

National Advocacy Organizations

America Bikes - America Bikes is a Washington, DC-based campaign funded largely by Bikes Belong to ensure that upcoming federal transportation legislation (known as TEA-3) continues to fund bike trails, bike lanes, and improvements to make cycling more accessible and safer. Since 1991, federal highway funds have provided nearly 2 billion dollars to build improved bicycle facilities across America - essentially a government subsidy to grow cycling. www.americabikes.org

League of American Bicyclists - founded in 1880 as the League of American Wheelmen, LAB has 34,000 members and 455 recreational clubs. Members receive an annual Almanac of Cycling listing tours and events, a monthly magazine American Bicyclist, and a "Bikes Fly Free" perk for cyclists traveling around the country. LAB also has national rallies, a strong Washington, DC presence fighting for cyclists rights, and a Bicycle Friendly Communities program that awards improved bicycle facilities for proactive communities around the country. For more information about LAB, go to www.bikeleague.org.

Thunderhead Alliance - The Thunderhead Alliance is a coalition of state, regional, and local bicycle advocacy organizations dedicated to sharing methods and resources as a way to keep these organizations self-sustaining financially and well-staffed. Thunderhead acts like an incubator, educating and strengthening these organizations by sharing success methods, lessons learned, and resources. www.thunderheadalliance.org

International Mountain Bicycling Association - founded in the late 80s, IMBA is a nonprofit membership organization with the mission to promote mountain bicycling opportunities which are environmentally and socially responsible. IMBA helps state and federal organizations establish mountain bike trails and policies, and through its network of state representatives, provides a Trail Care Crew program of trail design, construction, and maintenance for mountain bikers who want to learn about trail building. For more information about IMBA, go to www.imba.org.

Rails-to-Trails Conservancy - RTC is a 13-year-old nonprofit membership organization dedicated to creating a nationwide network of public trails from former rail lines and connecting corridors. Currently, there are more than 10,000 miles of converted rail-trails throughout the United States, with another 20,000 miles currently in development. RTC activities include notifying trail advocates and local governments of upcoming railroad abandonments; assisting public and private agencies in the complexities of trail corridor acquisition; providing technical assistance to private citizens as well as trail planners and managers on trail design, development and protection; and publicizing rail-trail issues throughout the country. For more information about RTC, go to www.railtrails.org.

National Center for Bicycling and Walking - the NCBW (formerly the Bicycle Federation of America) is a national, nonprofit organization working with people in communities to make America more bicycle friendly and walkable. The NCBW's resource center provides updates, information and resources for bicycle and pedestrian practitioners, related professionals, and citizen advocates. The NCBW also hosts Pro-Bike/Pro-Walk, a national conference held every other year the week after Labor Day. For more information about the NCBW, go to www.bikefed.org.

Bikes Belong Coalition - the BBC is an industry led and funded nonprofit dedicated to ensuring that ISTEA/TEA-21 funds are being used to build improved bicycle facilities. Industry "fair share" membership dues to the BBC are based on annual domestic sales and are used to make grants to communities and advocacy organizations building bike lanes and trails, putting bike racks on buses, and creating safer routes to schools for children cyclists. For more information about the BBC, go to www.bikesbelong.org.

Working With Your State Bicycle Coordinator

A good place to begin in bicycle advocacy in your immediate region or community is with your State Bicycle Coordinator. Thanks to ISTEA legislation passed in 1991, a bicycle coordinator is required to be appointed within each state's department of transportation. Your state bicycle coordinator can provide information about projects in development, future projects, funding opportunities, design guidelines, and whether or not your state has a statewide

bicycle conference - a key component to nurture a pro-bicycle environment.

U.S. DOT Releases Policy Statements Recommending Increased Bicycling Facilities

The U.S. Transportation Department recently released its policy statement urging transit agencies to incorporate bicycling and walking facilities in their planning. Accommodating Bicycle and Pedestrian Travel; A Recommended Approach is a set of recommendations released through the Federal Highway Administration, its subordinate agency.

The policy statement, while not a mandate, is nevertheless significant because it comes from the top U.S transit agency, which helps fund every other transit agency. Among the statement's recommendations:

Establish bicycling and walking routes in all urban construction projects unless specific conditions prevent it

Add paved shoulders on all rural roads used by more than 1000 vehicles per day and restrict rumble strips where cyclists use shoulders unless cyclists also have a path at least four feet wide

Plan construction projects such as bridges to be compatible with future bicycling and walking facilities, regardless of whether such facilities now exist; design intersections and interchanges so roads can be crossed as well as traveled along; and make senior level transportation managers approve and document why exceptions to these guidelines are made.

"There is no question that conditions need to be improved in every community in the United States; it is no longer acceptable that 6,000 bicyclists and pedestrians are killed in traffic every year, that people with disabilities cannot travel without encountering barriers; and that two desirable and efficient modes of travel have been made difficult and uncomfortable," the document concludes.

The U.S Transportation Department is encouraging all other U.S., state, and local transportation agencies, professional associations and community groups to adopt its policy statement. The document's entire text is available at www.fhwa.dot.gov/environment/bikeped/Design.htm.