

6. PROMOTION

PROMOTION GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

Goal:

Promote and Encourage Safe Bicycling

Objectives:

- Through community partnerships, identify funding, develop and implement bicycle media campaigns and promotional materials to promote bicycling as a safe, healthy, cost-effective, environmentally beneficial transportation choice
- Target promotional materials to San Francisco's diverse population groups.

INTRODUCTION

As part of a multi-faceted program to attract more San Franciscans to bicycle use, promotional strategies should be pursued to enhance awareness of the benefits of bicycling for commute, shopping and recreational purposes, as well as to encourage safe bicycling practices. In addition to seeking funding for physical improvements that benefit bicyclists, the City should seek funds to promote and encourage bicycling.

The 1997 Bicycle Plan included a presentation of focused research on regional and local bicycle promotion programs existing at that time. The findings of this research included:

- Employers' concerns for employee safety and employer liability limit the development of bicycle commute promotion programs;
- The success rate of City and employer sponsored bicycle promotion programs is difficult to assess due to the fact that information on bicycle commuters before and after program implementation is not readily available
- Bicycle commuting is generally overlooked as an automobile trip-reduction strategy

Since this research was completed, bicycle promotion has evolved in San Francisco with multiple City agencies, non-governmental organizations and employers expanding their promotion efforts. Before bicycling will be seriously considered as a transportation mode by large numbers of commuters, the availability, feasibility and benefits of bicycle commuting must be more widely

known. Many people are unaware of the opportunities that bicycle commuting can provide. Several strategies for promoting bicycle use for commuting and other purposes are discussed below. Recommendations are presented for the continued development and improvement of each strategy.

It is important to recognize that there is substantial overlap between bicycle education, as presented in Chapter 4 of this Plan and bicycle promotion as discussed in this chapter. The primary distinction is that bicycle promotion focuses on appealing messages and incentives to attract people to the benefits of bicycling. Because of the need to diversify transportation options in the City and the desire to attract new bicyclists to the streets and pathways of San Francisco's bicycle route network, City resources should be dedicated to actively promote bicycling to new markets. Once new markets are identified through promotional activities, educational efforts can then be more effectively employed to turn new bicycle riders into safe and committed bicyclists.

Promotional activities should be targeted utilizing the demographic information generated by San Francisco's State of Cycling Reportⁱ to reach the expressed latent demand. Promotional activities that reach out to new audiences and segments of San Francisco's population also should be undertaken. For example, assisting the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition (SFBC)'s outreach efforts, like the SFBC's Women and Bikes Profileⁱⁱ, could assist in reaching many of San Francisco's diverse communities.

PROMOTION OF BICYCLE ROUTE NETWORK

Action 6.1

Promote the benefits of bicycling to diverse age, income and ethnic populations.

The City should promote the bicycle route network to make potential users more aware of potential citywide bicycle trips between multiple neighborhoods, shopping districts, employment centers and other origins and destinations. Specific strategies for promoting the bicycle route network include:

- Distribute complimentary printed bicycle route network maps through appropriate channels, including employer commute programs, bicycle related events, bicycle shops, City-sponsored events and other sources
- Develop a Web-based bicycle trip planning system
- Post bicycle route network maps in high-visibility public locations such as transit stops, bus shelters, libraries, college campuses and tourist destinations
- Nominate San Francisco for official recognitions, such as the League of American Bicyclists (LAB) Bicycle Friendly Community award

As the City continues to refine the bicycle route network as detailed in Chapter 1 of this Plan, new bicycle facilities and major bicycle facility improvements should be promoted to encourage their proper use. SFMTA Bicycle Program staff should seek opportunities to partner with local nonprofit organizations, neighborhood groups and other City agencies to educate City officials, City staff, local employers and other citizens to further promote the benefits of these new facilities. An explanation of the benefits of each bicycle facility should be developed as part of the project development and should be used to promote both its implementation and use.



The San Francisco City Hall bike room provides secure bike parking and locker facilities for City staff.

DEVELOP CITY-SPONSORED BICYCLE PROMOTION

Action 6.2

Work with the Department of the Environment (SF Environment), the Department of Public Health (DPH), and other City agencies to formalize bicycle education and promotion responsibilities and develop partnership agreements with the SFMTA.



Ribbon cutting for the Duboce Pathway.

The SFMTA Bicycle Program should serve as the coordinating agency for all City-sponsored bicycle promotion efforts. Other City agencies should also consult with the SFMTA Bicycle Program regarding proposed bicycle promotion campaigns. The SFMTA Bicycle Program should work cooperatively with the SF Environment, the DPH and the SFMTA Municipal Railway (Muni) on future promotional events by developing a task force to determine priorities and funding strategies.

Once these responsibilities are determined by an interagency operating agreement, the SFMTA and other City agencies should work to promote a better understanding of the benefits of bicycling for utilitarian and recreational purposes. Environmental, health and cost benefits are examples of areas in which

promotional efforts could focus. The SFMTA Bicycle Program Web site should be updated to include features on the benefits of bicycling and should provide links to other City Web sites that promote the benefits of bicycle use. When the SFMTA partners with major cultural and civic attractions, including museums, parks and tourist destinations to provide traveler information, it should include bicycling as an option, including suggested bicycle directions to such attractions.

The above discussion of agency responsibility and the City's role in promoting the benefits of bicycling to the general public is also discussed in detail in Chapter 4, Education, under Actions 4.1 and 4.2.



San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom with SFBC staff, SFMTA staff and others during the 2004 Bike to Work Day.

BICYCLE EVENTS

Themed events held in San Francisco often attract regional and national attention. They offer the City and other organizations an opportunity to reach many people with promotional messages. To make the most of the promotional potential of these events, messages should be targeted to likely audiences. Potential audiences include existing bicycle commuters, potential bicycle commuters, recreational bicyclists and non-bicyclists.

BIKE TO WORK DAY

Bike to Work Day is an annual event celebrated in many municipalities across the country that encourages people to commute by bicycle. In San Francisco, participants enjoy complimentary coffee, treats and free "goodies" in tote bags from one of many neighborhood "energizer stations" located throughout the City. Participants also are eligible for a regional prize drawing. The collaboration between the SFMTA and the SFBC has produced record-breaking participation in each Bike to Work Day over the past several years.

The involvement of the San Francisco Mayor and members of the Board of Supervisors has served to elevate the event's profile. Additional participation from appropriate City agencies, including the SF Environment and the DPH, could serve to expand the scope, participation and influence of this event. The participation of greater numbers of City employees could serve to expand the scope of the event significantly.

Bike to Work Day is an opportunity for expanded promotional efforts related to bicycle commuting. Bike to Work Week, “Ciclovías (temporary street closures to automobiles),” Sunday Parkways, Car-Free Day and Earth Day are other existing events which could be expanded to encourage more participation. Refer to Action 4.5 in Chapter 4 for additional Bike to Work Day discussion.

BICYCLE RACING AND BICYCLE EVENTS

San Francisco serves as host to a growing number of recreational and competitive bicycle events, of an increasingly international stature. Partnerships with race promoters or organizations (such as the Northern California/Nevada Cycling Associationⁱⁱⁱ) could serve to incorporate broader bicycle promotion into the theme of these events.

There are several other bicycle events held in or passing through San Francisco. Among these are two AIDS fundraising bicycle rides, The Tour de Fat, Giro di San Francisco, and the Go Greenbelt! bicycle tour that circumnavigates the entire San Francisco Bay to promote open space preservation. Each of these events provides an opportunity for distributing bicycle safety and promotional materials. The SFMTA, the SFBC and the Department of the Environment (SF Environment) have distributed bicycle promotional materials at past events and should work with other City agencies to expand their efforts.

STREET FAIRS AND FESTIVALS

Other large public events in San Francisco such as neighborhood street fairs, the Festival d’Italia, the Cherry Blossom Festival and July 4th fireworks are required to provide bicycle access with secure bicycle parking (see Chapter 2). As part of the event advertising, suggested bicycle routes to each event should be published, along with the location of the bicycle parking. Street fairs and festivals are also potential distribution sites for bicycle promotion materials.

STREET CLOSURES

Street closures are another opportunity to conduct bicycle education for all ages and to promote bicycling. The opportunity to borrow bicycles for use during street closure events can provide an incentive for new bicyclists to try bicycling and riding on streets closed to automobile traffic can help take the fear out of urban cycling for novices.

CITY STAFF PROGRAMS AND POLICIES FOR BICYCLE USE

Action 6.3

Work with all City agencies to expand bicycle promotion and incentive programs for City employees to serve as a model program for other San Francisco employers.

There are a wide variety of potential strategies available to the City that can be used to promote increased bicycle use by City employees for both commute to work and on the job purposes.

The following specific programs should be implemented:

- The existing City bicycle fleet, similar to the existing shared fleet of City motor vehicles, should be expanded and made available to all City employees. The SFMTA Bicycle Program should continue working with the SF Environment's Clean Air Program to acquire bicycles for this purpose. Bicycle parking facilities, helmets, safety vests and training should also be included
- Development of a reimbursement program for City employees' use of personal bicycles, similar to existing programs for reimbursement of personal vehicle mileage or use of a City CarShare vehicle
- Development of a program to substitute fleet purchase of City vehicles with bicycles for specific agencies and positions where bicycles could provide a viable means of job-related transportation
- Development of specific campaign efforts to include bicycle promotion materials in City correspondence, such as a special message from the Mayor's Office, agency and department directors or as an inclusion in City paycheck distributions

There is direct overlap with the discussion of City staff bicycle promotion in Chapter 4, Education, under Actions 4.7 and 4.8

BICYCLE INFORMATION RESOURCES: MTC 511 PROGRAM

Action 6.4

Include, where appropriate, telephone and Web-based contact information for the MTC 511 program on relevant SFMTA materials.

The MTC 511 program is a “toll-free phone and Web service that consolidates Bay Area transportation-related information into a one-stop resource. This easy three-digit number provides up-to-the-minute information on traffic conditions and incidents, details on public transportation routes and fares, instant carpool and vanpool referrals, bicycling information and more.”^{iv}

BICYCLE-RELATED BUSINESSES

Action 6.5

Encourage and promote bicycle-related businesses within San Francisco.

Promotional efforts encouraging bicycling in the City should be developed to centralize information regarding pedicabs (bicycle taxis), bicycle rentals, bicycle shops, bicycle messenger services and stores that are bicycle friendly (allowing bicyclists to bring their bicycles inside, offering “shop by bike discounts”, providing secure bicycle parking, etc.). This material could serve many different bicycle users within the City, from the visiting tourist to the everyday resident bicycle commuter.

BICYCLE SHARING

Action 6.6

Conduct a feasibility study for a public bicycle sharing program, and if feasible, develop a plan for potential future implementation including any required environmental review.

As bicycle sharing programs become more and more popular in cities worldwide, San Francisco should study bicycle sharing programs and their potential application here, then develop an implementation plan, including conducting any required environmental review.

How does this description compare with the MGN Paris release?

ⁱ The 2008 San Francisco State of Cycling Report can be viewed online at <http://www.sfmta.com/cms/rbikes/3172.html>.

ii SFBC's Women and Bikes Profile can be viewed online at http://www.sfbike.org/download/tubetimes/tt_040203.pdf.

iii Information on the Northern California/Nevada Cycling Association can be viewed online at <http://www.ncnca.org>.

iv <http://www.511.org>