

Urban Transportation Report Card

August 2007

Urban Transportation Caucus:

San Francisco Bike Coalition
Cascade Bicycle Club
Chicagoland Bicycle Federation
Transportation Alternatives

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San Francisco Bicycle Coalition

sfbike.org

The San Francisco Bicycle Coalition (SFBC) is a 6,500-member, grassroots group working to transform San Francisco’s streets and neighborhoods into more livable and safe places by promoting the bicycle for everyday transportation. The SFBC’s work is important because more people bicycling means a healthier San Francisco – as more people are physically active, our environment is cleaner, and our streets and neighborhoods are safer and more livable.

Cascade Bicycle Club (Seattle)

cascade.org

Since 1970, the Cascade Bicycle Club has worked to fulfill its mission to *Create a Better Community through Bicycling*. Based in Seattle, Washington, it serves the interests of its 7,200 members as well as its constituents in the surrounding communities. Through its advocacy, education, daily rides and special events, the Cascade Bicycle Club strives to create livable, bicycle friendly communities. The efforts of the Cascade Bicycle Club have resulted in new funding and facilities, increased access and a greater voice for cyclists throughout the Central Puget Sound Region.

Chicagoland Bicycle Federation

biketraffic.org

The mission of the Chicagoland Bicycle Federation is to improve the bicycling environment and thereby the quality of life in the region. We do this by promoting bicycle safety, education and facilities, and by encouraging use of the bicycle as an energy-efficient, economical and nonpolluting form of transportation and as a healthful and enjoyable form of recreation. The Chicagoland Bicycle Federation recognizes the synergies between promoting bicycling and promoting walking and public transit. We align our advocacy with social equity and community improvement and we embrace the power of a broad multi-modal coalition to achieve our mission.

Transportation Alternatives (New York)

transalt.org

Transportation Alternatives is a 5,500-member NYC-area non-profit citizens group working for better bicycling, walking and public transit, and fewer cars. We work for safer, calmer streets and car-free parks.

With input from:

Thunderhead Alliance (thunderhead.org)

Illinois League of Conservation Voters (lcvillinois.org)

San Francisco League of Conservation Voters (sflcv.org)

Seattle Great City Initiative (greatcity.org)

I. Fighting Climate Change by Cutting “Rolling Carbon”

Transportation is responsible for 20 - 60% of carbon emissions in major U.S. cities. This “rolling carbon” (transportation based CO₂ emissions) contributes to global warming, and the other tailpipe pollutants that come with the carbon pose a significant public health threat to urban residents. However, converting drivers to hybrid cars alone is not a sustainable strategy to significantly reduce rolling carbon and improve mobility.

Why not? Because per traveler, cars consume much more street space compared to less polluting and more space efficient modes like transit, bicycling and walking. As populations grow, and in already dense areas, it is simply not feasible to meet transportation demand with private vehicles. In urban areas and dense suburbs there are also enormous public health, traffic safety, economic and quality of life benefits to be reaped by reducing traffic and shifting people to less polluting, more active, more efficient, quieter and safer modes of transportation. Today, more than ever before, large cities are claiming their rightful role as environmental leaders in this country. Green transportation and compact land use are a huge part of what makes the per capita environmental impact of an urban resident much lower than the average suburban resident.

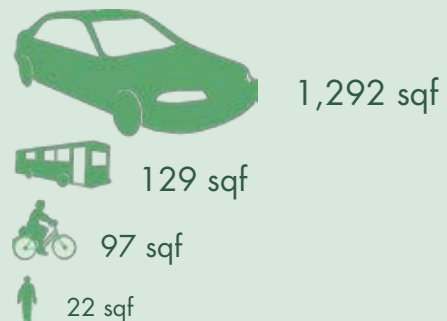
In a time when all of our cities are claiming environmental leadership, how do they stack up when compared to each other? In order to find out, leading green transportation advocates from four large cities (New York, Chicago, San Francisco and Seattle) involved in the C-40 (a group of the world’s largest cities committed to tackling climate change) have come together to rate our cities’ progress on greening their transportation systems and converting driving trips to more sustainable modes such as transit, bicycling and walking.

Underlying all of these categories are the principles of fairness and equity. A high quality urban transportation system must meet the needs of all a city’s residents, regardless of socio-economic class, race and age.

CO₂ Emissions by Mode

Large SUV	1.5 pounds/mile
Average Car	1.0 pounds/mile
Hybrid Car	0.4 pounds/mile
Bus	0.4 pounds/passenger mile*
Subway	0.25 pounds/passenger mile*
Bicycle	0 pounds/mile
Walking	0 pounds/mile

Space Used Per Traveler



* Emissions from public transit must be expressed per passenger, per mile

II. Cities in Depth



Courtesy of Cascade Bicycle Club / © Kevin P. Casey

Seattle

Shows Progress: Seattle is applying final edits to its new Bicycle Master Plan, which calls for the creation of a 450-mile network of bike routes, bike lanes and greenways within nine years. Many Bicycle Master Plan projects will be funded by a \$531 million transportation levy approved by Seattle voters in November of 2006, and others will be implemented as part of normal arterial major maintenance, thanks to Seattle's new complete streets ordinance which was passed in April by the City Council. A pedestrian plan is in its initial stages. The City has a good "urban village" growth strategy, which is reducing demand for driving by encouraging mixed-use development so residents can access services and run errands near home. There is good language in the zoning requirements that provides for streetscaping, frontages, and other amenities that create a pedestrian friendly environment. In an effort to manage demand for driving, Seattle is also raising its municipal parking rates and is instituting a commercial parking tax to fund other modes of transportation. The City eliminated its minimum parking spaces for new developments in the urban core, though still allows private developers to over-supply parking in other areas. Voters in Seattle recently voted to fund an expansion of bus service.

Needs Improvement: Seattle still defaults to maintaining auto capacity on city streets when forced to choose between accommodating transit or cycling and allowing for free flow and parking of private cars.



Courtesy of San Francisco Bike Coalition

San Francisco

Shows Progress: San Francisco has a “transit first” policy that is intended to prioritize transit, walking, and bicycling over single-occupancy vehicle trips. This is accomplished, in part, by encouraging development near transit lines and by reducing parking in transit-intensive areas by both eliminating minimum parking requirements and setting parking maximums.

City leaders have committed to boosting bicycling to 10% of all trips in San Francisco by 2010. However, bicycling skeptics have recently sued and enjoined the City from implementing any new, physical bike projects for at least one year, as the City’s Bicycle Plan undergoes additional environmental review. San Francisco is now preparing its first Pedestrian Plan, as well as a Better Streets Plan. The City has adopted a Complete Streets Policy, but has not yet developed standards for this. The City is also beginning a feasibility study of congestion charging.

The city’s transit operator, Muni, operates an extensive transit network, but the system is struggling to improve speed and reliability, and has seen fare increases, service cuts, and declining ridership in recent years. In 2003, voters approved a transportation sales tax that included funding for a citywide bus rapid transit network and improvements to the city’s light rail lines.

Needs Improvement: While the City’s transit-first policy is strong in theory, it is too often not adhered to, as it is over-ridden by NIMBY (“Not In My Backyard” opposition) fears about the loss of parking and the desire to prioritize car travel.

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Courtesy of Chicagoland Bicycle Federation

Chicago

Shows Progress: Chicago has adopted a new Complete Streets policy. While it is too early to tell how this will be implemented, it is still a promising sign. The City has made a commitment to become a world class bicycling community; the Bike2015 Plan is one of the most comprehensive bicycle plans in the country and its completion will put Chicago's bicycle infrastructure and encouragement programs at the forefront of big urban centers. Chicago relies very heavily on federal resources to fund its bicycle projects. While Bike2015 states goals for percentage of trips to be taken by bicycle, no similar targets exist for other modes. The City is currently undertaking its first pedestrian plan, which combined with the Complete Streets policy may increase walkability. Chicago's Safe Streets for Chicago raises the bar in making bicycling, walking and public transit users feel safer. Still more can be done on this front.

Needs Improvement: The regional transit system is struggling, both operationally and in finding sufficient funding to maintain a state of good repair and expand. The state must fix the funding problem, and the CTA must develop a system that users have faith in and begin to see as a primary choice. The city's zoning codes do not adequately address transit oriented development or otherwise encourage alternative forms of transportation; this leads to more induced demand for driving. Finally, there continues to be a strong priority of moving cars efficiently and quickly that in many cases works against all of the positive programs to promote other modes of transportation.



Courtesy of Transportation Alternatives

New York

Shows Progress: New York City is in a critical moment of transformation. The Mayor has shown bold new leadership on “green” transportation policies in his PlaNYC longterm sustainability plan and has also appointed a progressive new Department of Transportation Commissioner. New York was just awarded a \$354 million federal grant, and the City is working with the State to seek authorization to begin a three-year pilot study of a congestion charge that would reduce carbon emissions, clean the air of pollutants hazardous to human health and provide a much-needed dedicated stream of funding for New York’s enviable and aging mass transit system. The Mayor also recently committed to installing 200 new miles of bike lanes by 2009 and 40 new miles of car-free greenways by 2010, which will provide a significant boost to cyclists. In his sustainability plan, the Mayor also committed to installing 1,200 new bike racks by 2009 and to continue installing them until an “adequate” number are available in neighborhoods citywide. The City will also press for a bike access to buildings bill to provide for more indoor bike storage. This initiative shows a recognition that lack of secure indoor bike parking is still the number one reason more cyclists do not bike to work in New York City. The Mayor’s plan also recognized the equity issues in New York City’s transportation priorities. His plans prioritize the 95% of New Yorkers who do not commute to the Central Business District by car and provides for the vast majority of New Yorkers who take mass transit. His plans call for expansion of New York’s mass transit system and new bus rapid transit routes into neighborhoods that are currently underserved and for improving the frequency and reliability of existing service in outerborough neighborhoods. The Mayor’s plan also calls for 95% of all new development to be “transit-oriented,” built within 1/2 mile of a subway.

Needs Improvement: On the other side, the Mayor’s plan calls for new pedestrian plazas in each neighborhood in the city but lacks a comprehensive set of initiatives to improve pedestrian safety. The City continues to promote driving among municipal employees by distributing thousands of parking permits to employees annually and turning a blind eye to parking permit abuse. City workers drive at two times the rate of other professional employees in New York City. Finally, many of the details of PlaNYC are yet to be hashed out or institutionalized within government, and the completion deadline is not until 2030, many mayors from now. The plan sets no firm targets for mode switching, i.e. what percentage of trips the City would like to see by car, bus, subway, commuter rail, bicycling and walking. It still remains to be seen when and exactly how these ambitious and much needed plans will be implemented.

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III. How Do Our Cities' Green Transportation Efforts Compare?



City Population and Street Statistics

	Seattle	San Francisco	Chicago	New York
Total Population (2003)	569,101	751,682	2,869,121	8,085,742
Total Number of Miles of Streets (non-highway)	3,946	911	3,775	6,400
Pop Density (people/sq mile)	6,717	16,634	12,750	26,403
Mean Travel Time to Work in Minutes (2000)	24.8	27.7	35.2	40.0



Fighting Congestion, Cutting Carbon

	Seattle	San Francisco	Chicago	New York
Citywide Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goal	none	20% below 1990 level by 2012	none	30% below 2005 levels by 2030
Percentage of carbon emissions from transportation	60%	51% (1990)	21%	23% (2005)
Percentage Change in Vehicle Miles Traveled (1990-2000)	7.27%	6%	11.52% (1995-2003)	17%
Mode Share (2000) and Growth/Decline (1990-2000)				
Automobile, Single Occupant	57%	41%	50%	25%
Growth/Decline, 1990-2000	9%	5%	9%	4%
Automobile, Carpool	11%	11%	14%	8%
Growth/Decline, 1990-2000	7%	-9%	-1%	-6%
Transit	18%	31%	26%	53%
Growth/Decline, 1990-2000	28%	-10%	-11%	-1%
Bicycling	2%	2%	0%	0%
Growth/Decline, 1990-2000	42%	50%	80%	56%
Walking	7%	9%	6%	10%
Growth/Decline, 1990-2000	15%	-11%	-11%	-2%

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Improving Alternatives, Moving People to Less Polluting Modes

	Seattle	San Francisco	Chicago	New York
City has set goals for shifting driving trips to other modes	Yes	Goal set of 10% of trips by bicycles by 2010. And goal of reducing by 10% the number of commute trips by Single Occupancy Vehicles by 2012.	Yes, as part of Bike 2015 Plan: "Increase bicycle use so that five percent of trips less than five miles are by bicycle."	City has set general goal to "encourage commuters to shift from their cars onto an improved transit system"; the first specific benchmark is to reduce citywide VMT 6.3% by 2030.
Total number of bike racks	560	1,550	10,000	3,850
Bike racks per 10,000 people	10	21	35	5
Total route miles of public transit running in dedicated right of way (bus rapid transit using separated lanes or bus lanes) added (1995-2005)	N/A	16 miles of dedicated bus lanes, 34 miles of LRV in metro area	222	0
Number of miles of "lane miles" (each direction counts) of bike lanes / greenways	68	126	315	420
Ratio of bike lane miles to miles of streets	1/58	1/7	1/12	1/15
Percentage of households within a five minute walk of public transportation	80%	Roughly 95%. Good coverage, but not necessarily well connected	98%	95%
Bikes allowed on subways, bike racks on buses	Yes	Buses have bike racks; Limited access on regional rail; no access on local light rail	Yes, all buses no time restrictions, CTA trains have rush hour restrictions	Yes on subways, no on buses



Saving Trips through Smarter Planning, Preventing Pollution from the Start

	Seattle	San Francisco	Chicago	New York
Percent change in population density (1995-2005)	3.24%	7% increase 1990 - 2000, but 1% decrease 1990 - 2005 because of dotcom bust	1.67%	9%
City has smart growth and/or transit oriented development policies in place	Yes	Yes	Minimal efforts currently. Some discussion are in progress as part of Climate Change Initiative	Yes, as stated in PlaNYC: A Greater, Greener New York
City has Complete Streets Policy	Yes	Yes but no standards set	Yes	No

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