how to move forward. Part of this process will include receiving expert testimony on existing bicycle, pedestrian, and transit standards in other parts of the country, and discussing changes that would make these standards more appropriate for San Francisco.

The SFBC is committed to working with city departments, the BAC, pedestrian and transit groups, and the public at large to get new service standards adopted by the Board of Supervisors. Fortunately there is broad support in the community for leveling the playing field of street design, but we need your help in urging the Supervisors to take the next step and create new pedestrian, bicycle and transit standards, to



Wide, suburban-style roadway designs such as Portola (at Woodside) are hostile to bicyclists, and based on automotive levels of service.

legislate their intent that SF streets be safe and efficient for all roadway users. This intent exists now — an easy majority support safer streets — but it is not the law.

The time is right for San Francisco to adopt true multi-modal transportation planning techniques. We deserve minimum levels of service for people, not just for cars. Our lives and our city's health literally depend on it.

BY JOSH HART

For more information, contact Josh at 431-BIKE x23 or joshua@sfbike.org

Suzanne Holland & Michael Epstein: Seeing the City Together by Tandem

Suzanne, have you been blind since birth? Since I was eight months old; had a kind of cancer of the eyes. I find that in our society people fixate much on the blindness, on the outward disability. Blindness seems like such a big obstacle, which to me it doesn't have to be. Blind people can be a lot stronger than people wish us to be. They expect us to be a little bit helpless.

How long have you two been riding together? MICHAEL: Suzanne got the tandem from some friends of hers. We've been riding for—I think it's at least three years, though I know Suzanne has used a tandem for many years.

How did you get into cycling initially? SUZANNE: I was young,

about 23 or so, and I heard of a man who makes custom bikes for blind people. It was just a very good tandem that I had, not necessarily a blind tandem. It was a mountain bike, a Cannondale. My brother and I used to go riding at night [in Pretoria, South Africa]. We used to ride through the quiet streets everywhere, for at least three hours a night. Sometimes we would go down the steepest declines that you could think of. He's a young 16-year-old and he says, "OK, now don't move! If you move at all, we'll be history." So we just sat there and we went sailing—almost like sailing through the air. And sometimes my brother was naughty because he would kick up the mud from the street onto me and he thought that was funny and then he would wash me off with a fire hose afterwards!



Do you use your bike for transportation and errands, or for recreational riding, or both? MICHAEL: It's definitely for both; everything that a bicycle can be used for. We also call it our horse, our mule, and it takes quite a load. We go to Rainbow Grocery, to the farmers' markets, to Fisherman's Wharf. We love to go to Golden Gate Park. We go all the way to the ocean. We've been as far as Fort Funston.

What kind of bike is your tandem? MICHAEL: It's a 30-year-old Schwinn, and it weighs at least 70 pounds. It's five gears, and it's steel and extremely solid and we take very good care of it. We're members of the Freewheel bike shop. We love to go there every few weeks—it's on the way to the park at the corner of Hayes and Ashbury streets. Suzanne helps me lift the bike up to the rack and with oiling the bike and wiping the chain off and different things.

Why cycle rather than have a car? SUZANNE: I don't have a car because I think it would be dangerous to drive. [laughs] Living in the city, I was feeling very cooped up and I was seeing Michael, how he was riding his bicycle, and I felt so envious, like, "I also want to ride a bicycle; I won't rest until I also can ride." I love to ride because I can hear the sounds of the neighborhood, and smell the smells. I love it when we get off at the rose garden at the park and smell all the roses. It makes me really happy to be on the bike.

Is it ever scary to be on a bicycle when you can't see? SUZANNE: I trust my sweetheart very much. I'm not afraid when we

Suzanne Holland, 42, SFBC member for a year, unemployed. Her hobbies include singing and visiting the farmer's market.

Michael Epstein, timeless, SFBC member for five years. Courtesy of George Bush's economic policies, he is successfully weaning himself from a 20-year computer-related career.

They have been a couple for almost five years and live in the Mission.

ride. Maybe a few times when it seemed like we were almost going to fall, I just got a little jolt of the nerves. But no, I'm not at all afraid; I really trust him.

MICHAEL: I feel a special responsibility, as the one who is steering the tandem, and I feel very nervous going downtown, a lot of parts of the Mission, or around North Beach, for example. It's much more fun going to the park.

How could biking in San Francisco be even better? MICHAEL: Bike culture should be more like in Denmark: businesspeople biking to work alongside children riding to school and seniors biking to the market, and even the Queen may be seen merrily pedaling on safe, wide city and country bike paths. We need less cars, more bicycles, more places to park your bicycle safely. Suzanne and I have had lots of fun recently doing volunteer work for the SFBC. We biked all over the city on our tandem distributing flyers at bike shops and cafes.

INTERVIEW BY LINDA ATKINS

this woman wants to
install YOUR bike rack!

Deirdre Weinberg of the Department of Parking and Traffic Bicycle Program has plenty of shiny new bike racks, just waiting to be installed in front of your favorite business. They are free, and just waiting for a cyclist in need to request one. Call 585-BIKE or e-mail us through the web at www.bicycle.sfgov.org. Make sure to include address and cross street as well as your contact information. Check out the new bike racks in garages, too!

Big Plans for Market Street Could Change the Way You Ride

Market Street may seem like the same old hectic and frustrating street for bicyclists – as well as pedestrians, transit riders, and drivers – but take heart, because behind the scenes, major improvements are in the works for the city's top transportation corridor. A study led by the SF County Transportation Authority (started nearly two years ago at the urging of the SFBC and other groups) is yielding some dramatic — and encouraging — results.

Some Background Market St. is home to an amazing diversity of users, including 200 bicyclists an hour at some intersections, 7,000 transit passengers per hour, 160 Muni buses and F-line streetcars per hour, and 200,000 pedestrians using the BART/Muni portals along the street.

The goals of the study are to improve transit performance and reliability; improve pedestrian safety and circulation; improve bicycle safety and circulation; and to accommodate needed motor vehicle traffic. It focuses on recommendations that can be implemented in the relative near term.

A Place for Bikes but More Space Needed We are excited to report that the draft plan includes a popular option for wide, continuous bike lanes between Octavia and 8th Streets. But, as of this writing, the study has failed to recommend specific bike improvements for the vital stretch east of 8th St., where the street narrows considerably from about 88 to 50 feet and space become more contested by users. One option considered was cutting back the sidewalks on Market St. by 6 feet on both sides to allow for dedicated bike space. Because this would be costly, require moving the transit por-

tals, and restrict pedestrian space, it has not been promoted further.

The SFBC is working closely with the Transportation Authority and its project consultants to explore more feasible options for a continuous Market St. bikeway east of 8th St. We believe that a combination of dramatically reducing private autos on Market St. and adding innovative bike treatments, such as bike

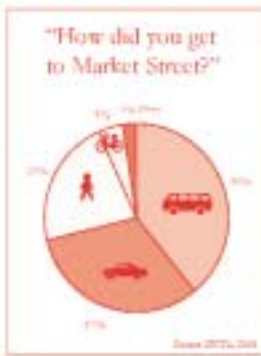
were questioned, most said they took transit to their destination, 40%, while 32% drove; 22% walked, 4% biked; and another 2% did not fit these categories. Tellingly, the respondents said they would rather drive less on Market. When asked how they would prefer to get to Market St., only 20% said they want to drive; 36% want to take transit; 30% want to walk; and 7% would prefer to bike.

The study is considering four different ways to improve transit (which can be mixed and matched): Reduce the number of automobiles on Market St., increase the duration of green lights, lengthen the boarding islands, and extend the transit-only lanes. The option of reducing autos on Market St. includes better signage and forbidding through-traffic on Market St. by forcing cars to make right turns at certain streets, for instance: 8th St, 4th St., and Montgomery St. It is estimated that this could reduce traffic eastbound at each of these intersections by

boxes, dedicated traffic signals with head-starts for bikes, and major traffic calming, could be the answer.

Reducing Car Use on Market St. So far, the Market St. study is confirming what a lot of us already guessed: people don't actually enjoy driving on Market St. (many are probably just trapped since they can't make left turns), and some well-planned auto restrictions at key intersections would do a lot to improve traffic flow and safety without hurting Market St. businesses.

That's pretty much what the survey says. When 700 people who use Market St. to access shops, businesses, restaurants, theatres, etc.



Vote for Your SFBC Board of Directors by Dec. 12

Citywide political races are not the only votes SFBC members are reminded to cast this December. It is also time for the SFBC's annual Board of Directors elections, when half of our Board seats come up for a vote. We have more candidates than ever expressing interest in the illustrious SFBC Board, so your help is truly needed.

We have set up an easy online voting system at www.sfbike.org/board where members can learn more about the Board candidates and vote for your choices between December 1 and December 12. (Watch your email for special instructions about voting procedures, including your password. For those members who we do not have an email address for, you will receive a postcard in the mail explaining the voting procedure.) The new Board members will be announced in late December and will join the Board in January for two-year terms.

We also want to take this chance to thank several longtime Board members stepping down this year for their dedication to the SFBC: Maggie Robbins, Peggy daSilva and Pi Ra. And a heartfelt welcome to our two, talented new Board members, Jean Fraser and David Soward, who were appointed this year to fill vacancies.

about 30% each.

The Market St. transportation draft plan will be released at a public workshop on December 11. For time and location — and to get involved with Market St. — call us at 431-BIKE or see www.sfbike.org.

BY LEAH SHAHUM

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- Landlord/Tenant

Cozy Winter Bike Reading

Come winter, many of us who live in chilly Victorian flats will be found in bed, clutching a book with one cold hand peeping out of the covers. Here are short reviews of great biking-related books to keep you dreaming this winter. Keep in mind that SFBC members get 10% off all books at A Clean Well-Lighted Place for Books, and that these books are also available at the public library. Enjoy!

✧ This year my favorite biking book was **Where the Pavement Ends**. Erika Warmbrunn biked 8,000 kilometers from Irkutsk to Saigon. She spent several months in Mongolia before heading through China and Vietnam. She is respectful and sensitive to the people she meets, and writes of her preconceptions and difficulties honestly and humbly. (AS)

✧ If you dream of biking through Asia, also check out **Cycling to Xian**, by Michael Buckley. First published in 1986, this book is still

in print, lucky for you! Armchair travel doesn't have to be up to date! (NB)

✧ John Hockenberry's amazing book **Moving Violations** isn't exactly about biking. The nationally known journalist became a paraplegic at the age of 17, and poignantly wishes his 10-speed goodbye after the accident. His ruminations on human movement, and how we interact with the world depending on our mode of locomotion, will deeply touch any city cyclist. (AS)

✧ Dervla Murphy's **Full Tilt** is not a new book — she made her solo bike trek from Ireland to India in the early 1960s. But the geography is more relevant to Americans than ever, as she is attacked by wolves in Yugoslavia, passes through Iraq and the unrelentingly hot sabkah in Iran, and spends months in Afghanistan before climbing the Himalaya of Pakistan and India. Just for the loving descriptions of the lost world of pre-invasion Afghanistan, I press this book on anyone who will listen. (AS)

✧ As if the story of a 60-year-old Irish woman cycling from Kenya to Zimbabwe isn't interesting enough, in **The Ukimwi Road**, Dervla Murphy quickly discovers that she is biking along "the AIDS highway." The book is also a discussion of the AIDS crisis in Africa as she encounters all sorts of people from missionaries and African intellectuals to prostitutes and truck drivers. (NB)

✧ I'm happy to see my favorite touring book, **Miles from Nowhere** by Barbara Savage, back in print, and recommend this to anyone with an interest in travel or bicycling. **Following the Sun: from Andalusia to the Hebrides** by John Mitchell is also a worthwhile read. (JB)

✧ Thomas Stevens' **Around the World on a Bicycle**, first published in 1887, is an account of his circumnavigation of the globe on a Columbia high-wheel bicycle. The book was released in a single vol-

ume in 2001. Read about a long-distance trip in a time when the word "bicycle" meant something rather different from what it means to us today. (JB)

✧ **Off to the Races**, Samuel Abt's collection of columns from his twenty-five years as a cycling journalist in Europe, is a look at professional bike racing. It includes interviews of top racers such as LeMond, Indurain, Hinault, and Armstrong, as well as many lesser-known but interesting European bike racers. **The Unknown Tour de France**, by Les Woodland, is a series of essays exploring what it was like for the racers in the beginning days of the Tour on dirt paths and without support, or what some of the Tour winners did after they finished their racing careers.

There's also plenty of juicy scandal and intrigue, showing the seedy side of the sport. (JB)

✧ Every page in **Bicycle Around the World**, a collection of photographs by Linda Svendsen, tells a story. Published only a year ago, many of the cyclists on your Christmas list probably don't own it yet! (NB)

✧ **100 Years of Bicycle Component and Accessory Design: The Data Book**, originally published in Japan, has been reprinted by Van der Plas Publications, and it contains drawings of bicycles and components from the 1860s to the 1960s. Of particular interest are the many wonderful Daniel Rebour pen and ink drawings of beautifully rendered bicycle components. (JB)

REVIEWS BY NANCY BOTKIN, JONATHAN BOTKIN, AND ANNA SOJOURNER



TUBE TIMES INDEX

- 1 Federal transportation money spent in California on pedestrian and bicycle facilities, 1998-2001:
52 cents per person
- 2 Federal transportation money spent nationally (average) on pedestrian and bicycle facilities, 1998-2001:
87 cents per person
- 3 Trips made by foot or bicycle among Germans and Dutch 75 years or older:
about 50 percent
- 4 Trips made by foot of bicycle among Americans 75 years or older:
6 percent
- 5 Americans who favor increased federal spending on bike facilities, even at the expense of new road construction:
53 percent
- 6 Pounds of biomass buried millions of years ago, and converted to oil, that would produce one gallon of gasoline:
196,000
- 7 Area required to produce equivalent biomass today:
40 acres
- 8 Pounds of carbon in total fossil fuel burned worldwide in 1997:
97 million billion
- 9 Ratio of carbon burned in fossil fuel in 1997 to amount contained in "all the plant matter that grows in the world in a year":
400:1

Sources: 1,2 Mean Streets 2002, Surface Transportation Policy Project; 3-5 Neal Pearce, Washington Post, 6-9 University of Utah, www.eurekalert.org/pub_releases/2003-10/uou-bm9102603.php

Letters continued from p. 2

within the bicycle community believe that because they choose a car-free lifestyle they are above criticism.

As a pedestrian, public transit rider, and non-driver myself, I share many concerns with bicyclists. But as long as I feel threatened by bicyclists whenever I step outside my door, I regretfully choose not to support any bike-related issue.

PEACE AND LOVE,
PATRICK CARROLL

You have a point that some bicyclists may act holier than thou because their mode of transportation is safer and more environmentally friendly than others.

But we run into dangerous territory when we generalize about any group, whether it's drivers, cyclists, or whoever. There are good and bad people in this world, both of whom use bikes and cars.

The SFBC is always working to improve etiquette among bicyclists and motorists to make a more peaceful, safer environment for everyone.

Too Much Matt?

The SFBC should be focusing their energy on bike-related issues, not calling me at home to tell me which mayoral candidate to vote for.

DIANE WHITMORE

In August, SFBC members voted overwhelmingly to endorse Matt Gonzalez for Mayor of San Francisco. The next mayor will influence city bicycling policy to a huge extent, and work on the campaign will pay off in tangible improvements to bicycling conditions.

We're very careful not to pull members away from our core bike network advocacy, but since there are so many bicyclists who are excited about Matt's candidacy, we've been directing people to work with Matt's campaign. Volunteering in the final days before the election is probably the most effective thing you can do as a bicycle advocate in San Francisco.

Send letters to tubetimes@sfbike.org or SFBC, 1095 Market St., #215, SF 94103. Please keep them brief; letters may be edited.

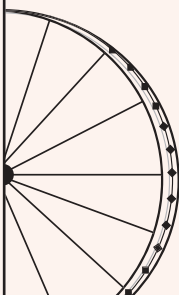
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AVENUE CYCLERY	FREEWHEEL	ROARING MOUSE CYCLES
BIG SWINGIN' CYCLES	FRESH AIR BICYCLES	SALON DES BICICLETES
BIKE HUT AT SOUTH BEACH	JOHN COBB'S BICYCLE SPORTS	SAUSALITO CYCLERY
BIKE NOOK	MISSING LINK	SPORTS BASEMENT
BLAZING SADDLES BIKE RENTALS	NOE VALLEY CYCLERY	VALENCIA CYCLERY
CITY CYCLE OF SAN FRANCISCO	NOMAD CYCLERY	VISION CYCLERY
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*Etiquette for the
Conscientious Cyclist*

Ask the Advice Pedaler

Dear Advice Pedaler: My bike was zippy when I bought it a few months ago, now it feels sluggish. Would putting helium in the tires make the bike lighter and zippier? – *Light-headed*

Dear Light: No, helium isn't the answer, what you need is good old-fashioned air!

Your tires can lose air even without a puncture. Part of riding a bike is checking the tires often for firmness. They just slowly seep out air over time, and you need to pump them regularly. How do you know when a tire is low? The recommended pressure is printed on the sidewalls of your tires. Use a floor pump with a gauge to pump them. If you don't have a pump with a gauge, most bike shops are happy to give you free air. When you've pumped it to full pressure, see how hard it feels to your hand. Get used to feeling your tires weekly, or before long rides.

There are many benefits to keeping your tires pumped up. Not only does it give you a zippy feel and give you better control around curves, but your tires will last longer, you'll avoid puncture flats, and prevent damage to your rims!

In the Advice Pedaler's perfect world, all cyclists have two pumps: a carry-along pump for roadside repairs and a floor pump at home. It's difficult to get full pressure from the carry-along pumps, but they'll get you to the next service station or bike shop. Pumps don't need to deflate your wallet, either, you can buy a floor pump at any local bike shop for \$15-\$60 and a carry-along pump for \$15-\$30.

Dear Advice Pedaler: You know how on the west sidewalk of the Golden Gate Bridge there are places where there is maintenance equipment on the sidewalk? Last week, as I approached one of these narrow parts, a cyclist was coming fast the other way. I didn't feel there was enough room for both of us to pass, so I stopped. I heard the screeching of brakes behind me and then someone yelling at me! I don't think I was wrong to stop, since it would have been unsafe to go forward. – *Right or Wrong?*

Dear Right and Wrong: If you felt uncomfortable proceeding, then you did the right thing in stopping. However, the proper etiquette on crowded bike paths is to let others know what you're doing or you may end up causing a crash behind you. Likewise, faster riders should understand that the bridge can be a scary place to ride and cyclists may be slowing frequently. Since bikes don't have brake lights to alert people behind you that you are braking, the universal signal for "I'm stopping right now" is to stick your left arm out to the side, bend it at the elbow with your hand down. ...but what is all that equipment doing there anyway?

Unclassified Ads

Mid to high-end **hybrid bike wanted** for 6'4" rider mainly for riding & commuting in the city. Call Ed at 972-3970."

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 or join with membership specials at the door

Valet bike parking, of course

Our annual Winterfest features **tons of great food, drinks, music, and people, plus bargains galore!** **Live and silent auction** items -- bikes, accessories, art, clothing, gift certificates, and much more.