

# Basics of Bicycle Advocacy

- **Establish goals**—What are the issues that you want to address? Do they involve facility accommodations, safety, or ridership? Clearly define goals and then develop a coordinated approach toward realization.
- **Understand the process**—A successful approach to advocacy is similar to doing a home improvement project in that you should understand the steps necessary for success before you begin work. Well-coordinated efforts will save time and resources. Answer questions like how, when and who is making the decisions effecting your goals. What are the timeframes? Which levels of government have oversight and influence over your priorities? Under what conditions do various levels of government work?
- **Identify the decision makers**—Become familiar with the officials who have oversight over projects that affect your locality. It is important to understand that you will have several avenues through which to generate support. While you may find roadblocks in some areas, you will discover opportunities in others. Examine every potential resource and get to know the players.
- **Establish an organizational framework**—Does an organization already exist that can address your goals, or do you need to establish an organization to focus on relevant issues? There is the advantage of working with an established group because you will not have to spend resources developing an organization. However, some clubs and organizations may not want to address issues you find important. In those cases it is necessary to create a new advocacy organization to work toward realization of these goals.
- **Build constituency**—It is important to generate a network of individuals who share your goals. Politicians react to constituent interests. If you generate a network of people who lend support to your goals, you will be much more successful than acting as an individual, no matter how worthy your project may be.
- **Time your efforts**—It is important to understand not only how the political process works, but also when it works. You have to know when opportunities will arise, and to time your efforts accordingly. Most legislative bodies have established schedules. Know things like when and where your local Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meets and when relevant committees of your local, state and federal governments meet.
- **Understand allies and adversaries**—A successful advocate will have a sound understanding of potential allies and adversaries. You should work together, where appropriate, with groups that support your goals. Adversaries

must be recognized. It is important to try to best appreciate the point of view of potential opponents. Work to appease objections where possible.

- **Get busy**—It is easy to complain about a lack of facilities or a hazardous intersection, but making a difference is the real challenge. Your incentive for change must be harnessed with a well-coordinated effort. Making a difference in your community will not be easy, but your success will be worth the effort.