

## **Models For Change**

### **Ensuring Excellence in an Emerging Profession: the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals**

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#### **Summary**

The Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals was established in 1995. Located in Washington, DC, the APBP has 300 members from more than 40 states and four countries. Members include state and local government staff, academics, professional advocates, students, and consultants from traffic engineering, planning, safety, research and campaigning backgrounds. More details of the APBP's specific activities will be presented in a workshop later in the program.

APBP is a good model for change in the sense that it reflects a number of trends in the United States that have considerable application throughout the world. This presentation will focus on two themes: First, associations in the United States have a unique and critical role in shaping public policy and affecting our everyday lives. Second, one of the few areas in which the United States has something to teach other countries in relation to bicycling is in the role and function of the bicycle program manager, bicycle coordinator, or cycling officer. In the United States, they hold at least as much responsibility for the future of bicycling as do advocates or campaigners.

#### **1. Associations Advance America.**

The United States is home to 1,300 international associations, 23,000 national associations and 110,000 state and local associations. Associations employ 295,000 people nationwide and in the Washington DC area associations are the third largest industry behind the government and tourism. The largest associations in the US are the American Automobile Association (35 million members), the American Association of Retired Persons (32 million) and the YMCA (15 million) and the work of associations affect you from infancy (National Association of Diaper Services) to death (National Concrete Burial Vault Association).

Inevitably, therefore, there are dozens of transportation-related associations, and twenty or more bicycle-related national associations in the US alone. In a country that boasts a National Association of Professional Pet Sitters, it seems only right that there should be a group for pedestrian and bicycle professionals.

The reason why industries, professions, hobbies, and all kinds of interest groups form associations is because they play a critical role in a number of important areas.

- a) Legislation and public policy: landmark transportation laws such as the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) and the Transportation Equity Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (TEA-21), were inspired, crafted, and lobbied by associations. Because of the active involvement of bicycle associations, Federal funding for nonmotorized projects has risen from \$7 million in 1990 to \$222 million in 1999.
- b) Standards, guidelines, best practices and ethics: associations in the United States are responsible for a wide variety of codes of ethics and professional and safety standards which govern such professions as law, medicine, and banking. Most highway design manuals in the United States are based on those developed by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE), and other professional groups. APBP has a critical role to play in coordinating the input of the bicycle professionals into these other groups.
- c) Information and knowledge management: conferences such as this are vital opportunities for professionals to learn from each other, to network, and to be inspired. Association in the United States spend more than \$56 billion to hold conventions, expositions, and seminars, and meetings account for one-third of all hotel revenues and one quarter airline operating revenues. The 1997 convention of the National Marine Manufacturers Association was attended by 177,000 people. APBP has tailored its information management activities to expand opportunities for professionals to learn from each other. The group provides a newsletter, web site, electronic list serve, training workshops, professional development seminars, and helped to establish and run the Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center ([www.bicyclinginfo.org](http://www.bicyclinginfo.org)).
- d) Professional development and skill-building: one of the unique features of the APBP is its focus on individual professional development. Our constituents/members are individuals who want to know how to do a better job within their agency, company, or organization. Members have also been able to find new jobs because of the network created by APBP. The group has recently issued a benchmarking survey of the profession and will use the information gathered from that to improve salaries, recognition, status, and training opportunities for the professionals working in our field.

## **2. Bicycle Professionals Advance Bicycle Programs**

Many of APBP's members are bicycle program managers (or bicycle coordinators, cycling officers etc) for State, regional, and city governments. Even though they are vastly outnumbered by their colleagues who are not solely responsible for bicycling issues, bicycle program managers are essential catalysts in improving conditions for bicycling. In 1991, Congressman James Oberstar inserted a simple requirement in the ISTEA legislation that every State Department of Transportation should have a bicycle

coordinator. He believed it was important for there to be at least some point of contact for bicycling issues in every state. Although there is no requirement, more than 75 cities and counties have designated bicycle program managers and many more have staff working at least part time on bicycling issues.

Although the impact of individual bicycle program managers varies wildly, it is hard to underestimate the impact they have had in several areas:

- Training of state and local engineers and planners
- Development of bicycle plans and programs
- Implementation of bike lane and trail networks
- Promotion of bicycle events and activities
- Updating design manuals, policies and plans

APBP programs must nurture and support the work of bicycle program managers as they are so vital to the process of change at the state and local level.

Indeed, in many communities there are no (or few) campaign groups or advocates arguing for change and it is up to the bicycle professional to lead the charge for bicycle improvements. In the mid-1990s, an important shift took place in the United States. For years, most of the technical expertise in the bicycle field was held by the advocacy community (and some advocates who went on to work for government). However, as the number and proficiency of bicycle program managers and consultants grew in the ISTEA era, the bicycle experts were increasingly to be found in the planning and engineering world. APBP was, perhaps not consciously, formed in response to this shift.

### **3. Conclusion**

The Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals is an important model for change because it exemplifies the value of associations and the important role of the bicycle program manager in influencing change.

### **Useful Resources**

- [www.apbp.org](http://www.apbp.org) site of the Association of Pedestrian and Bicycle Professionals
- [www.asaenet.org](http://www.asaenet.org) site of the American Society of Association Executives
- [www.gwsae.org](http://www.gwsae.org) site of the Greater Washington Society of Association Executives

Envelope Manufacturers Association

Greeting Card Association

American Philatelic Society

National Postal Forum

National Association of Professional Pet Sitters

National Association of Diaper Services  
27 entries in ASAE directory starting Association Management  
International Society for Performance Improvement  
International InFlight Food Service Association  
International Association of Airport Duty Free Stores  
International Air Transport Association  
International Airline Passengers Association  
Air Line Pilots Association  
Air Traffic Control Association  
Airborne Law Enforcement Association  
Airport Ground Transportation Association  
National Concrete Burial Vault Association