May 23, 2016

Chairwoman Mary Nichols

California Air Resources Board

1001 I Street

Sacramento, CA 95814

**Re: Bicycle Incentive Program Concept**

Dear Chair Nichols, Board Members, and Staff:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we applaud the efforts of the Air Resources Board to improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector through Low Carbon Transportation Fund investments. In particular, we support the diverse investments in disadvantaged community Light-Duty Vehicle Pilot Projects that provide opportunities for low-income residents to either afford an electric vehicle or to access clean mobility options without the burden of owning a personal automobile. We recommend you consider also investing in incentives for a zero-emission vehicle that is not currently included in the program—the bicycle.

We propose creating a $10 million *Bicycle Incentive Pilot Program* within the Light-Duty Vehicle Pilot Projects subset of the Low Carbon Transportation Fund to fund rebates for the purchase of high-quality bicycles. The program would incentivize the purchase and use of electric bicycles, cargo bicycles, folding bicycles, and other high-quality utilitarian bicycles to replace vehicle trips. In addition, the program would further replace vehicle trips by subsidizing bike repair, replacement of essential bike parts, and community bike repair workshops through grants to local bike shops and community bike repair “kitchens”. At least 75 percent of the funding should be expended to provide direct mobility benefits to low-income residents in disadvantaged communities. The following expenditures should be eligible for incentives under the program:

* Vouchers or rebates for individuals and families, with at least 75 percent set aside for households whose income is 80 percent or less of the area median income, and at least 25 percent set aside for households whose income is below 50 percent of area median income.
* Expansion or establishment of bike fleets for housing authorities, public agencies, or corporations, especially those located in disadvantaged communities, limited to 100 bicycles.
* Bike share programs located in disadvantaged communities, limited to 100 bicycles, including free bike share memberships to low-income individuals.
* Grants to local bike shops and bike kitchens in disadvantaged communities to provide essential bike parts, repair, and workshops to low-income community residents.

Incentives for bicycle purchases at 50% of the price of the bicycle up to a maximum voucher of $500, or $1000 for an electric bicycle, are appropriate. ARB should also consider including the cost of legally-required lights, locks, helmets, and cycling classes as reimbursable expenses under the program. Participants will be required to complete a survey at the time of purchase and after six months to evaluate the effectiveness of the voucher in prompting the initial purchase and the level and nature of use of the new bicycle for trips of all purposes and lengths.

Demand for utilitarian bicycling to replace vehicle trips is exploding and the bicycle industry has responded with a wide variety of electric bicycles, cargo bicycles, folding bicycles, and other commuter-style bicycles. However, many of these types of bicycles typically cost $1,000 or more, creating a cost barrier for low-income consumers and for families considering the cost of multiple bicycles. Providing subsidies for bicycle purchases would increase the affordability of these high-quality, zero-emission vehicles and stimulate the market for bicycles, especially for emerging technologies in electric-assist bicycles and cargo bicycles, continuing to drive down prices.

Our proposal also allows people who bicycle to overcome the technical and cost barriers to owning and operating bikes, which are often identified especially by low-income individuals[[1]](#footnote-1). We propose that existing bicycle owners and new bicycle owners who receive a voucher through this program have the option to repair their own bicycles at local bike shops and community bike “kitchens” through grants to establish or expand the activities of such facilities in disadvantaged communities. Eligible expenses for these grants could include essential bike parts such as tires and lights, bike repair, and workshops for individuals to learn to maintain their own bikes. This “fix it first” approach allows low-income residents and households to repair bikes they own now to be operable and safe, and allows those who purchase new bikes through the proposed bike incentive program to maintain their bikes over the long term.

In many underserved communities across the state, safe bikeway infrastructure is lacking, despite the high rate of people bicycling in these communities. We recommend that jurisdictions which apply to the program for bike share program subsidies be required to demonstrate a commitment to prioritizing bikeway infrastructure improvements in the disadvantaged communities where the new bike share stations will be located. The prioritization could be demonstrated with a project list in the jurisdiction’s adopted bike plan that shows projects adjacent to the new bike share stations at the top of the list. In jurisdictions that lack an adopted bike plan, other documentation, such as an application for Active Transportation Program funding, could meet the requirement.

Our proposal leverages the existing successful “Increased Incentives for Public Fleets Project” which encourages public agencies to turn over their automobile fleets to electric vehicles by encouraging agencies to replace many of those vehicles with high-quality utilitarian bicycles, getting greater value for each dollar invested in greenhouse gas reduction.

Our proposal also strengthens the existing Car Sharing and Mobility Options Pilot Project that supports subsidized transit passes, bike- and car-sharing memberships for low-income residents. Research demonstrates that low-income communities of color have the highest rates of bicycling, and “the fastest growth in bicycling is among the Hispanic, African American and Asian American populations.”[[2]](#footnote-2) Increasing access to bicycles, especially in disadvantaged communities, has the potential to spur greater mode shift.

Promoting bicycling is a critical strategy for meeting our state climate goals and it has more “co-benefits” than almost any other strategy; it provides affordable transportation options, improves public health, increases traffic safety, and advances the economic prosperity of our communities. Bicycle travel doubled in California between 2000 and 2012 and the Caltrans Strategic Management Plan aims to triple bicycling by 2020.

We request that you consider funding a $10 million Bicycle Incentive Program as a Light-Duty Vehicle Pilot Project within the Low Carbon Transportation Fund in the 2016-17 fiscal year to improve access to the most affordable and cleanest vehicle for individuals, agencies, and families across California. Please contact Jeanie Ward-Waller, Policy Director with the California Bicycle Coalition ([Jeanie@calbike.org](mailto:Jeanie@calbike.org)) with any questions.

Sincerely,

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| --- | --- |
| Jeanie Ward-Waller, Policy Director  California Bicycle Coalition | Janine Rood, Executive Director  Chico Velo |
| Chuck Mills, Director of Public Policy and Grants  California ReLeaf | Dan Rivoire, Executive Director  Bike SLO County |
| Tyrone Buckley, Legislative & Policy Advocate  Housing California | Ryan Wiggins, Climate Policy Manager  TransForm |
| Bill Sadler, Senior California Policy Manager  Safe Routes to School National Partnership | Eric Bruins, Planning & Policy Director  Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition |
| James Pappas, Manager of Housing Preservation & Policy Research  California Housing Partnership | Denny Zane, Executive Director  Move LA |
| Rico Mastrodonato, Senior Government Relations Manager  Trust for Public Land | Edward France, Executive Director Santa Barbara Bicycle Coalition |
| Marven E. Norman, Policy Director  Inland Empire Biking Alliance | Alisha Oloughlin, Policy & Planning Director Marin County Bicycle Coalition |
| Melissa Balmer,Director  Pedal Love/Women on Bikes California | Emma Shlaes, Policy Manager Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition |
| Andy Hanshaw, Executive Director  San Diego County Bicycle Coalition | Kula Koenig, Government Relations Director  American Heart Association | American Stroke Association |
| Matt Read, Esq., Director, Statewide Government Relations  Breathe California | Stephanie Stephens, Executive Director  California Park and Recreation Society |
| Laura R. Cohen, J.D., Director  Western Region Rails-to-Trails Conservancy  Sigrid Wright, Executive Director and CEO Community Environmental Council | Richard Marcantonio, Managing Attorney  Public Advocates Inc. |
| *Industry support from the following corporations:* |  |
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| Tern Bicycles North America, Lakewood, CA | Trek Bicycle Corporation, Waterloo, WI |
| Xtracycle, Oakland, CA | Yuba Bicycles, Petaluma, CA |

1. <http://www.communitycyclingcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/Understanding-Barriers-Final-Report.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.bikeleague.org/sites/default/files/equity_report.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)