



PRESS RELEASE

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Primary Contact:

Karl Rohde
Government Relations and Public Affairs Director
Bicycle Transportation Alliance
(503) 226-0676 x12
karl@bta4bikes.org

Bicyclists DECLARE INDEPENDENCE FROM OIL on July 4th

Residents in New York City, Philadelphia, Portland, San Francisco and Washington D.C. pledge to go Gas-Free

(SAN FRANCISCO, NEW YORK CITY, PHILADELPHIA, PORTLAND, WASHINGTON D.C.) — Spurred by soaring gas prices and our country's overdependence on oil, bicycle advocates are urging Americans to show their patriotism this July 4th, what they're calling Independence from Oil Day, by pledging to make more gas-free trips. The "Gas-Free Fridays" campaign aims to get more Americans on bicycles this summer, recognizing that half of all driving trips are under two miles in length.

With national gas prices exceeding \$4 per gallon, and with mass transit increasingly crowded, Americans are discovering how easy and cost-effective it is to commute by bicycle, sending bike ridership numbers higher than ever.

"More people are recognizing the economic benefits of biking for transportation, not to mention the health and environmental benefits," says Leah Shahum, Executive Director of the 9,000-member San Francisco Bicycle Coalition. "We urge more Americans to do their part by taking the Gas-Free Fridays pledge this summer." **San Francisco has seen a 30% increase in the number of people commuting by bicycle in the past year alone.**

New York City has seen a 75% increase in bicycle commuting since 2000. "Sales of commuter bikes doubled this year in New York City, and many local bike shops have simply sold out," says Paul Steely White, Executive Director of the 6,000-member Transportation Alternatives.

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Bicycle riding in Portland has doubled in the last five years. “Many people in Portland are trying bicycling for the first time because of the high cost of driving,” says Scott Bricker, Executive Director of the 5,000-member Bicycle Transportation Alliance. “They would rather spend \$4 on a light lunch or to buy a locally hand-crafted beer than on a gallon of gas.”

Washington D.C. saw a 100% increase in the number of cyclists between 2004 and 2006. “What really strikes me is the diversity of cyclists we are seeing,” says Eric Gilliland, Executive Director of the 7,000-member Washington Area Bicyclist Association. “It’s no longer just men in spandex, but women in dresses, men in suits and people of all ages and races.”

Bicycle traffic on Philadelphia’s bridges increased 15% in the last year. “There has never been a better time to declare independence from your car and enjoy the freedom and benefits of using your bike,” said Alex Doty, Executive Director of the 1,200-member Bicycle Coalition of Greater Philadelphia.

Advocates hope that “Gas-Free Fridays” will encourage even more Americans to develop healthy, sustainable commuting habits that will ease the financial burdens of skyrocketing gas prices and reduce our country’s dependence on oil. In one year, riding a bicycle versus owning and driving will save an individual \$8,000. On average, commuting 10 miles a day by bike instead of car burns 110,250 calories (keeping off 30 pounds of fat each year) and saves 3,500 lbs. of greenhouse gas emissions each year.

“Today we are calling on our representatives in Washington D.C. to lessen our nations’ overdependence on oil and to offer Americans the greater freedoms and efficiencies of bicycling,” says Paul Steely White. “We urge them to give direct and better federal assistance to our nation’s 20 most populous cities so that they can establish safe bicycle networks, bike to transit facilities and public bicycle-share programs.”

The Bicycle Transportation Alliance is a statewide non-profit organization that works to open minds and roads to bicycling. We represent bicyclists and the bicycle industry with over 5000 members in Oregon and SW Washington, and have seventeen years of experience in bicycle engineering, planning, education and advocacy.

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