

LARA WEISIGER

From: Denyse <denyse@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, January 07, 2018 2:39 PM
To: Trish Spencer; Malia Vella; Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft; Jim Oddie; Frank Matarrese; City Clerk
Cc: BikeWalk Alameda BikeWalk alameda
Subject: Re: city council comments

Dear Council Members,

I'm writing today because I had attended the last two council meetings to speak to you live on this topic, but in both cases, the agenda item was bumped. Although this matter is extremely important to me, I will not be able to make the next council meeting, so I'm hoping you'll review these comments with same attention as you give Alamedans who appear before you in person. (thank you for that!) I'm writing in reference to the referral item regarding the potential to direct staff provide information on the citywide dockless bike sharing program and return to council with additional safety requirements. (Mayor Spencer and Vice Mayor Vella).

Since the presidential inauguration this year, there has been, at the federal level, an apparent war on fact-based policy decisions. Instead, decisions are being made based on greed, personal opinions, and anecdotes. Many Alamedans are taking some comfort in the fact that at the state, and local level, our legislators are better than that. That we have, and will, hopefully, continue to make decisions based on sound scientific information and data when weighing policy options. Fortunately, when it comes to encouraging biking, the science is irrefutable.

While I appreciate that this agenda item is probably most specifically around helmet use, and I am not here to argue the case for or against helmets, I'm here to remind you that **even if every kid riding a bike today didn't use a helmet, the benefits of cycling would far outweigh any risks**. That's not my opinion, because again, I don't want you to make decisions based on personal opinions. That's the opinion of the National Institute of Health (NIH). In 2010, the NIH published a study by de Hartog et al which "quantified the balance between physical activity and air pollution and accident risks of cycling and concluded that the benefits outweigh the risks by an order of magnitude."

In addition, a recent study of Barcelona's bike sharing program, Bicing, found that the health benefits of using the system **outweigh the risks by a ratio of 77 to one**. The study also estimated that Bicing reduces carbon dioxide emissions by more than 9,000 metric tons every year.

Below are just a smattering of other peer-reviewed, scientific studies extolling the benefits of cycling, specifically for children:

[Journal of Physical Activity and Health, Volume 9.](#) Cycle to school is associated with lower BMI and lower odds of being overweight or obese in a large population-based study of Danish adolescents.

[Scandinavian Journal of Public Health, 7 March 2012:](#) Bicycling to school improves children's cardiorespiratory fitness.

Ambulatory Pediatrics, 8, 392-395: Children who ride a bike two or more times a week are less likely to be overweight.

Archives of Pediatrics & Adolescent Medicine, 162, 23-28 Overweight adolescents who participate in bicycling 3 to 4 days per week are 85% more likely to become normal-weight adults.

European Journal of Clinical Nutrition, 62, 739-47 Adolescents who bike or walk to school watch less TV and **are less likely to smoke** than their peers who are driven to school. They also get more overall physical activity.

Finally, even if you wanted to ignore all the immediate and long-term physical health benefits, there's **correlation between biking to school and scholastic performance:**

A study conducted by the **New York City Department of Health, 2009** concluded: In the New York City school system, elementary and middle school students who placed in the top third of a fitness scale had better math and reading scores than students in the bottom third of the fitness scale. Those who were in the top 5% for fitness scored an average of 36 percentage points higher on state reading and math exams than did the least-fit 5%.

Another study looked at nearly 20,000 Danish school children between the ages of 5 and 19. It found that kids who cycled or walked to school, rather than traveling by car or public transportation, performed measurably better on tasks demanding concentration, such as solving puzzles, and that the effects lasted for up to four hours after they got to school. The studies author stated: " The results showed that having breakfast and lunch has an impact, but it was not as significant as having exercised..." He added, "...as a third-grade student, *if you exercise and bike to school, your ability to concentrate increases to the equivalent of someone half a year further in their studies.*"

But, despite the overwhelming evidence, nationally, as of 2009, only 13 percent of kids in the United States walked or biked to school, down from 50 percent in 1969.

You have undoubtedly heard from people who say that biking without a helmet is too dangerous for our children. Again, while I encourage all kids to ride with a helmet, the SCIENCE clearly, and irrefutably states that the benefits of getting kids on bikes as much as possible far outweigh any perceived risk. Please don't follow in the footsteps of our policy makers at the national level. **Listen to the experts** on this issue, make fact-based decisions backed by hundreds of peer-reviewed studies on the topic, and then do all you can to get more and more kids (and everyone) on bikes!!

Thank you,

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