



Press Release

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PORTLAND FAMILIES RALLY FOR BIKE FUNDING IN 2009-10 TRANSPORTATION BUDGET

Friday, March 20, 2009 – Despite rain and wind, nearly 100 people rallied at Portland City Hall Friday evening in support of bike and pedestrian investments. Many arrived by bike, with young children in trailers and older children riding on their own.

Led by the Bicycle Transportation Alliance, they gathered to demand more funding for biking and walking in the Portland Bureau of Transportation Budget. The first draft of the Budget, released in February, cut \$200,000 in funding for the city's Safer Routes to Schools Program, which educates kids and parents on safe walking, biking and driving around schools. The draft budget also failed to fund the 15 miles of Bicycle Boulevards Mayor Sam Adams has committed to build in 2009. Fifteen miles of Bicycle Boulevards would cost the Bureau \$300,000, leveraging nearly \$400,000 in contributions from other bureaus and agencies.

Bureau Director Sue Keil argues that the city's top priority is paving arterial streets, and that other projects – like biking and walking investments – will have to wait until the crumbling asphalt is addressed. The City's street maintenance backlog sums to nearly \$1 billion; even assuming an optimistic annual investment, that backlog translates to almost 30 years of repairs.

Some residents are beginning to wonder whether they'll really have to wait until 2039 to see sustainable transportation become a top priority in Portland.

For the first time in years, the City will receive ample new transportation revenue in 2009-10. "With \$15 million dollars of federal stimulus money, and another \$7 million dollars in proposed fee revenue, this is a chance for the Bureau of Transportation to move on multiple priorities at once," said BTA Advocate and Educator Michelle Poyourow.



“We don’t have to choose between paving streets and building safe bicycle routes. We can do both.”

The BTA asserts that Portland residents want to see more investments in active and sustainable transportation, not “just the same old choices we made last century,” as Poyourow puts it. “We’ve found in our survey work that most Portlanders want to bike more, but are not willing to ride near fast-moving cars. Without more investment in bike routes they have no choice but to continue driving even for short neighborhood trips.”

The bike rides that delivered families to City Hall for Friday’s rally actually take place every month, with a different destination. Known as “Kidical Mass,” these slow-paced outings, in which families can practice and enjoy biking together, originated in Eugene but have spread to other communities in Oregon and Washington. A new twist on the old controversial “Critical Mass,” Kidical Mass leaves after rush hour, follows all the laws, and often includes costumes and ice cream.

Release of the Bureau of Transportation’s draft budget is only the first step in the city’s lengthy, iterative budget process. On April 28, the Mayor will release his Proposed Budget to the public and City Council. Biking and walking advocates hope it contains some significant changes over the Bureau’s first draft. The Portland City Council votes on a final budget for all bureaus in June.

Resources:

Bicycle Transportation Alliance:

<http://www.bta4bikes.org>

City of Portland Budget Center:

<http://www.portlandonline.com/omf/index.CFM?&c=26061>

Mayor Sam Adams’s 100 Day List – Transportation Section:

<http://www.bta4bikes.org/docs/MayorAdams100DayList-Trans.pdf>

Photos attached:

All photos by Michael O’Leary and released for print or electronic use.