

22 October 2009

Memo To: Transportation Study Committees
From: Hedi Ballantyne and Kate Rader
Subject: Interview with Nancy Schulz, Vermont Bicycle and Pedestrian Coalition (VBPC)

The Bicycle and Pedestrian coalition promotes safe walking, running and biking in Vermont through education and advocacy. It is a statewide nonprofit organization, with some members from out of state.

VBPC distributes safety information through their newsletter, bumper stickers, cards with safety tips and, perhaps most importantly, through direct talks to school students.

Funding is a problem, to cover the cost of literature and travel. In the past, AARP has provided some funding for the newsletter, and they have had grants from insurance companies and AAA. Blue Cross-Blue Shield of Vermont provides support indirectly through publication of walks and bike routes around the state, which they give to VBPC for distribution. Grant money has become scarce in the recent economy, and personnel resources to help seek new money are thin.

Schulz sees the need for more and safer transportation through self-locomotion as a health issue. She mentioned H.R.2050, the No Child Left Inside act. While mainly addressing environmentalism, this legislation also seeks to touch on healthy living programs encouraging outdoor recreation and sound nutrition. The Safe Routes to School program integrates health, fitness, traffic relief, environmental awareness, and safety under one program. Schultz referred us to Aimee Pope, at VTrans, for more information about this program. Another program which encourages cycling is the federal Bicycle Commuter Act. Starting January 1, 2009, employers who provide bike parking, bathing facilities, tune-ups, or other support for bicycle commuting, can deduct up to \$20 a month per participating employee from their own taxable income. John Kaplan oversees bicycle/pedestrian programs at VTrans.

Two other needs she sees are more mass transit, particularly busses, and easy access to trains for cyclists traveling with their bikes. For more information about advocacy on the train access issue, Schulz referred us to Christopher Parker, of the Rail Action Network (conductorchris@gmail.com).

VBPC works with Local Motion (Chittenden County), Rutland Area Physical Activity Coalition (RAPAC), the Upper Valley Trails Alliance and AARP to promote their goals. AARP will be advocating in the State House this session for “complete streets,” legislation that requires all new construction or reconstruction (except simple repaving) of streets to include walkways and bicycle lanes.

As usual, this interview provided our study with new sources for information.