

# Funding the Conserve by Bicycling Program

## Issue

The 2005 Energy Policy Act (PL 109-58) signed into law by President Bush on August 8 authorizes a \$6.2 million program to study the energy impact of shifting car trips to bicycle trips in up to ten communities. **Members of Congress should appropriate funding to implement the study, which will be managed by the Secretary of Transportation.**

## Status

Each year, Congress must appropriate funds for spending by the different government departments. The Department of Transportation's annual budget is included in an appropriations bill that also funds the Treasury, Judiciary, and Housing and Urban Development Departments, as well as the District of Columbia.

In February, the President submits a budget for approval to Congress for the following fiscal year (FY 2007 starts on October 1, 2006 and runs through September 30, 2007). Based on that budget and its own priorities, Congress debates and ultimately passes a series of appropriations bills. In order for the Conserve by Bicycling program to be funded, an allocation of money must be included in the Transportation Department's annual appropriation.

## Background

The Conserve by Bicycling program is designed to conserve energy resources by encouraging the use of bicycles in place of motor vehicles. The legislation was proposed long before the gas price hikes and \$3 per gallon gas prices in the Fall of 2005 and is more appropriate and necessary now than ever.

The Energy Policy Act of 2005, Section 755, requires the Secretary of Transportation to establish not more than 10 pilot projects to:

- use education and marketing to convert motor vehicle trips to bicycle trips
- document project results and energy savings
- maximize bicycle facility investments
- demonstrate methods that can be used in other regions
- facilitate the continuation of ongoing programs sustained by local resources

The Secretary of Transportation is required to enter into a contract with the National Academy of Sciences to conduct a report on the feasibility of converting motor vehicle trips to bicycle trips. The study shall take into account the experience in the pilot communities, existing travel patterns, a cost-benefit analysis of bicycle infrastructure investments, and a description of factors that would encourage more motor vehicle trips to be made by bicycle.

\$5.1 million is authorized for the pilot projects; \$300,000 to publicize the results of the program; and \$750,000 to carry out the study. In addition, 20 percent of the funding for the pilot projects should come from state or local sources.

## Opposition

The provision was a very small part of the Energy Policy Act. We can anticipate concerns about any increased funding or earmarking of funding for programs in a tight budget year, and the Department of Transportation may resist the allocation of their funding towards this project.