

## Response to ODOT Bike and Ped Plan

February 17, 2016

Dear Ms. Crawford,

We at BikeLoudPDX, a grassroots bike advocacy group based in Portland, have had a chance to review the proposed ODOT Bike and Ped Plan. While it contains good ideas and sounds plausible, we feel that overall the language is too vague and not sufficiently action-oriented. The plan lacks specific benchmarks and measurements for success that are vital if bicycling and walking are to continue to be important parts of our state's transportation system. Finally, it does not include any facts or statistics on how bicycling and walking are currently benefiting our state, would continue to do so in the future, and could be made more beneficial.

Throughout the report, the language used is disappointingly vague and lacks a commitment to measureable goals and outcomes, with no plans of how to meet the stated policies or what success of the plan would look like. An example is Policy 1.3 under Goal 1: Safety, which reads "Encourage the development and sustainability of Safe Routes to School type programs through funding, partnerships, model programs and other technical assistance." Nowhere in the strategies for this goal is a mention of funding commitments, or how ODOT will help redesign and build their streets and roads near schools so that more children can walk and bike to school. Instead, these strategies mention such lukewarm goals as "[b]uild and maintain partnerships...endorse, promote, and implement SRTS Programs" and to merely "inform local school districts" about the eligible SRTS activities available!

Given the facts that many studies show that exercise before and after school benefits children's ability to learn and focus, that walking 1 mile to school each way meets two-thirds of the recommended amount of sixty minutes of physical activity per day, and that more children walking and biking would cut down on congestion and pollution on roads around schools<sup>1</sup>, we thought that ODOT would include these important facts in the plan. A firmer commitment toward a measureable outcome, like committing to more funding over the next 10 years so that at least 10% of Oregon schools (double the current number who participate in SRTS) would be able to participate in this excellent and innovative program.

We were disappointed to find that there were no maps with an inventory of existing roads noting degrees of bike-friendliness as there were in the 1995 plan. The new freight plan includes such maps and we feel it is vital to include such an inventory so that the state can pinpoint where to make improvements. Especially since Policy 2.2 of Goal 2 is to "Inventory and define walking and biking networks to aid in project prioritization," it is disturbing that the state would not include either a map with an inventory or a timeline for inventorying the road system.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://saferoutespartnership.org/healthy-communities/101/facts>

We were also surprised to find that although Goal 4 is about community economic vitality, no statistics about the economic benefits of biking and walking are included. Policy 4.2 is about pedestrian and bicycle tourism, but doesn't include the fact that in the Oregon Scenic Bikeways program report, they found that the average overall bicycle trip expenditure, per person, was \$693<sup>2</sup>. The Scenic Bikeways Report for 2014 notes the economic impacts of the program overall:

- “Cyclists who rode Oregon Scenic Bikeways made expenditures of approximately \$12.4 million in 2014.
- More specifically, cyclists who rode on Oregon Scenic Bikeways spent \$6.9 million on accommodation and food services, \$5.3 million on retail, including snacks and groceries and trip-related motor fuel, and about \$182,000 on arts, entertainment, and recreation, including bicycle/cycling event fees.
- In addition, this spending by cyclists who rode on Oregon Scenic Bikeways directly supported over 150 jobs with earnings of approximately \$3.4 million.
- This spending also generated local and state tax receipts (lodging taxes, motor fuel, and travel-generated business and personal income tax) of approximately \$450,000.<sup>3</sup>”

Yet nowhere in the Bike and Ped plan are these benefits noted, despite the fact that they are in an easily accessible, public report found with a quick internet search.

Omissions like these, coupled with the vague language of the plan and lack of identifiable benchmarks and goals make us wonder how seriously ODOT actually takes biking and walking as transportation. Given that 72 people died while walking and four people biking were killed while using OR highways, streets, and roads last year<sup>4</sup>, we draw the conclusion that ODOT is not prioritizing bicycling and walking.

We ask that ODOT add more action-oriented language and measureable goals and benchmarks to this plan, include an inventory map of the transportation system as well as adding statistics on the economic impact of bicycling and walking statewide. Bicycling and walking are a vital part of transportation in Oregon and will continue to be in the future.

Sincerely,

Emily Guise, Co-chair of BikeLoudPDX

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<sup>2</sup> <http://industry.traveloregon.com/content/uploads/2015/06/ORScenicBikewayStudy2014.pdf>, page 4

<sup>3</sup> <http://industry.traveloregon.com/content/uploads/2015/06/ORScenicBikewayStudy2014.pdf>, page 6

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.oregonlive.com/commuting/index.ssf/2015/12/oregon\\_traffic\\_deaths\\_top\\_400.html](http://www.oregonlive.com/commuting/index.ssf/2015/12/oregon_traffic_deaths_top_400.html)