

League Position on the Use of Bicycles for Transportation

The League of American Bicyclists supports and encourages the use of bicycles for transportation.

The League recognizes the individual, societal and environmental benefits that bicycle transportation offers, especially when such trips represent a transfer to bicycling from personal motorized modes of transport.

The League supports programs which improve the skills and abilities of bicyclists and other road users, which improve the acceptance of bicycling for transportation, which provide incentives for bicycle travel, and which improve the physical environment, making conditions better for bicycling.

The League supports the right of bicyclist access to the transportation system of streets, highways and other facilities—including secure bicycle parking—and the destinations that system serves.

Background

The use of bicycles for personal transportation has repeatedly been found to offer significant personal and societal benefits. Bicycling improves personal health and well-being, especially cardiovascular fitness. In addition, travel by bicycle requires less monetary investment, making it less expensive for an individual and available to a broader segment of the population than personal motorized transport.

Society also benefits from bicycle transportation. Bicycling is non-polluting, energy-efficient, and space-conserving. Programs which encourage purposeful trips by bicycle rather than personal motorized modes of transportation benefit the entire population by reducing traffic congestion, air pollution, noise pollution, fuel consumption, greenhouse gas emissions, and parking space required at major destinations. Bicycling has also been shown to promote use of mass transit when adequate facilities for secure bicycle parking and/or transport are provided.

The number of bicyclists nationwide was estimated at 42.5 million in 2000. Although these individuals own bicycles and know how to operate them, it seems that few actually use bicycles for personal transportation. Several factors contribute to this decision not to travel by bicycle. Among these are lack of adequate skills for bicycling in traffic, lack of recognition and accommodation of bicyclists by other road users, inaccessibility of desired destinations caused by unsafe or restricted facilities, lack of secure parking facilities and other amenities such as showers, lockers and changing areas in the workplace. Programs and projects to overcome these disincentives will promote bicycle use for transportation. Bicycling and public transportation complement each other well; bicycle parking at transit stops, bike racks on buses and bike-on-train programs are important incentives for use of both modes.

In densely-developed areas, cycling for travel to nearby destinations may be encouraged by the use of traffic-calming measures to restrict the speed and volume of traffic on local streets. The League encourages urban planning which places needed services close to residential neighborhoods so that they are easily accessible by bicycle.

Even in areas of moderate population density, many useful destinations - schools, churches, parks, playing fields, shopping areas, transit stops, and employment - are at reasonable bicycling distances from residences. However, a major challenge to the use of bicycling is the construction of large residential and business developments which have only one entry point, from an arterial street. The League encourages planning and zoning for four-quadrant connectivity to minimize travel distances for bicyclists and pedestrians. When such connectivity is provided by paths intended only for non-motorized travel, they may also permit emergency access. The League also strongly recommends safe connectivity across major arterials, and improvement of arterials to accommodate bicycle traffic; arterials are the locations of many important destinations, and generally the shortest routes between many points.

Cycling in rural areas is primarily recreational, but accommodating foreseeable development is simpler and less expensive than attempting to retrofit the road network after development has occurred. Also, recreational cycling supports and complements daily cycling for transportation.

(Approved by the Board of Directors, December, 1985; amended August, 2001 and March 2005)