

Bicycling and walking are often called ‘alternative transportation’ modes. In fact, they are our *primary* ways of moving from place to place; all of us learned to walk and many of us learned to ride a bicycle long before we slid into the driver’s seat of a car. Sadly, for more than 60 years, we’ve focused our collective attention – and most of our funding – on the automobile, relegating the less expensive and healthier modes of walking and bicycling to ‘alternative’ status, only as important as the latest fad in fashion or lifestyle.



Congressman Blumenauer is a national champion for bike and pedestrian issues. He knows that bicycling and walking are important not only as basic transportation modes, but for individual health, our environment, safe streets, and increasingly for the economic vitality of our communities. Here’s just a sampling of some of the benefits of these primary modes:

### **Benefits of Walking and Bicycling:**

#### **To Individuals**

### - **Health**

According to the President's Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, approximately 70% of US adults are sedentary. This includes 28% who engage in no leisure-time physical activities and 42% who undertake less than 30 minutes of physical activity (such as walking) each day. Recreational bike riding is a safe, low-impact, aerobic activity for Americans of all ages. A 150-pound cyclist burns 410 calories while pedaling 12 miles in an hour; a 200-pound cyclist burns 546 calories while going 12 miles per hour.

### - **Environmental**

Motor vehicle emissions represent 31 percent of total carbon dioxide, 81 percent of carbon monoxide, and 49 percent of nitrogen oxides released in the U.S. (The Green Commuter, a publication of the Clean Air Council).

### - **Lower transportation costs**

The cost of operating a sedan for one year is approximately \$7,800 (AAA, Your Driving Costs). Owning a car accounts for more than 18% of a typical household's income. (AAA, US Census surveys) The cost of operating a bicycle for a year is only \$120 (League of American Bicyclists).

## **To Our Communities**

### - **Safer streets**

More bicyclists on the streets mean safer streets for all roadway users. As more people ride, bicyclists gain experience; drivers become more aware of bicyclists and community support for bicycle improvements grow. Portland Oregon invested heavily in bicycle infrastructure from 1999 – 2009, and saw a measurable decline in traffic fatalities during that same period. Although traffic fatalities nationwide declined in that same decade, traffic fatalities in Portland declined three times faster than for the state as a whole, and six times faster than the national rate. *(Source: Portland Bureau of Transportation.)*

### - Public Health

According to the CDC, 61% of adults in the U.S. are overweight or obese; 13% of kids aged 6 to 11 and 14% of kids 12 to 19 are overweight. Obesity is second behind tobacco in U.S. health risk factors, contributing to 300,000 deaths a year. In 2002, obesity-related medical care spending accounted for 11.6 percent of all private health care spending, compared to just 2 percent in 1987, concludes *Health Affairs*.

Bicycling and walking help Americans improve their physical fitness and lose weight. A study of almost 200,000 General Motors employees found that overweight and obese individuals average up to \$1,500 more in annual medical costs than healthy-weight individuals. (Sources: Exercise and Your Heart -- A Guide to Physical Activity. National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute / American Heart Association, DHHS, PHS, NIH Publication No. 93-1677) An independent cost-benefit of Portland, Oregon's Bicycle Master Plan concluded that the plan would provide health care savings from \$338 to \$594 million by 2040, depending on the level of final investment in the Plan. ([\*Journal of Physical Activity and Health, Vol 8 Supplement, January, 2011\*](#))

### - Improved air quality

Motor vehicle emissions represent 31 percent of total carbon dioxide, 81 percent of carbon monoxide, and 49 percent of nitrogen oxides released in the U.S. ( *The Green Commuter*, a publication of the Clean Air Council). A short, four-mile round trip by bicycle keeps about 15 pounds of pollutants out of the air we breathe. (WorldWatch Institute). Short (i.e. a distance easily bicycled) car trips are much more polluting than longer trips on a per-mile basis, since 60% of the pollution from auto emissions is released during the first few minutes of the vehicle's operation.

Bicycling allows more people access to their communities. Safe Routes to School programs enable children to safely walk and bicycle to school, rather than rely on being driven or being bused. Adults find bicycling less costly than driving a car, especially for short trips in neighborhoods with convenient and safe access to transit and services.

### - Lower transportation investments

From 1991 – 2008, the total number of vehicles crossing the Hawthorne Bridge in Portland increased by 20%. However, **most of that increase was in bicycle traffic; auto traffic increased by only 1% during that time.** **The 100-year old bridge would have had to have been replaced at great expense if that 20% increase had been in auto traffic.**

Between 6 and 20 bicycles can be parked in the space required by one car. The average cost of one parking space for a car in a paved lot is \$2,200; in parking garages, a single car

space averages \$12,500. An independent cost-benefit analysis of Portland Oregon's Bicycle Master Plan concluded that the plan would provide between \$143 million and \$218 million in fuel costs (depending on the level of final investments) by 2040. ([Journal of Physical Activity and Health, Vol 8 Supplement, January, 2011](#))

### Economy

- In Portland, Oregon the bicycle industry –including bicycle, apparel, and accessory manufacturers and retailers, tourism, businesses , and events – employs between 850 and 1150 people and contributes \$90 million/year to the region's economy. ( [Alta Planning](#) )

- A similar 2010 report for the state of Wisconsin found that bicycle industries and tourism employs 13,200 people and pumps \$1.5 billion into that state's economy every year. ([Bicycle Federation of Wisconsin](#))



2011 Bike Summit

### Bicycles and Pedestrian Issues in the 112th Congress

The 112<sup>th</sup> Congress brings with it new challenges to those who would like to see greater federal investments in bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The Highway Trust Fund is in the red; the Transportation & Infrastructure Committee, under new Republican leadership, is focused on highway investments; and programs that have traditionally funded bicycle and pedestrian projects – Transportation Enhancements (TE) and Congestion Mitigation/Air Quality (CMAQ) – are in the sights of those who'd like to reduce federal investments in the nation's infrastructure. We definitely have our work cut out for us.

The good news is that although the congressional outlook is not so rosy for new legislation, we've made a lot of progress on the local level. Americans who understand the value of active transportation aren't just bicycle fanatics, but families, public health advocates, educators, school children, civic boosters, and offices of tourism and economic development. In fact, people from all walks of life understand that constructing better facilities for people who chose to walk and ride their bikes creates jobs, gives them more and healthier choices for their daily transportation needs, creates safer communities, and strengthens local economies. Now, more than ever, it's important for Americans to be telling their member of Congress that they want more transportation choices in their communities.

Meanwhile, Congressman Blumenauer will continue his decades-long work to champion bicycle and pedestrian issues on Capitol Hill and in our communities.

- As a strong advocate for legislation that provides federal funding for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, he will continue to fight for the popular and highly effective Transportation Enhancements and CMAQ programs, and watching for opportunities to support those who choose to commute by bicycling or walking.

- In addition, the Congressman will continue his efforts to make our roads and highways safe for all users by extending the hugely successful National Safe Routes to School Partnership to include all students in grades K-12.

- Congressman Blumenauer continues to co-chair the Congressional Bicycle Caucus, focusing attention on policies, programs, and activities that get Members of Congress and their staff out on the many bicycle routes in the Washington DC area, to see for themselves the value in active transportation.

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