



The San Francisco Bicycle Coalition

By TEMN Reporter Katy Tang

Bicycling is a great way to exercise. It's also a very convenient way to travel. The San Francisco Bicycle Coalition is a non-profit organization whose goal is to promote bicycling as an everyday means of transportation. The San Francisco Bike Coalition has over 2,600 members that want to make San Francisco's busy streets safer for pedestrians and those who rely on bicycles to get around.

A great deal of San Francisco bikers' concern stems from the many problems created by cars. "I think one of our big problems with cars is that we have too many of them in our limited space," says Linda Atkins, who serves on the Board of Directors for the San Francisco Bike Coalition. "That causes congestion [and] we have a whole lot of pedestrian fatalities and pedestrian injuries here from people being hit by cars," says Atkins.

Atkins says many bicyclists may not understand they have the right to share the road with cars. Likewise, many motorists are unaware of the fact that they are required to share the road with cyclists.

Many people choose to drive cars. They use their cars to go to work, to go shopping, to go traveling, to run errands, or to get to school. "I certainly think it's a very convenient way to get around in theory," says Atkins about driving. "In theory, you hop in your car, you go where you want to go, and you're there."



In reality though, Atkins feels that driving works better in suburban or rural environments where there are fewer cars. In San Francisco, where the streets are always busy with cars, drivers are usually either stuck in traffic jams, or circling around in search of parking. If parking can't be found, some leave their cars in expensive garages where they pay up to \$20 for eight hours.

Atkins, who rides her bicycle to work every day, feels that cycling even helps to put her in a better mood. "I just so appreciate not having to struggle to find a place to park and not having to pay a fortune to park," she says. "When I get to work in the morning, I'm generally in a cheery mood instead of being all grumpy from dealing with a car."

Members of the San Francisco Bike Coalition work very hard on bicycle issues at the Department of Parking and Traffic. There they lobby for such things as bike lanes, bike racks for buses, and other things that are necessary for all bicyclists and their safety. The San Francisco Bike Coalition hopes to complete an urban bicycle pathway network to further encourage safety for bicycle riders.

Atkins enjoys the fact that when she is bicycling, she feels a lot more interactive with the environment. "A lot of times, I see my friends out there when I'm riding my bike. I can be clear across town, and you know, 'Oh! There's Bob riding his bike by!', which I would never even notice, probably, if we were both in a car," she says. She adds that when tourists stop to ask her for directions, she is able to stop and help them easily.

Not only are people generally more interactive with their surroundings when they bike, but there are also many positive health benefits to gain from bicycling. Bicycling regularly helps to keep people's bodies healthy, as well as help them to live a longer life. And, by bicycling each day, you can do your part for the environment by reducing pollution and improving air quality.

For more information about the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition, visit www.sfbike.org where you can find information on how to become a member, where you can join a bike club, and much more.

Further Resources

San Francisco Bicycle Coalition: www.sfbike.org/
California Bike Commute Week: www.bikelink.com/commuting.htm
California Bike Rides Online: www.bikecal.com/index.asp

2-minutes Audio Reports

-Benefits of Biking: www.scienceinterchange.org/media/sf_katy_benefitsofbiking.ram
-Bike Around Town: www.scienceinterchange.org/media/sf_katy_bikearoundtown.ram