1612 k street nw suite 800 washington, dc 20006
phone 202-822-1333 fax 202-822-1334
www.bikeleague.org

March 15, 2011

Hon. James Patterson
Chairman, Transportation Policy Council
County Commissioner
Transit Director

Dear Hon. Patterson:

I'm writing today on behalf of the League of American Bicyclists' 20,000 members to ask that you protect the current $12.8 million in bike and pedestrian funding, as well as preserving programs to fund future bicycle and pedestrian projects in your 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program. The proposed cuts to these programs would be extremely counter-productive and would hinder the progress being made to make the Houston-Galveston area more livable through increased transportation choices of biking and walking.

I certainly understand the need to look for ways to trim budgets in these economic times; however I will share with you the same message that over 800 advocates from around the country delivered to members of Congress last week at our National Bike Summit—now is not the time to be cutting funding to programs that work.

A recent case study conducted by the Political Economy Research Institute in Baltimore, Md. found that investments in bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure create the most employment per dollar spent on transportation projects. More specifically, for every million dollars invested bike lane projects created twice as many jobs as traditional road construction. Many of the projects whose funding would be eliminated are scheduled to break ground this fall, potentially negatively effecting job creating in the region.

As the Houston-Galveston area continues to grow, bicycle infrastructure investments are the most efficient use of limited transportation dollars. Portland, Ore. has found that in their population boom, that for the cost of every new auto commuter their metro region has been able to accommodate twelve new bike commuters. This has led to tens-of-millions in savings from expensive capital investment in their roadways and bridges. Portland's world-renowned 300 mile bike network was done for the same cost as 1 mile of urban freeway. By choosing the former, Portland has dramatically improved the quality of life for its resident- attracting many large businesses and positioning the city as one of the most economically vibrant cities in the country.

Cities that make the largest investments in bicycling get the best returns. Of the 31 largest Bicycle Friendly Communities, bicycle commuting rates rose 71% from 2000-2009 compared nationally. Houston's rates of bike commuting are going the other way, dropping 18% over the same time frame. If this trend is to be reversed, and the goal in the H-GAC 2035 Regional Plan of increasing ridership is to ever be realized, then funding levels must be maintained.

This issue is about much more than just commuting; we are not suggesting that people will ride

Printed on recycled paper using soy inks

from one side of the region to the other to get to and from work every day. Even in the Houston-Galveston area, up to one half of all trips are short (less than three miles) and the overwhelming majority (85%) are social, recreational, for shopping, education and other purposes – trip lengths and purposes ideally suited to bicycling, especially as gas prices rise once again. Local travel needs can realistically be met by making bicycling safer, more attractive and convenient; a small investment in improved roadways for bicyclists can make a huge difference, and this will be even more pronounced and welcome as the population of the area continues to grow.

Investing in bicycling helps reduce congestion, improves air quality, promotes daily physical activity in an increasingly sedentary world and is a fiscally prudent way to use transportation dollars. It is a simple solution for many complex problems. Together with Bike Houston, Houston Tomorrow and the tens of thousands of Houston-Galveston area cyclists I strongly urge you to reconsider these proposed cuts to the 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program.

The League of American Bicyclists promotes bicycling for fun, fitness and transportation, and works through advocacy and education for a bicycle-friendly America. The League represents the interests of the nation's 57 million bicyclists. The League works to bring better bicycling to your community. Visit www.bikeleague.org for more information.

Sincerely,

Andy Clarke
President

cc: Members of the Houston Transportation Policy Council: Hon. Norman Brown, Hon. Ed Emmett, Hon. Tom Reid, Modesto Mundo, Hon. Darrell Morrison, Don Brandon, Hon. David "Bubba" Abernathy, Hon. Terry Sain, Hon. Kenneth Clark, Delvin Dennis, Hon. Craig Doyal, Mark Ellis, Hon. Doug Kneupper, Scott Elmer, Hon. Stephen C. Costello, Steve Howard, Larry Calhoun, Hon. Dianna Puccetti, Stever Phelps, Hon. Sue Lovell, Mr. Daniel Kruger, Hon. Robert A. Fry, Jr., Hon. Jacqueline Baly-Chaumette, Randall C. Redmond, Orval Rhoads, Hon. Matt Sebesta, Arthur L. Storey, P.E., George Greanias, Joseph Adams