

Bike to Work Program

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March 20, 2006

Chairperson Ellen Pirie
Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission
1523 Pacific Avenue
Santa Cruz, CA 95060

Dear Chairperson Pirie and Commissioners:

Santa Cruz County Bike to Work (BTW) is requesting \$40,000 of TDA funds for FY 2006-2007 to support an important portion of our programs. The Commission's allotment has proven crucial for the continuing success and expansion of our programs aimed at increasing bicycle commuting. Last year 5,971 residents participated in our spring and fall Bike to Work/School Day events. The Bike to School program had the greatest participation with 4,520 kids, teenagers, teachers and parents biking to school. The Bike to Work/School Day cyclists rode 30,097 miles for the spring and fall events. This significant mileage helped reduce CO2 emissions by 29,194 pounds.

As the nation and our county addresses the growing problem of obesity BTW's programs are ever more relevant. Daily exercise incorporated into regular routines is frequently cited as the best way to mobilize sedentary people. Biking to work and school fits this criteria for adults and kids. Since safety is a major concern for novice cyclists and parents we have partnered more closely with Bike Smart! Youth Bicycle Safety program, distribute bike safety videos to participating schools and conducted bicycle helmet fit checks for some 500 kids at the Super Kids Triathlon this past fall. BTW actively promotes bicycle safety.

Bike Smart's safety work paved the way for more kids to bicycle to school. Bike Smart's in-class presentation and hands-on bike safety rodeo at Mintie White Elementary School in Watsonville led to a highly successful Spring Bike to School Day in which 241 students, parents and teachers participated. While this was Mintie White's first BTS event, it had the highest school turn out for spring 2005.

This year we leveraged RTC funding to secure Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District AB2766 money to expand our Bike to School effort and start a year-round classroom-based education project. This two-year project starts in 2006 and will build on school administration, teacher and parent support for Bike to School to increase the number of students biking to school and the frequency they bike.

Why it's a Viable Program

The past year's quality services and programs are largely due to the ability to pay permanent staff to solicit, coordinate and support the large amount of in-kind services, products, and volunteers for BTW. At the current funding level BTW has improved both the quality and quantity of its effort. Our effectiveness is illustrated on the attached program summary and survey data comparison.

BTW has successfully demonstrated, through careful measurement and evaluation, to be a viable and progressive program. *School participation, which is the major subset of BTW participants– with 4,520 school students biking last year – helps reduce unnecessary and dangerous automobile congestion and provides daily exercise to school students.* BTW activities contribute to a healthier community: less air, noise, run-off pollution, less traffic congestion, safer streets and healthy individuals.

With SCCRTC support, BTW uses a multi-faceted program approach to reach out to and change the behavior of non-bike commuters, novice bike commuters and experienced bike commuters. We use positive, fun and interactive methods to encourage commuters to try bicycling, to commute by bicycle more frequently and to bicycle safely and responsibly.

Broad-base Support

BTW leveraged a considerable amount of private and public money to extend SCCRTC's funding. We generated \$18,100 in cash from local businesses and public agencies, plus \$76,000 of in-kind services and product donations in 2005. Over 75 businesses and public agencies, plus 100 individuals volunteered time and contributed to this community effort.

BTW is a steppingstone to becoming a frequent bike commuter

Bike To Work's impact on bike commuting trends reaches beyond the popular Bike To Work/School Days. After these biannual events participants will more likely continue to bike because they have experienced the benefits of biking and have successfully overcome any barriers. They realize it does not take that long, it makes them feel healthier, they do not have to hassle or pay for parking and they save money on gasoline. Bike To Work/School Day is a steppingstone for recruiting year-round bike commuters. Getting someone to bike to work and therefore experience it first-hand is so much more powerful than simply telling someone it is a good thing to do.

Throughout the year, we also provide resources such as our new *Tips for Winter Bike Riding* pamphlet, our web bike commuter resource guide and email updates on bike commuting news.

Conclusion and Summary

Santa Cruz County Bike to Work (BTW) has successfully utilized past funds received from the SCCRTC. We are requesting \$40,000 for FY 2006-2007 to support BTW's successful programs. Bike to Work (and School) continues to be a viable and significant program. The program not only contributes to the betterment of our entire community by reducing traffic congestion, pollution and promoting sustainable forms of transportation but also improves the health and well being of its individuals.

Sincerely,

Piet Canin
Bike to Work Program Director