

BICYCLE ADVOCACY

(OR) HOW TO CHANGE THE WORLD IN 10 EASY STEPS

Bicycling issues are often ignored. Change can happen however by asserting our positions. These pointers, courtesy of many years of successful advocacy, may help.

1. Set reasonable, specific, and *achievable* goals.
2. Involve as many groups as possible. "Coalitions" succeed because they represent more people and multiple interests. One person can be ignored; coalitions can't.
3. Know the political and administrative context. How are decisions made? Who makes them? Who controls the budget? What opportunities are provided for public input?
4. Don't be afraid to contact the appropriate politicians. They value your opinions. Besides, it's their job to represent you.
5. Do your homework beforehand. Even better, do *their* homework. Stress dollar savings, alternative funding sources - "the bottom line". Demonstrate that your proposal is reasonable and affordable.
6. Remember - a meeting is better than a letter, a letter is better than a phone call, and a phone call is far better than a name on a petition.
7. With all contacts begin by summarizing your position/request. Use statistics and personal experiences to support your argument. Be brief. Keep your tone positive; anger only alienates people.
8. Cultivate media support. Newspaper articles, in particular, have tremendous political clout. Capture media interest by staging unusual events, with "photo opportunities" and "sound bites" for television coverage. A local politician or celebrity may help champion your cause.
9. Be persistent. Any organization - especially a government bureaucracy - is resistant to change.
10. Nurture positive energy. Graciously thank people for their support. Respect divergent opinions. Cultivate your allies. Avoid antagonizing people and organizations. Celebrate your victories. Have fun ... and change the world!

By Ben Gomberg. Based on an by article Bill Coffman.