

FROM INCREMENTAL CHANGE TO LEAPS

Power Moves for Bike Coalitions

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The hottest things I've seen:

- Bike Share.
- Protected bike lanes: the export of Dutch and Danish cycling infrastructure.
- Traffic calming: the Dutch call it Sustainable Safety.
- Open Streets/Ciclovía.

At the recent California Bike Summit, Randy Neufeld described the \$10 Million Cycling Fund he manages for component manufacturer SRAM. The fund makes grants to support advocacy for innovative cycling infrastructure in Europe and the U.S. Since he has such a great perspective on what effective advocacy is worth funding, he shared with us his Power Moves:

1. **Decision-Points** – Focus on the most important decision-points, on who the decision makers are, and which decisions, if they go our way, would change the environment to allow leaps forward, not just incremental progress. Evaluate any events, programs, education and information activities you work on to make sure they are essential to your winning the decision-points. Sometimes you have to choose not to do good things to focus on more important things. Have a campaign focus instead of a program focus.
2. **Wholesale not Retail** – focus on wholesale change, on brokering support from groups, agencies, institutions. Not working one person at a time, but rather bringing in substantial support in one relationship. Moving from teaching a person to fish to embedding the teaching of fishing in schools, government and business. Think mainstreaming.
3. **Hardware & Software** – Hardware is the on-street infrastructure that changes people's behavior – the new bikeways and other projects that brings out new people to ride and increases the percentage of people biking. Software is the encouragement and education programming. Focus 75% on hardware and 25% on software. Many bike coalitions fall into the trap of doing software because that is what we have control over, but it is the hardware changes that will actually have the biggest impact.
4. **Carrots & Sticks** – Make driving harder (sticks) and biking easier (carrots). It is the combination of these two that effects rapid change in the numbers of people biking. Bike coalitions typically focus only on the carrots, but we have to work on both sides to effect real change. The London congestion charge is a good example of a stick that dramatically grew cycling. Sticks are hard in the US. Think about using safety, economic and health problems as a basis for enacting sticks. For instance slower speed zones to cut down on pedestrian crashes. Some strategies are both carrots and sticks. For instance removing a travel lane to build a protected bike lane.
5. **Make powerful friends** – create relationships with Mayors and other powerful politicians. Help them have the experiences that bring understanding on our issues. Get them invited on study trips, get them on bikes, get them to meet their equivalent politicians in places where great things are happening for bikes.
6. **Make diverse powerful friends** – Reach out to leaders of communities of color, immigrant, and low-income communities. The decision-makers, the Legislatures and City councils often reflect the diversity of a city or a state. We should build our network into all sectors of power.
7. **Get people hired and get people fired** – Sometimes when things are stuck at agencies or in government we just need new players to move our agenda ahead. When Rahm Emmanuel became Mayor of Chicago he got the first protected bikeway implemented in just 35 days. Sometimes when new leadership comes on board the obstacles that kept projects stuck for years disappear. We need to get involved with personnel decisions. We need to ask ourselves the question – who should be doing this job? And how can we get them in the seat? If the wrong person is doing the job how can we get them out of that seat?

8. **Bike Partisanship** – We have friends and allies on both sides of the aisle. Bikes appeal to the left because they are a great equalizer and give people access to a transportation choice that is healthy, environmentally sound and economical. Bikes appeal to the right because they are a symbol of freedom, independence and a patriotic choice (no dependence on foreign oil) and appeal to nostalgia for a time when kids got themselves to school and learned to be entrepreneurs on their bike-powered newspaper route. Cycling already has bike-partisan support, let's intentionally build our base among both parties, and in all wings of each party.
9. **Redefine Membership** – Individual members are important, but institutions, hospitals, businesses, government agencies, the bike industry are also important and very powerful. We need a broad definition of membership that includes a way for institutions to sign on as members and supporters. They are great ambassadors and allies. Make all of these part of our constituency, owners of our org. We are a true coalition. Think of how many people ride bikes, not how many people define themselves as cyclists. Many more people ride bikes than call themselves cyclists. Build coalitions outside of cycling groups, align with other groups with complementary interests, especially pedestrian and transit interests. Your membership should be your power base.
10. **Build a nest of leaders** – Organizations and movements with just one leader are not as successful. We need LOTS of leaders – people who will grab on to specific pieces and run with them. Successful non-profit orgs are staff-led (no micro-management from their board of directors) and have lots of leaders at all levels: staff, board and volunteer. This results in more capacity, more leadership and better outcomes.
11. **Unite** – Currently we are not optimally organized. We have too many organizations with too many overlapping jurisdictions resulting in competition for donors, members and other resources. We don't necessarily need to merge, although we should consider it where it might make sense. The national level is one place we have too much overlap. If we better align ourselves we can use our limited resources more effectively. How can we finance and organize our national, state and regional organizations differently so they can enthusiastically champion their local organizations and efforts?
12. We need to **work at the top and the bottom**. Do demonstration projects to show success at the local level, then institutionalize at the state and federal level with legislation, funding programs and policy.
13. **You are not the only one working on this** – Look at what is happening in other cities, states, regions, and countries. Freely borrow the best practices that you find. Create an exchange. Many European countries, especially south and east, share a very similar stage of cycling infrastructure development.
14. **Sweat the Details** – It's OK to be wonky. Do your homework. We need to understand the legislative process, funding process, the systems, and who really makes the decisions. Target the key decision points. Ask lots of questions. Being a helpful resource to decision makers is a tremendous relationship builder and a source of power.