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ACCT NOW

Winter 2007/2008

BICYCLING FOR LIFE

Jeanne Catherine

At 10 am on October 3rd, 2007, East Market Street was quiet and still. No cars roared past as I biked toward the McIntire and Preston intersection. The sky was so blue and the weather was so warm that five minutes earlier I had stuffed my bright neon windbreaker into the bike pack.

Coasting downhill, I took a deep breath and marveled at the beauty of the day. A big smile spread across my face as the wind whipped past. Across the street, I noticed a dark blue Buick slowing for a left hand turn. Presumably the driver saw this lone biker and was giving me the full two car lanes to make my way past before turning onto High Street.

Imagine my shock when I came out of my reverie to see the Buick turning into me. I searched frantically for the drivers eyes but couldn't see through the darkened glass. My newly serviced bike braked easily, but I was not out of harms way. As the car slammed into my left side I thought, "If I knew I was going to die today I would have stopped, drunk water, taken a moment to myself."

This was my first time being hit by a car. Before this happened I was aware that some drivers may not be looking for bikers. But afterward I wondered, "Are drivers seeing what is actually there?"



And how safe is it to bike around Charlottesville? And what can I do as a biker to make it safer for myself and others?

In order to better answer these questions I scoured the web, called the police and quizzed every biker I met. It quickly became apparent that there was only one way for me to be sure I stay safe as a biker. That one way is an ancient practice, passed down through time. It is popularly disseminated but widely misunderstood.

What is this one way? The name of this way can come in many forms, mindfulness, awareness or the power of now. Whatever we name it, the practice remains, stay awake and aware, check your reality, know thyself.

What does this have to do with your safety? Let us take into account the top three actions any biker can take and what they have to do with mindfulness. They are: looking deeper, staying present, and protecting your most valued asset.

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**JOIN THE ALLIANCE,
HELP TO MAKE YOUR
COMMUNITY A BETTER PLACE
TO TRAVEL**



**SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION IN YOUR AREA,
BECOME A MEMBER! DONATE! VOLUNTEER!
ACCT Now**



WHY WE LIKE "ALTERNATIVE" MODES OF TRAVEL

Zachary Shahan

There are numerous reasons why we support "alternative" modes of travel and why we travel via these modes. There are the environmental reasons: we want to help preserve our natural environments, our land, our water, our clean air, and our climate. There are economic reasons: it saves us *much* money to travel via bike, foot or transit. There are the logical health reasons: we know that we need regular physical activity to be healthy and to live longer lives, and walking or biking is a great way to easily get this regular exercise. And there are several intangible reasons regarding the quality of our lives. Traveling via these alternative modes helps us to lead happy and relaxed lives.

All of these reasons are important. Their importance and the degree to which we are aware of them, of course, vary from person to person based on our own interests and our own ideals and passions. I think it is nice to step outside of our own world view once in awhile to see what compels others to make the same end decisions we are making -- to support alternative transportation and/or to travel by alternative means. Additionally, we all may know, generally or instinctually, that bicycling, walking or riding transit is good for the environment, society, and ourselves, but there are times when we don't have the facts we need to support this general or instinctual knowledge.

The following subsections of this newsletter are intended to help us out in both of these respects. Hopefully, they will broaden our reasons for being alternative transportation enthusiasts and will also give us the

information we need to support our views with some hard facts. There is much more information out there than what I am presenting and we have more available if you ever want to learn more, but included below is what I find to be some of the most compelling evidence and reasoning.

TRAVELING FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND A LIVABLE CLIMATE

Global climate change is one of the prime issues of concern facing our world today (if not the prime issue). The general consensus by climate experts is that we need to aim for a global temperature increase of no more than 2 to 3 degrees Celsius by 2050. Even at this level, considerable environmental changes and catastrophes are predicted to occur. To achieve this goal, we in the United States need to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to 60-80% below the 1990 level by 2050. The transportation sector accounts for approximately 33% of GHG emissions in the United States, 61% of which are from automobiles and light duty trucks. Transportation is the largest and the fastest growing source of GHGs in the nation. In addition to the climate issue, there are many critical air quality and water quality concerns that continue to create problems for human life due to continued and increasing automobile travel.

Bicycling, walking and other forms of non-motorized transportation do not directly emit any GHGs. Bicycling is also considered to be the most efficient mode of transportation (by US Congress and others). As one source explained it, on one slice of pizza a person could travel 10 miles by bike, 3.5 miles by foot, and 100 feet in an automobile. A bicyclist on an average US diet gets about 104 miles to the gallon (of fossil fuel input). And with certain dietary changes, they could get about 196 miles to the gallon.

Transit is also considerably more efficient than traveling in a car full of empty space and extra weight. A transit rider creates 65% fewer

greenhouse gases than a person making the same trip in an auto. If 60% of new development was transit-oriented, GHG emissions would decrease 12% by 2050 (a part of the solution).



Walking in Charlottesville

TRAVELING FOR YOUR POCKETBOOK

The average U.S. household today spends approximately 19% of their income on transportation. We are spending approximately \$1 out of every \$5 on transportation. In an auto-dependent exurb, transportation expenditures increase to about 25%, whereas in a transit-rich neighborhood, they decrease to about 9%.

For a little historical perspective, in 1920, 3% of an average household's expenditures went towards transportation. Wouldn't that be nice?

If a household gets rid of one car, they tend to save about \$400 a month. How much do you spend paying for your car, your insurance, gas, maintenance, etc.? How much could you save if you traveled more using other modes or got rid of your vehicle altogether? Have you done it? Do you have a story you can share with us? Send it in and we will publish it on our website.

TRAVELING FOR YOUR HEALTH

There is a serious health epidemic in this country, largely instigated by the excessively sedentary lifestyles most of us lead. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, almost two-thirds of adults in the United States are either obese or overweight, and the rates of overweight children more than tripled between the years 1980 and 2005, going from 5% to 17%. Significantly related to obesity are heart disease (the leading cause of death in the United States) and diabetes. One generation ago, 1 out of 50 newborns could be expected to get diabetes. Today, 1 out of 3 newborns can be expected to get diabetes. According to Jeffrey Koplan, director of the CDC, "Overweight and physical inactivity account for more than 300,000 premature deaths each year in the U.S., second only to tobacco-related deaths. Obesity is an epidemic and should be taken as seriously as any infectious disease epidemic." A key factor considered by health professionals to cause obesity is an excessively sedentary lifestyle. Despite these concerns and the widespread recognition that we need to engage in more physical activity, the trend is not abating and we still do not get enough regular physical activity. Finding a way to make more of our regular daily trips by bicycle or foot (even partially) is a great way to address our physical activity needs and to appreciably counter this obesity epidemic and related health problems.



TRAVELING FOR A HAPPY & SIMPLE LIFE

There are many very compelling reasons to travel via alternative modes, but this one may be the most compelling to me. We all want to live happy and relaxed lives. We all travel nearly everyday as well. It is a core part of our daily lives. If we view it only as a way to get from one place to the next then we are missing out greatly on a great portion of our lives. Transportation must be a part of our vision for a happy life. We must enjoy the way we travel. It should help to calm our mind, or should be fun and exhilarating, or should broaden our understanding of the world and deepen our connection to others.

Some people do love driving and do love certain aspects of driving. Everyone has their own individual preferences. But, to me, for daily travel, walking, biking and riding transit are the most enjoyable. Walking is almost meditative. The constant but slow rhythm of walking always relaxes me. If I am stressed, walking is normally a great way for me to get grounded and centered again. Additionally, it is a pleasant, mild form of exercise. I used my body a bit and I feel better physically but I am not drained or sweaty.

It may take some initiative to begin cycling for basic, everyday travel, but once you get started it sells itself. The exhilaration of feeling the breeze on your face (even on a cold day), of gliding past a que of autos at the traffic light, of making a smooth turn around the corner or around an obstacle in the way, of coasting a little ways after reaching the top of a hill. In my opinion, there are not many things as enjoyable as bicycling.

Riding transit is a unique one for me. The thing I love about riding transit is the social environment. It is an interesting mixture between public and private space. You mix with so many people and you basically stay to yourself (although there is also normally the opportunity to interact some with others), and you get to observe others, you observe society in action not just through articles, books or visual media. You have the opportunity to peak into the lives and lifestyles of others, to meet and interact with people from such a variety of different backgrounds, to reflect on life. You have the opportunity to observe, in person, the similarities and differences that exist across various subcultures of our society. There are many subtle things here which



are hard to capture in words. Maybe it is the sociologist in me, but I find it fascinating and very enjoyable, and from my observations I think many other people do as well. Beyond those reasons, I find riding the bus to be a fairly relaxing mode of travel. There is the opportunity to sit back, rest, reflect, catch up on some work (perhaps), talk on the phone, snack, listen to music, and so on. It is simple and easy, a good supplement to a busy day.

THANK YOU TO ALL OF OUR NEW AND RENEWED MEMBERS (SINCE OCTOBER 2006):

ALAN & HELEN STALEY, AMANDA SCHOFIELD, ANDY KINLEY & AVEN HORMEL, ANDY WINZ, BARB FRANKO, BARRIE CARVETH, BETH MACLEAN, BETTY BLACK, BETTY BRUBACH, BIKE WALK VIRGINIA, BILL FAUST, BILL LUCY, CALI GASTON, CAROLYN SHEARS & HILARY KERNER, CATHERINE PEASLEE, CHAD FRECKMANN, CHARLES ROTGIN, CHERI ACKER, CHRISTOPHER YATES & DENISE WILLIAMS, CYNDI FAHRINGER, DAN CLARK, DAVE NORRIS, DAVID BROWN, DAVID HIRSCHMAN & GARNETT MELLEN, DAVID KAUFMAN, DAVID NEUMAN, DEB COOK & JOY PUGH, DENNIS & ANN ROOKER, DONNA SHAUNESSEY, DREW HANSEN, FAYE SATTERLY, GREG KORBON, GREG GRYMES & LAURIE MILLER, GREG & JANIE PUDHORODSKY, GREGORY & MELANIE ANDERSON, HANNELORE ASMUSSEN, HAPPY RICKSHAW, HEATHER HIGGINS, HOWARD & JANET EVERGREEN, IRA BASHKOW, JACK MARSHALL & CRI-KARS MARSHALL, JAMIE ORCHARD-HAYES, JANE & EUGENE FOSTER, JASON HALBERT & KRISTIN TAVERNA, JENNIE KERN, JENNIFER HARVEY, JERRY DEILY, JIM & ELIZABETH MANDELL, JIM KEENAN, JOHN MOORE, JOHN OSTERMAN, JOHN PFALTZ, JOSH MURRAH, JOSEPH CRAGWALL, JUANDIEGO WADE & CLAUDETTE GRANT, KEVIN LYNCH, LANDERS UNDERWRITING, LAUREL WOODWORTH, LEN SCHOPPA, MARY KELLY, MARY ROPKA, MATT DAY, MICHELLE MATTIOLI, MIKE HURLEY & ERIN JOHNSTON, MIKE & PEGGY VAN YAHRES, MORGAN BUTLER, NICOLAS FINCK, OUTDOOR ADVENTURE SOCIAL CLUB, PAUL & MARY GASTON, RACHAEL KESLER, RAMKUMAR VEN-TATANARAYANA, RHONDA MISKA, RON ENDERS, ROSE MARY SHAHAN, RUSSELL MAC LAFFERTY, RUTH KASTENMAYER, SABRA TIMMINS, SHANNON & RON WILCOX, STEPHEN BACH, SUSAN FIELD, SUSAN PLEISS, TARA ROWAN BOYD & GALLIN RODMAN BOYD, TIM BEATLEY, TOBIN SCIPIONE, TODD NIEMEIER, TOM HANSEN, VOLKER KIESSLING, WILL MARTIN & MARY PRENDERGAST, YOLANDA ARELLANO, ZACHARY SHAHAN.

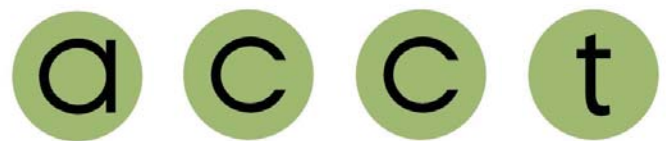
WE THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT AND YOUR VISIONARY THINKING!

TRANSPORTATION BUDDIES

One of our members mentioned recently the great idea of promoting "alternative transportation buddies." As we discover throughout our life, our friends and companions have an impact on our beliefs, attitudes and behaviors. We also give each other support when we need it, in hard times and good times. If we would like to travel more via bus, walking or bicycling (or some other mode of travel even -- segway, scooter, rollerblade), we may find the extra support we need by buddying up with a friend or companion and making the commitment together. So, we invite you all, *each of you*, to find a transportation buddy and to make a commitment to travel more via some alternative mode of travel. Also, send us your story and we may print it in the Spring 2008 newsletter. Happy Travels!



**WE RELY ON COMMUNITY SUPPORT TO DO THE WORK WE DO.
HELP US TO FULFILL OUR MISSION,
BECOME A MEMBER! DONATE! VOLUNTEER!**



Alliance for Community Choice in Transportation

ACCT is a network of citizens and groups dedicated to promoting balanced transportation options, sustainable land use, and transit-oriented development in the greater Charlottesville area. Visit us on the web at www.transportationchoice.org.