

# Report on the 2007 National Bike Summit

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Washington, DC

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The National Bike Summit is presented by the League of American Bicyclists (LAB) and sponsored by Bike Belong Coalition. It is held annually to bring together bicycle advocates, city officials and staff, industry representatives to network, learn, become inspired, and more importantly, to meet with their elected officials on Capitol Hill in order to further the LAB's national agenda and the individual's own local agenda. The core of the Bike Summit is the meetings with Members of Congress.

Oregon was well represented at this year's summit. We had the second largest state delegation (bested only by California) and certainly the largest per capita. Our meetings with our Representatives and Senators were very full!

All told, more than 400 people attended this year's Summit, making it the best well-attended yet.

Oregon attendees and their affiliations are listed below.

Evan Manvel	BTA	Scott West	Travel Oregon
Scott Bricker	BTA	Carol Astley	Oregon Tourism Commission/Travel Oregon
Emily Gardner	BTA	Veronica Rinard	POVA
John Bloss	BTA Board	Suzann Gorham	Convention and Visitors Association of Lane County
Jay Graves	Bike Gallery	Jerry Norquist	Cycle Oregon
Allison Hill	Community Cycling Center	Dennis Oliphant	Central Oregon Visitors Association
Jeff Mapes	Oregonian reporter	Robert Ping	National Safe Routes to School Partnership
Jonathan Maus	Bikeportland.org	Brad Upton	Citizen activist
Mike De John	International Mountain Bicycling Association	Roger Geller	PDOT
Jill Van Winkle	International Mountain Bicycling Association		
Charlotte Lehan	Mayor of Wilsonville		

There were many good ideas and themes presented at the Summit. My report is organized into the following four sections: Funding, Legislative & Politics, Themes & Opportunities, and Conclusions.

## **Funding**

There exists the potential for significant funding for bicycle improvements for Portland. There are opportunities in:

Congestion Mitigation Funds (USDOT funds)

Bond Measures (following Seattle's example)

Non-Motorized Pilot Program (an expansion of this program is being actively pursued by Rails to Trails Conservancy)

Conserve by Bike (seeking appropriation of the dollars already approved by Congress)

Eliminating Transportation Enhancement Rescissions

Private Donors for "Legacy" Projects (as done successfully in Louisville, KY)

### 1. Congestion Mitigation

- \$130 million available from US DOT in grant funding for innovative mitigation programs
- Sam Adams has already met with Tyler Duvall, Assistant Secretary for Transportation Policy at US DOT; Tyler is major proponent of this program
- Duvall says DOT is looking for innovative programs, modeled after those in London, Stockholm and Singapore; US DOT has been working closely with 25 communities and expects to receive 25 applications; intensive promotion of bicycling/walking/transit would be appropriate strategies
- US DOT is looking for communities where there's been sufficient groundwork to show strong political/local support for proposals
- Applications are due the end of April.

### 2. Bond Measure

- City of Seattle passed a \$530 million, 9-year levy that will provide \$30 million per year for bicycled and pedestrian improvements; levy was a combination of initiatives passed by City Council<sup>1</sup> and a popular vote.<sup>2</sup>
- This occurred in an environment in which the city's transportation revenues had declined 65% due to the loss of \$30 car tabs; the city had accrued a \$500 million maintenance deficit
- The levy will be used to rebuild 2,000 lane miles of Seattle roadways that will include rechannelization (striping) for bikes as well as dedicated bike/ped projects
- Seattle, soon to approve their first Bicycle Plan, will have funding to implement their newly planned network of 444 bikeway miles (they're currently at 67 miles) over the next 9 years through a combination of lanes, boulevards, off-street paths and shared lane markings
- Seattle advocacy group—the Cascade Bicycle Club (CBC)—took a lead role in funding initiatives. They are in 4,000 households, with 11,000 people in these households, and command a strong voting bloc in municipal elections (especially off-year elections) where 190,000 ballots are cast. According to Advocacy Director David Hiller, they are covered favorably in the local press, respected by editorial boards and politicians, and deliver the votes. They worked in coalition with other prominent environmental groups in Seattle (Sierra Club, ...). They have a \$2 million annual budget and 18 staff. They also spend \$300,000 annually on bicycle ambassadors, doing marketing, education, and PR for new cyclists. CBC also runs STP, an \$800k event that nets them \$300k.

### 3. Non-Motorized Pilot Program

This federal program provides \$25 million to each of four communities over a 4 year period to effect a mode shift.

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<sup>1</sup> 10% commercial parking tax and tax of \$25 per full-time employee per year; these initiatives will raise \$200 million.

<sup>2</sup> Property tax levy to raise \$356 million.

- Rails to Trails Conservancy (RTC) is actively engaged in current non-motorized pilot program (NMPP), working under contract to and closely with the four communities.
- Existing legislation does not include funding for evaluating changes in mode split. This is a huge weakness in legislation given that program is intended to demonstrate the ability of focused bike/ped improvements and encouragement to effect a mode shift. The four communities have voluntarily sent some of this funding back to USDOT to create an evaluation program. USDOT Volpe Center in Cambridge, MA is creating the evaluation methodology.
- RTC is beginning to float the idea for \$2 billion in 2010 reauthorization of TEA to provide \$50 million to each of 40 communities.
- RTC is coming to Portland for a national conference in August. Focus of the conference will be on how communities can best position themselves to be one of these 40 communities. They chose Portland in order to highlight the best US cycling city.
- I made good contacts with RTC staff: Marianne Fowler, Senior Vice-President Federal Relations; Kevin Mills, Vice President of Policy; and Billy Fields, Director of Research.
- They are already well-impressed by all Portland has accomplished; Marianne Fowler stated that she wants Portland to be one of 40 communities.

#### 4. Conserve by Bike

- \$6.2 million program already approved but funds have not yet been appropriated
- Program is intended to fund promotion and encouragement campaigns in each of ten cities to demonstrate energy savings that can be realized through increased bicycling
- Program is currently stuck in the Department of Energy; Earl's office believes it would have a better chance of being funded if it were moved to USDOT, though better yet if funds were actually obligated, but still ok if moved to DOT and DOT was given specific contract authority to use their own funds to run the program
- If funded, it could bring \$600k to Portland for increased encouragement activities.

#### 5. Transportation Enhancement Rescissions

This is both a state and federal issue:

- Oregon is one of several states, that when requested to rescind federal transportation dollars back to USDOT, send back a disproportionate amount of TE funds. ODOT has rescinded more than 2/3 of its eligible TE funds over the past six (?) years, amounting to approximately \$32 million.
- The ask at the national level was that future rescissions not apply to TE funds, or, that TE funds be rescinded in line with the proportion of federal transportation funds they represent, which is approximately 2-3%

#### 6. Private Donors for "Legacy" Projects

- Mayor Jerry Abramson of Louisville, Kentucky (pronounced "Le-Uh-Ville") gave an enthusiastic presentation on his city's determination to make Louisville a bicycle-friendly community. He mentioned two concepts that could be instructive for Portland:
- The first is a city policy that requires striping of bicycle lanes with any resurfacing project. Currently, Portland strives for this in conjunction with our "Missing Links" program (Bikeway Network Completion), and BOM does a good job of checking to see if resurfaced roadways are classified as "City Bikeways." But, we do not have a formal policy requiring this, and especially not on arterials that are classified as "Local Service Bikeways."
- The second, and more intriguing concept, is working with private donors to fund "Legacy" projects. Louisville has a plan to create a 100-mile pathway loop around the city. They have raised \$20 million from Humana—a large local corporation—to fund the first 27 miles. They've used that to help leverage another \$38 million in federal dollars. This type of

signature or legacy project creates passion and energizes people. Large corporations like Humana—who also have a clear interest in promoting health and activity—will be able to provide something of enduring value to Louisville and contribute to their value of being a good corporate citizen.

## **Legislation and Politics**

Legislation and politics is a big part of the Bike Summit. The following were significant elements:

### Bicycle Commuter Act

A strong International Mountain Bicycle Association (IMBA) presence and asks

### Conserve by Bike

Non-Motorized Pilot Program, and

### Congressional Meetings

#### 1. Bicycle Commuter Act

- The Bicycle Commuter Act would provide equity in terms of employees being allowed to offer a tax-free benefit to bicyclists much as they offer to motorists and transit riders.
- Co-sponsored in the House by Blumenauer (H1498) and in the Senate by Wyden and Collins (R-ME) (S 858). This has been a top legislative priority for LAB for years, and they'd like to finally put it behind them.
- Smith's office was concerned about the cost. It was "scored" by the Congressional Budget Office at an annual cost of \$9.8 million. This compares favorably to the annual parking cost of \$5.5 billion and transit cost of \$389 million.
- Wyden, Blumenauer and LAB all believe it has an excellent chance of passing this year.

#### 2. Strong IMBA presence and asks

- The International Mountain Bicycle Association (IMBA) had a strong presence at the summit. They were a main co-sponsor and had two official asks: a) do not limit bicycle access to trails when setting aside federal land for protections; either draw the boundaries so as to not include these trails if using a Wilderness designation or use one of several less restrictive designations; b) fully fund at \$12 million the Rivers Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA), which leverages \$4 locally for each federal dollar.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> ask, and IMBA's program in general, was focused on fostering stewardship of the land and getting kids (and adults) physically active and out into beautiful areas.

#### 3. Conserve by Bike

See under "Funding" section.

#### 4. Non-Motorized Pilot Program

See under "Funding section." No specific asks yet, but we need to be actively engaged so that a) legislation is passed, and b) Portland is one of the 40 communities targeted for funding.

#### 5. Congressional Meetings

- Oregon contingent met with all members of Oregon's Congressional delegation, typically bringing 5-11 people to each meeting
- I met with Blumenauer's staff (Katie Drennan and James Koski), Smith's staff (Jacob Truillo and Dan K), and Wyden's staff (Brendan Doyle, James Cheves, Michelle Miranda, Bob (Dave?) Rosen, and Dave Berick).
- All Oregon Members of Congress are members of the Bike Caucus.

- Wyden and Blumenauer strongly support the Bicycle Commuter Act
- Blumenauer, Walden, Smith and Wyden strongly support the Lewis & Clark Mt. Hood Wilderness Act, which allows for continued mountain bike access.
- One of the legislative issues is the lack of federal dollars for anything but Iraq. This is a difficult climate in which to seek funding for new programs. This was addressed directly by Representative Wu, who, according to those who met with him, would talk only about how funding for the Iraq war was taking away all other funding opportunities.

## **Themes and Opportunities**

The primary themes for Oregon of the Bike Summit can be summarized as:

### Tourism and Bicycles

### Taking Bicycling to the Next Level/Making Bicycling Mainstream, and

### The Time is Now.

#### 1. Tourism and Bicycles

- The Oregon Bike Summit contingent included a strong and organized presence from the tourism industry. POVA, Travel Oregon, Cycle Oregon, and the Oregon Tourism Commission were all represented.
- The tourism industry is strongly interested in the image and reality of Oregon as a bicycle-friendly state, and Portland as a bicycle-friendly city. The tourism industry is interested in improvements in both urban and rural areas of Oregon as both provide cachet in attracting people to the state.
- The Oregon packet, presented to each Representative and Senator, was attractive, prepared professionally by Travel Oregon, and emphasized both rural trail development in support of long rides, and urban bikeway development in support of bicycling in livable cities.
- The travel industry is organized, professional, and they know how to effectively deliver a message. They also have good contacts with and respect of the business community.

#### 2. Taking Bicycling to the Next Level/Making Cycling Mainstream

This is Portland's message, and it was well-received by national and local activists, including LAB, RTC, Deborah Hubsmith<sup>3</sup>, and others. It was also a theme expressed in the opening plenary by Andy Clark, Executive Director of the LAB.

Demonstrating the effectiveness of the bicycle as a legitimate means of transportation is also the message and goal of RTC—that's what NMPP is all about. This theme was also addressed by John Pucher from Rutgers University. His presentation ending the conference was about how European cities have achieved this, and how it can be done here, and the significant health, quality of life, environmental, and financial benefits that would be realized.

This message was also enforced by a presentation by the Shimano Coasting Team. They've put together a new bicycle (the "Coaster") to meet the needs of the large, untapped market of people their research tells them is out there. These are people who want to ride, but are intimidated, in part, by bicycles. These Coasters are relatively inexpensive, have coaster brakes, and shift automatically (electronically) between three gears. Bike Gallery has begun selling them in Portland. Portland's message—that we're poised to be a world-class bicycling city—meshes well with the national goals expressed by LAB and RTC and Bikes Belong. Portland continues to serve as an inspiration to cities across the US. Cities are rooting for us to succeed in dramatic fashion—to truly become a world-class bicycling city on the level of many Dutch and German and Danish cities. For, when we do, we'll be an example to which they will be able to continue to

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<sup>3</sup> She is the Marin County bicycle activist who is largely responsible for the Non-Motorized Pilot Program, which is providing \$25 million to each of four communities.

point. Already, our simple graphs juxtaposing bicycle trips across the bridges with facility miles is shown in numerous jurisdictions to demonstrate the truth to “build it and they will come.”

### 3. The Time is Now.

This theme was expressed forcefully by Representatives Blumenauer and Oberstar, as well as by Andy Clark. Earl and Oberstar both emphasized that the current House leadership, with Pelosi, Defazio, and themselves, means that bicycle funding will be looked upon quite favorably. Earl discussed Pelosi’s focus on global warming, and Oberstar’s chairmanship of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee as very positive for bikes. He emphasized that we need to take advantage of this confluence of events. Earl also said that we need to plant the seed now about what we’re going to do with reauthorization of the federal highway bill. He, too, is thinking about RTC’s proposal to provide significant funding to expand the NMPP.

## **Conclusions**

The Bike Summit was a very inspiring and invigorating experience. It pointed out the connections between what is occurring at the federal level and its potential impact at the local level. I gleaned much useful information and made contacts that could have some significant pay off down the line. The most exciting aspect of the Summit was learning about the numerous potential funding opportunities. The most intriguing part was hearing from the professionals about what a large impact a national lobbying day can have on the thinking of our elected officials, especially when combined with appropriate follow-up. From what I saw and heard, Portland seems the one city in the U.S. that is best positioned to truly make cycling mainstream. To do so, we’ll need to rethink our transportation priorities and really focus on making bicycling a first choice for more Portlanders. We’ll have to rework standard transportation designs. Above all, we need to secure adequate funding to build what we need. The key to funding is four-part:

- Direct federal funding from the next reauthorization of the federal highway bill
- State funding through TE (no rescissions)
- Local funding through a bond measure, and
- Private funding for stand-alone legacy projects.

To build the type of national support we’ll need to secure federal funding, I recommended a strong and continuing presence for Portland at the bike summit.