



May 7, 2013

Mr. Jacob Manaster, President
Mr. Noah Margo, Vice President
Mr. Brian David Goldberg, Boardmember
Ms. Lisa Korbatov, Boardmember
Mr. Lewis Hall, Boardmember
Mr. Jason Friedman, Student Boardmember

Dear President Manaster, Vice President Margo, and members of the Board:

You may recall my that I addressed the Board in early April about making our streets in Beverly Hills safe and bike-friendly for students who choose to ride to school. I would like to follow up by suggesting a few opportunities where our district can make a difference.

First, let me remind the Board that May is Bike Month. This week the Santa Monica–Malibu district is supporting a week of events called *Bike it! Walk it!* to encourage children to ride a bike to school. Coming next week is Bike Week, which will find public agencies, advocates and employers across the region working together to make riding a bike the safe and convenient transportation option it should be. Looking ahead to the 2013-2014 school year and Bike Month 2014 beyond, I encourage the Board to help make riding to school fun and safe again.

By way of background, for the past half-century the League of American Bicyclists has commemorated Bike Month to celebrate nearly 150 years of two-wheeled innovation. For example, in the mid-nineteenth century the bicycle inaugurated an era of individual mobility that we take for granted today. It facilitated the transition from mass conveyance (horse-drawn streetcars) to Karl Benz’s ‘horseless carriage’ (motorcar) – which itself was inspired by his own two-wheeled traveling – and not least presented a means of emancipation for women long before they enjoyed suffrage in 1920.

Cyclists then were also at the forefront of the Good Roads movement – a nineteenth-century political effort to improve roads and to create an intercity network of engineered thoroughfares (again that we take for granted today). Indeed as our cities are more densely-settled and natural resources are constrained today, the League is again at the forefront to make cycling practical once again. We advocate for new ways of thinking about mobility (such as integrating cycling with transit) and recommend street designs that facilitate our safe conveyance.

What does this mean for Beverly Hills? My own story is suggestive. I began to reach for my bike helmet only when sitting in traffic took up more of my time than did my errands. Now I ride everywhere and hardly ever pick up the car keys to run an errand.

Better Bike

Mark Elliot, Organizer
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Beverly Hills United School District Board
Re: Bike-friendly streets

Indeed there are many would-be riders in Beverly Hills (I call them ‘latent’ cyclists) here who would ride were it convenient and safe. And not a few of them are students who want to ride to school. Safe travel-to-school by bicycle must be a part of the district’s educational mission too. Please let me identify some opportunities where the district can make a difference:

We need safer streets. Improving our roads will make riding not only convenient but a safe choice too. Beverly Hills Unified can support making the streets between our five schools and neighborhood centers bike-friendly through the use of sharrows and bike lanes (the latter separating riders from auto traffic) where feasible.

We need true mobility planning. Transportation planning must focus on more than well-paved streets. Public Works department performance benchmarks should touch on more than miles paved. Beverly Hills Unified could remind city staff in every JPA discussion that safe travel-to-school *by any mode* is a collective responsibility – city *and* district.

We need to teach students how to ride in accord with the law. And that *should* happen in our schools. Did you learn to ride a bike decades ago by wobbling your way down a sidewalk? Did it prepare you for mingling with motor traffic? Beverly Hills Unified could work with the League of American Bicyclists and local advocates to create a safe-riding class for every BHUSD student as part of the physical education curriculum.

We need to remind drivers that riders are legitimate and legal road users on every city street. Our roads are meant to be shared but to date the city has not posted a single sign to that effect nor created any public service announcement. Beverly Hills Unified could get the message out to parents and students alike by working with school administrators and the PTA much in the model of last fall’s community conversation at Hawthorne.

We need to remind parents that morning & afternoon car queues are not the only option. Though many BHUSD students live sufficiently close to school to ride, relatively few do. Yet there is support among administrators, parents and students themselves for the idea. Beverly Hills Unified could promote ride-to-school with quality, standard bicycle racks at every school campus. *Measure E should fund state-of-the-art bike parking as a key element of the facilities upgrade.*

When I organized Better Bike in 2010, I saw nothing bike-friendly about Beverly Hills and a quick call to City Hall confirmed why: Making streets safe for riders was on nobody’s to-do list. But change is in the air. Bike Month is here and the next school year is approaching quickly. In 2014 we will celebrate our own city’s centennial. The following May there will be another opportunity to join the League in celebrating cycling’s history

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and potential during Bike Month. Let's seize that opportunity to make Beverly Hills the leader in bike safety on the Westside.

We need to remind City Hall that a network of bike-friendly streets can connect schools, institutions and neighborhoods to make cycling safe and convenient (as our Bicycle Master Plan anticipated back in 1977). Only through the hard work of planning for the cyclist will we create the conditions that encourage people to ride (much as our Sustainable City Plan in 2009 advised).

Should the Board choose to lead on this issue, I can make myself available to the district so that we can put it on the district's to-do list. I can help identify materials and contractors and even put district officials in touch with advocates and programs (like Safe Routes to School). I'll look forward to it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark Elliot". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Better Bike
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