
Bicycles on Campus

John Carroll

One of the more noticeable changes on campus this semester has been the increased number of bicycles and assorted wheeled conveyances. Even with some new bicycle racks in place, bicycle parking is nearly as vexing as finding an empty spot in one of the lots or parking structures. Increased parking fees and high gas prices have likely contributed to this upturn in bicycle usage, but growing concern for the environment may also be a factor.

Accompanying this surge in bicycle use is the implementation of President's Directive 16 dealing with on-campus use of personal forms of transportation. The timing was coincidental, but Directive 16 comes at an opportune moment in our campus growth. The punitive component of the new regulation has garnered the most attention lately, but the intent, and it is hoped, long-term benefits of the new policy will be a more sustainable campus.

Despite coverage in the *Daily Titan* and several announcements on campus portals and websites, many students, faculty and staff members I have spoken with around campus still have questions about the new Directive. In this article I hope to address some of these questions by describing the process of crafting this new policy, highlight some steps that are underway or still in development, and encourage any interested parties to lend their ideas and energy to the task of making CSUF safer and more convenient for alternative modes of transportation. Some of the conversations and bike rides that helped shape the Directive are worth reviewing since many involved feel the successful process could serve as a model for future policy development.

The Process

In the Fall of 2006, at a meeting of the Ad Hoc Bike and Bike Facility Committee, plans were presented for a new policy that would have

greatly reduced bicycle use and bicycle parking on campus. The objective of the plan was to reduce the likelihood of pedestrians being injured by bicycles or other forms of non-motorized transportation, including skateboards and scooters. While all agreed that improving campus safety was a necessary outcome, exactly how to reach that goal was called into question. Thus began a dialog between campus administrators and bicycle advocates that resulted in a much richer policy than would have come about if either group had developed it alone.

There was general agreement that the campus would benefit from an official policy on bicycle use and other forms of alternative transportation. In fact, the Ad Hoc Committee approved an early version of the policy. However, some members of the Ad Hoc Committee felt the plan was unnecessarily restrictive and counter to the ideas of environmental stewardship and campus sustainability. To the credit of the administrators charged with developing this policy, they did not simply move forward with the approved document, but instead sought additional feedback before implementing the new Directive. It was noted that the campus did not have any current baseline data about bicycle usage on campus. Over the next few months, students in one of my classes conducted a comprehensive bicycle rack usage survey and presented a report to the Ad Hoc Committee. The report concluded that on a typical day over 300 bicycles were parked on campus. Further, it was observed that in several popular areas rack space did not meet demand for bicycle parking, and many bikes were locked to nearby poles and railings. This was most extreme near the east entrance to Pollack Library.

As the dialog continued, a more progressive approach to bicycles and other forms of personal transportation evolved. It was agreed that these various forms of transportation should be accommodated where appropriate and safe. In order to determine safe routes through campus we went for a bike ride. On several occasions various Committee members and administrators rode bicycles, walked and traveled in electric carts around campus mapping safe routes, designating areas most suitable for bike racks,

and identifying congested areas that are unsafe for bicycle riding.

In addition to mapping routes and identifying rack locations, the document that would become Directive 16 developed from purely restrictive in tone to a policy that balances the transportation needs of students, faculty and staff with public safety. Several of the new provisions are worth noting. First, the policy charges the University with providing “safe and convenient routes for bicycles to all campus facilities” where feasible. In addition, the Directive requires the University to provide sufficient bike racks and review their use periodically. Second, Directive 16 permits parking bicycles in private offices.

The Department of Environmental Health and Instructional Safety has developed a complete Bicycle Parking and Storage policy. Third, and most significant, Directive 16 requires that CSUF establish a University Bicycle Committee.

The Committee will “review bicycle access and safety” annually and make recommendations to the Parking Advisory Committee. The Bicycle Committee will be specifically concerned with on-campus bicycle paths, routes to and from campus, bicycle rack locations and design, publicity and signage, and other campus bicycle issues. It is hoped that through effective publicity and signage more students, faculty and staff will be encouraged to consider bicycling to campus as a safe and viable alternative to an automobile. None of these provisions were in the original policy but resulted from constructive dialog and open cooperation between bicycle advocates and campus administrators.

Implementation

As can be imagined, disseminating new usage rules, updating infrastructure, and establishing a new campus committee is a complicated undertaking. Consequently, these changes are being phased in. At the beginning of the Fall 2008 semester an ongoing educational campaign commenced to inform the campus community about the new policy and to provide fair warning before enforcement begins. Campus maps indicating safe routes across campus and

designating “dismount zones” where bicycle riding is prohibited have been posted across campus. In addition to the maps, permanent metal bike route signs and dismount zone signs are being installed on campus.

Throughout the rest of this year, new bicycle racks will be installed in locations convenient to campus facilities and provide logical parking options that minimize the necessity to cross dismount zones. By placing bike racks in these locations, the temptation for bicyclists to continue riding through dismount zones will be reduced. After the new racks are installed and maps and signage are updated, bike route lines will be painted on streets and sidewalks to more clearly demark bike paths.

The University Bicycle Committee is currently being formed. Directive 16 requires that the committee consist of “three faculty members appointed by the Academic Senate, two staff members appointed by the Vice President for Administration and Finance, and two students appointed by the President of the Associated Students Inc.” These voting members can serve for no longer than two consecutive academic years. In addition, the Director of Environmental Health and Instructional Safety, the Director of Parking and Transportation, and the Facility Planner or their designees will serve as ex officio, non-voting members. One of the first tasks of this committee will be to re-evaluate campus bicycle usage in the wake of both increased gas prices and parking fees and implementation of Directive 16.



Pedaling Forward

At the end of September, Governor Schwarzenegger signed the Complete Streets Act into law. Although this new legislation requires cities and counties in the state to adequately address the needs of bicyclists, pedestrians and transit riders on streets and roads, it is reasonable to expect that these mandates will make their way to our campus in some fashion.

The passage of the Complete Streets Act combined with several campus initiatives to increase the University's sustainability and the planned disruption of our parking lots will, in all likelihood, generate even greater demand for bicycle infrastructure and facilities. The decision to craft Directive 16 to include a University Bicycle Committee and to require the University to accommodate bicycles into our long-range planning will serve the campus well.

Even if one is not inclined to ride a bicycle to campus, everyone benefits from a decrease in the number of automobiles coming to campus. In addition to the reduction in pollution and energy consumption, fewer cars means less congestion and a greater probability of finding a parking space. For those who choose/need to drive to campus. Whether you ride a bicycle to campus or not, if you are concerned about a safe and sustainable University, you are invited to participate in the ongoing development of our campus bicycle plan.

Further information about Directive 16 can be found at: <http://www.directive16.fullerton.edu/>



Dr. John Carroll is Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Geography. He has been commuting by bicycle for as long as he has been commuting. His teaching and research interests include Geographic Information Systems, environmental hazards, and sustainable communities. Dr. Carroll serves on the Academic Senate, the University's Information Technology Committee and, not surprisingly, the new Bicycle Committee.

The Senate Forum

The *Senate Forum* is a publication of the Academic Senate at California State University Fullerton. It is designed to stimulate discussion, debate, and understanding of a variety of issues that the Senate addresses. Individuals are encouraged to respond to articles contained in the *Forum*, or to submit their own contributions.

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