



BERNUTH & WILLIAMSON

---

# Perceptions and Possibilities

Stakeholder opinion on the status of bicycling in the national policy arena

*Prepared for the National Bike Summit, March 5, 2013*

Douglas Meyer  
Bernuth & Williamson  
[www.bernuthconsulting.com](http://www.bernuthconsulting.com)



# OVERVIEW

---

- **Purpose**
- **Participation**
- **Findings**
- **Recommendations**



## PURPOSE

---

- Obtain through a series of in-depth interviews the opinions of the national policy community, with a focus on bicycling as transportation
- Obtain through a survey the opinions of leading advocates, specifically those at the Bike Summit
- Analyze, compare and contrast
- Provide recommendations



# OVERVIEW

---

- Purpose
- **Participation**
- Findings
- Recommendations



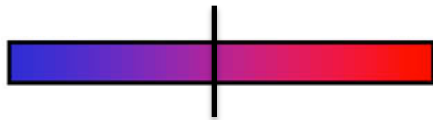
# PARTICIPATION

## Interviews (January-February)

30 in-depth conversations with policy leaders identified by the League



House staff	9
Senate staff	11
DOT/Other	10
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30</b>



Republican staff	10
Democratic staff	10



"Opponent" or "supporter"\* + .4

\*All potential interviewees were identified by the League on a scale from "strong opponent" to "strong supporter." Actual interview sample was skewed slightly towards "supporters."

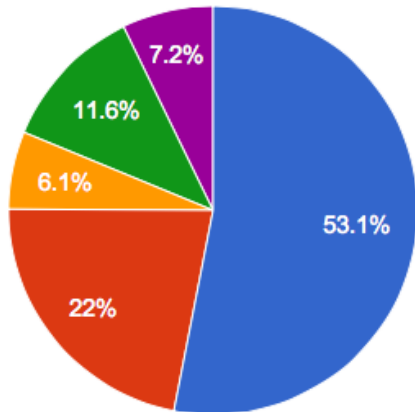




# PARTICIPATION

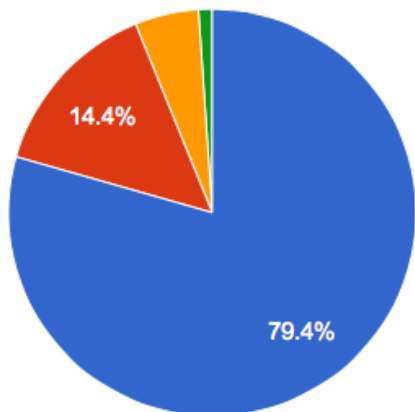
## Survey (Yesterday)

A sample of 281 attendees as they (i.e. you!) registered for the Summit



**What is your primary affiliation at the Summit?**

- Bike club or advocacy organization
- Bike shop or bike related business
- Business or organization not focused on bikes
- Government agency
- No affiliation



**Which is of the highest interest to you? Advancing...**

- Transportation
- Recreation
- Programs for children
- Races and special events





# OVERVIEW

---

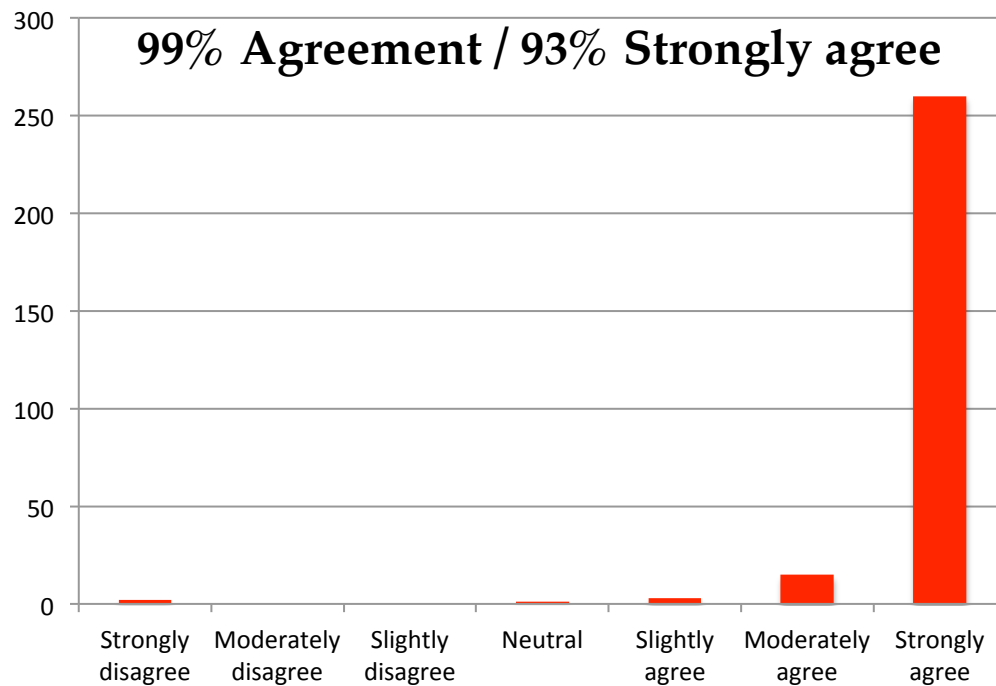
- Purpose
- Participation
- Findings
  - Acceptance
  - Obstacles and opportunities
  - Final thoughts
- Recommendations



## FINDINGS: ACCEPTANCE

*Advocates say:*

**Federal Government should support bicycling  
for local transportation**







## FINDINGS: ACCEPTANCE

---



*“Anything you do in DC is going to impact the national conversation”*



*Photo courtesy of Alta Planning*



## FINDINGS: ACCEPTANCE

---

*Policy leaders say:*

### **Acceptance is not the primary issue**

- *“BikeShare is a game changer.”*
- *“With the bike share and the green bike lanes (in DC), more people are seeing the more utilitarian aspects.”*
- *“With Secretary LaHood and the Administration you’ve had a real push to include biking, (and) four years of talking about it has lifted it to...a more legitimate topic.”*
- *“A lot of it comes down to whether or not you feel the Federal role in transportation is to build a better highway system or a better transportation system, and if someone believes firmly (in the former) then it’s going to be difficult, but if someone is (open to the latter) you can make arguments (for bicycling).”*
- *“It varies from place to place, (but in) the major cities on the coast and other places bicycling has become a part of the network of how we just get around.”*
- **COUNTERPOINT:** *“(Opponents) will acknowledge the potential benefits... but overall I just don’t think they’re buying bicycling as transportation.”*





# OVERVIEW

---

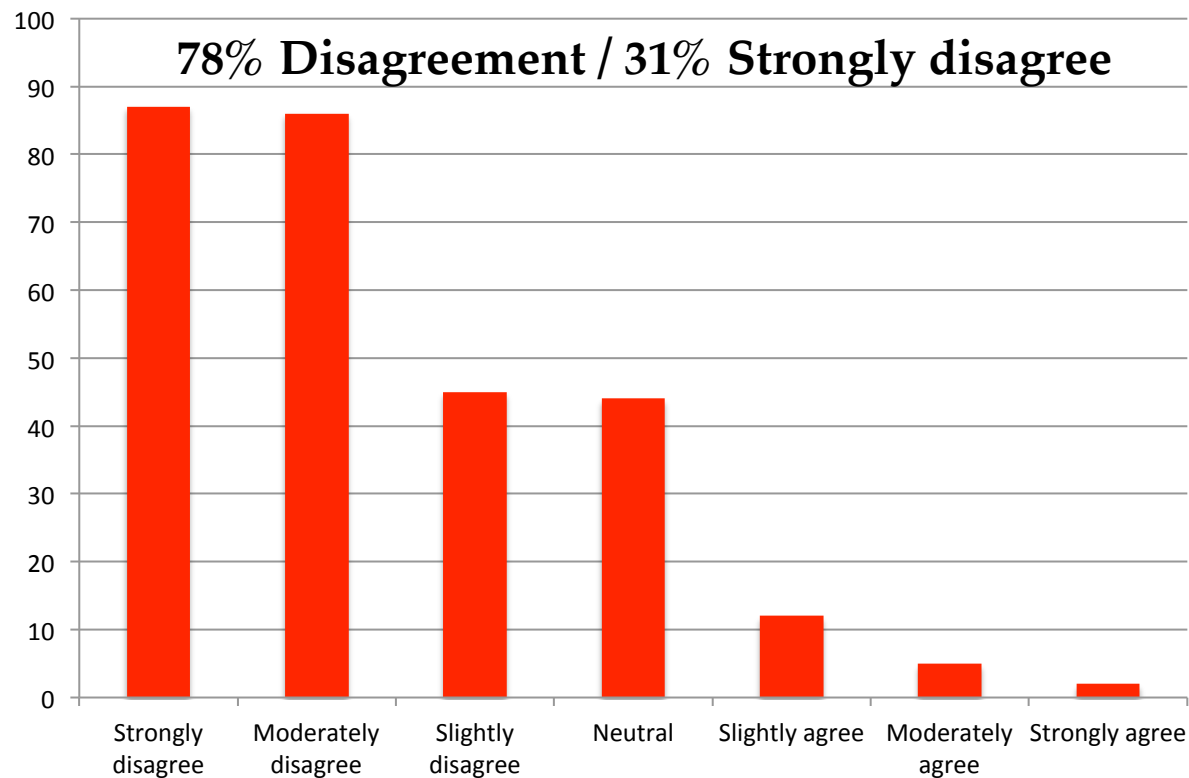
- Purpose
- Participation
- Findings
  - Acceptance
  - Obstacles and opportunities
    1. Funding
    2. Multimodalism
    3. Telling stories
    4. Measuring success
    5. Popularity
  - Final thoughts
- Recommendations



## FINDINGS: OBSTACLES & OPPORTUNITIES

*Advocates say:*

**Satisfied with treatment of bicycling under MAP-21**





## FINDINGS: OBSTACLES & OPPORTUNITIES

---



*“(Disagreement is) less about the ends,  
more about the means”*

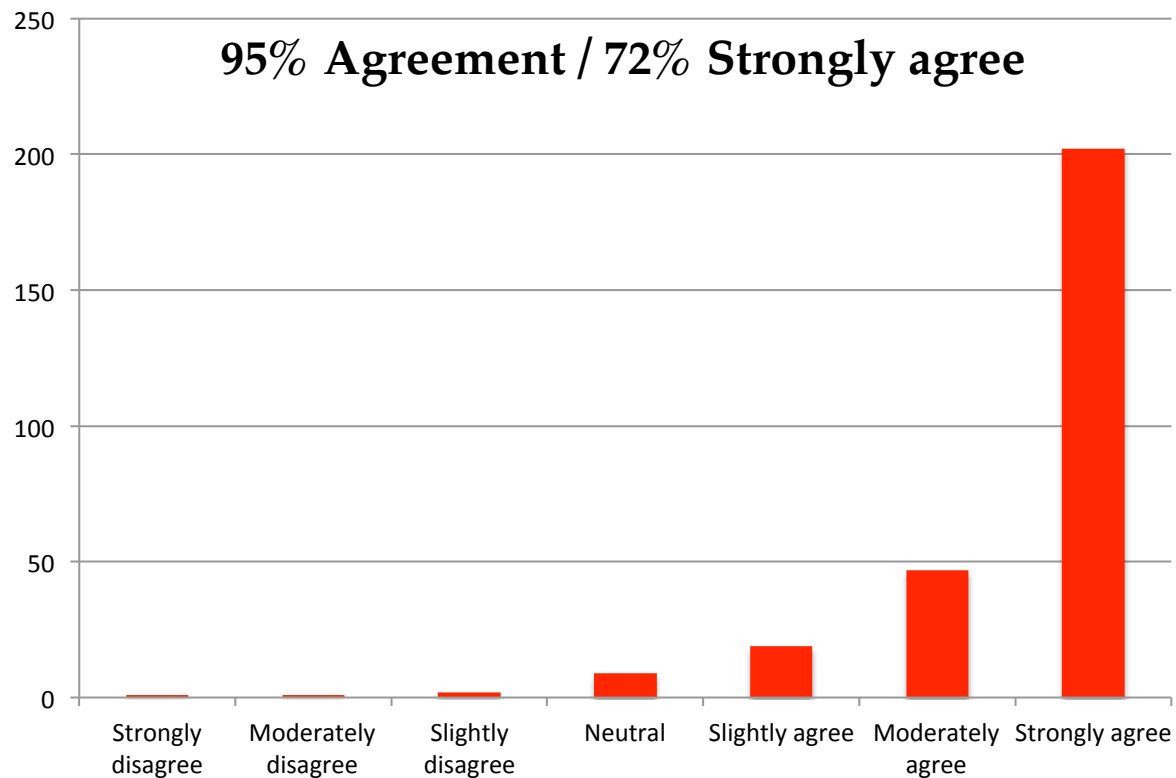




## FINDINGS: FUNDING

*Advocates say:*

**Ask for fair share of Federal transportation funding**





## FINDINGS: FUNDING

---

*Policy leaders say:*

### Recognize trends, and don't take it personally

- *“I thought this shift (to more state and local decision-making) was clear a couple of years ago and they should have shifted already. They're late, very late.”*
- *“I don't think that anyone has an animosity to bikes...we have funding constraints.”*
- *“Advocates need to recognize the pressures on the Federal budget, and instead of relying on the dedicated funding...focus on how to access...the money (that is there).”*
- *“Focusing on having a dedicated funding source marginalizes the issue, rather than... (an) approach where you accommodate all the needs and let the money go to that.”*
- *“One of my concerns is how the bike community is always arguing about ‘getting their fair share of funds.’ Everyone in transportation is always kvetching about not getting their fair share, and it is annoying...It shouldn't be about parity but about result”*
- *“The bicycling community needs to think about revenue - is there a user fee or other way to help pay, even if something symbolic?”*

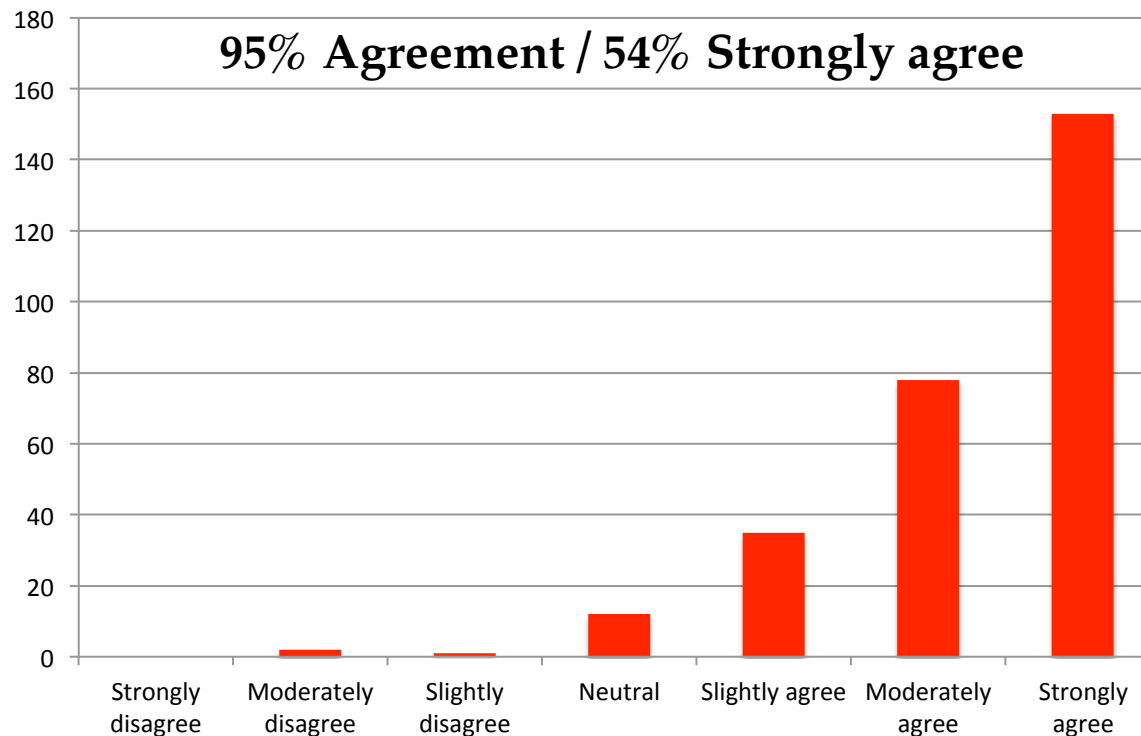




## FINDINGS: MULTIMODALISM

*Advocates say:*

**Position bicycling as part of the mix of choices...  
emphasize complementarity**



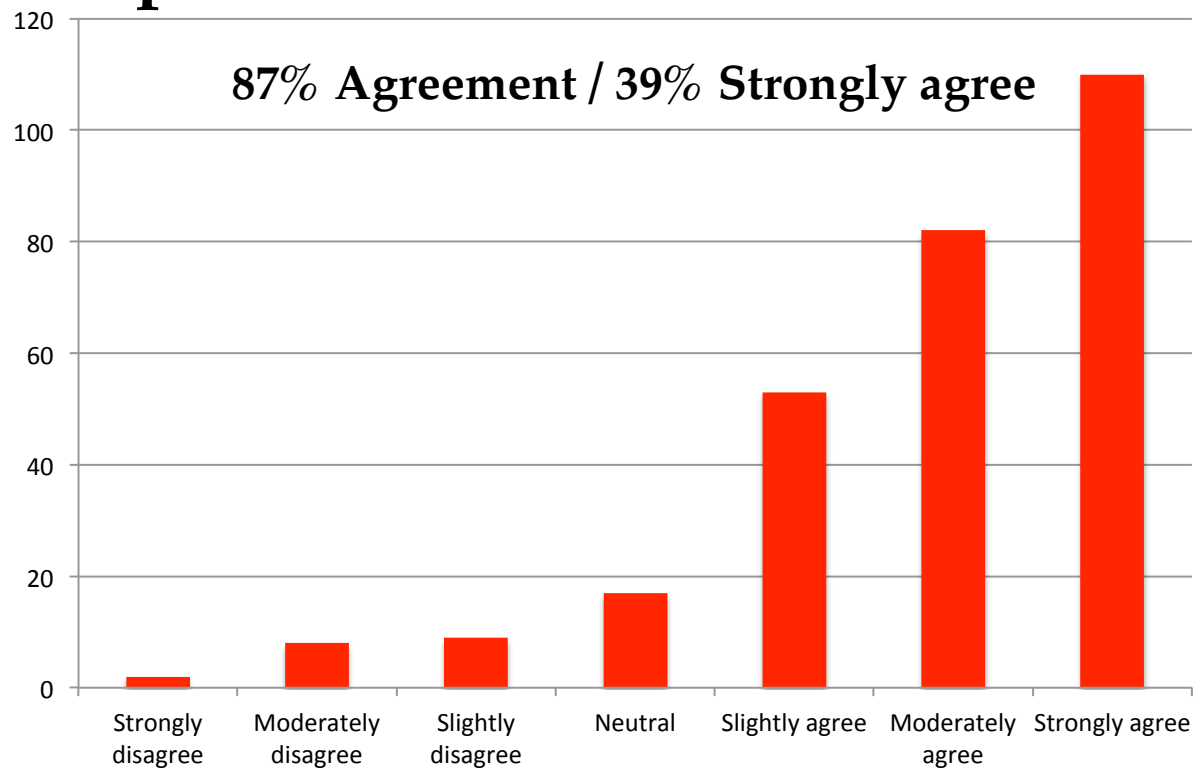




## FINDINGS: MULTIMODALISM

*Advocates say:*

**Position bicycling as a better alternative...  
compare to other modes**





## FINDINGS: MULTIMODALISM

---

*Policy leaders say:*

**Multimodalism is the way forward, even if bicycling advocates have yet to embrace it**

- *“A stronger argument can be made for the complementarity of modes...there are some missed opportunities because of this feeling that it is zero sum game.”*
- *“It can’t be about critical mass and kicking ass. It has to be about multimodal, progressive, transportation options.”*
- *“It is about really looking at it as a complement to the system rather than as an alternative to the system...and giving people options...that is actually bringing us closer to what the bike advocates want, even if they may not think so.”*
- *“You have some very well meaning, but out of touch and arrogant (bicycling advocates) who come in and turn people off.”*
- *“This process this last time around was so bad that it is now difficult for our bosses, even when they care about these issues, to go down to the floor and support those kinds of programs.”*

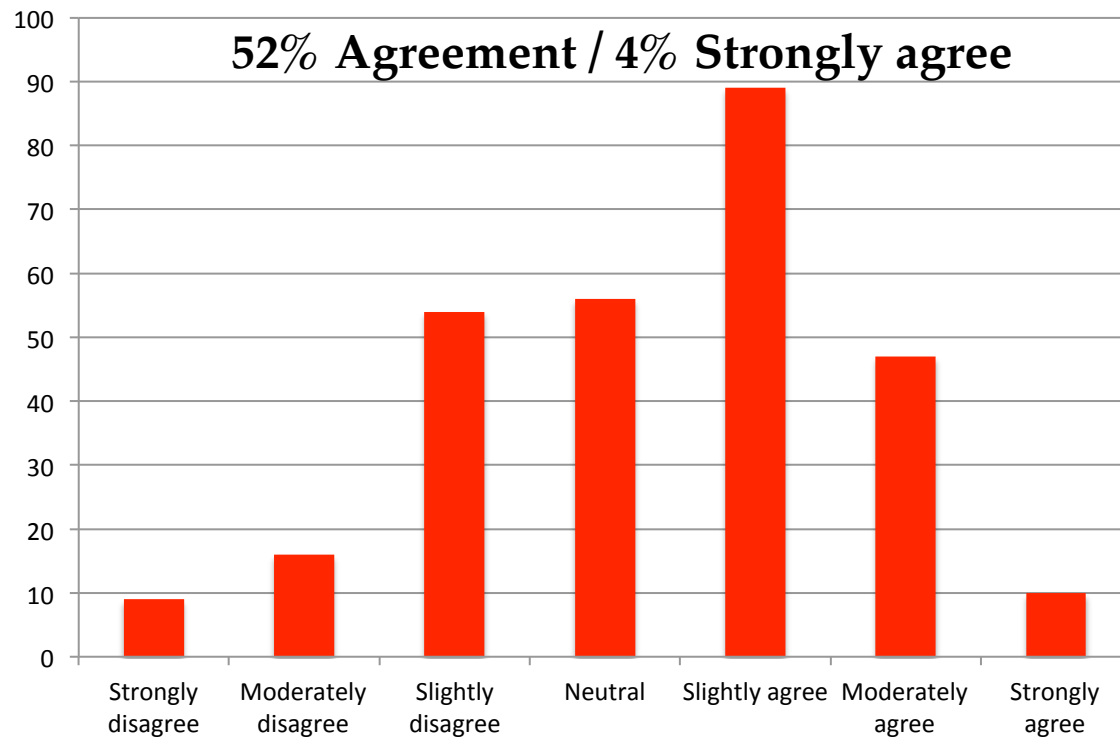




## FINDINGS: TELLING STORIES

*Advocates say:*

**Advocates are providing compelling stories of communities that have benefitted from bicycling**





## FINDINGS: TELLING STORIES

---

*Policy leaders say:*

**Stories are good, personal experiences are great**

- *“Well designed successful projects stick with people, and can color their whole view, and (bicycling advocates) can do a better job at getting those (stories) out there.”*
- *“No matter how many statistics you have, if someone gives a counter example that negates (your) facts, you’ve lost.”*
- *“For our district it is more recreational, whereas...DC is an example of where this works, as bicycling is a (mode) that people can take in lieu of the subway or the car.”*
- *“95% of the nonbelievers roll their eyes when I talk about bicycling for transportation, and the 5% who don’t typically have some personal experience.”*
- *“(There are) questions about the federal role and still a strong car bias... (then) you’re seeing cities like Oklahoma City, and that catches people’s attention.”*
- *“When you’re trying to convince someone who doesn’t have bike infrastructure already, you have to say, ‘Here are all these other places and don’t you want to like them?’, and, ‘Here are the studies that back that up.’”*

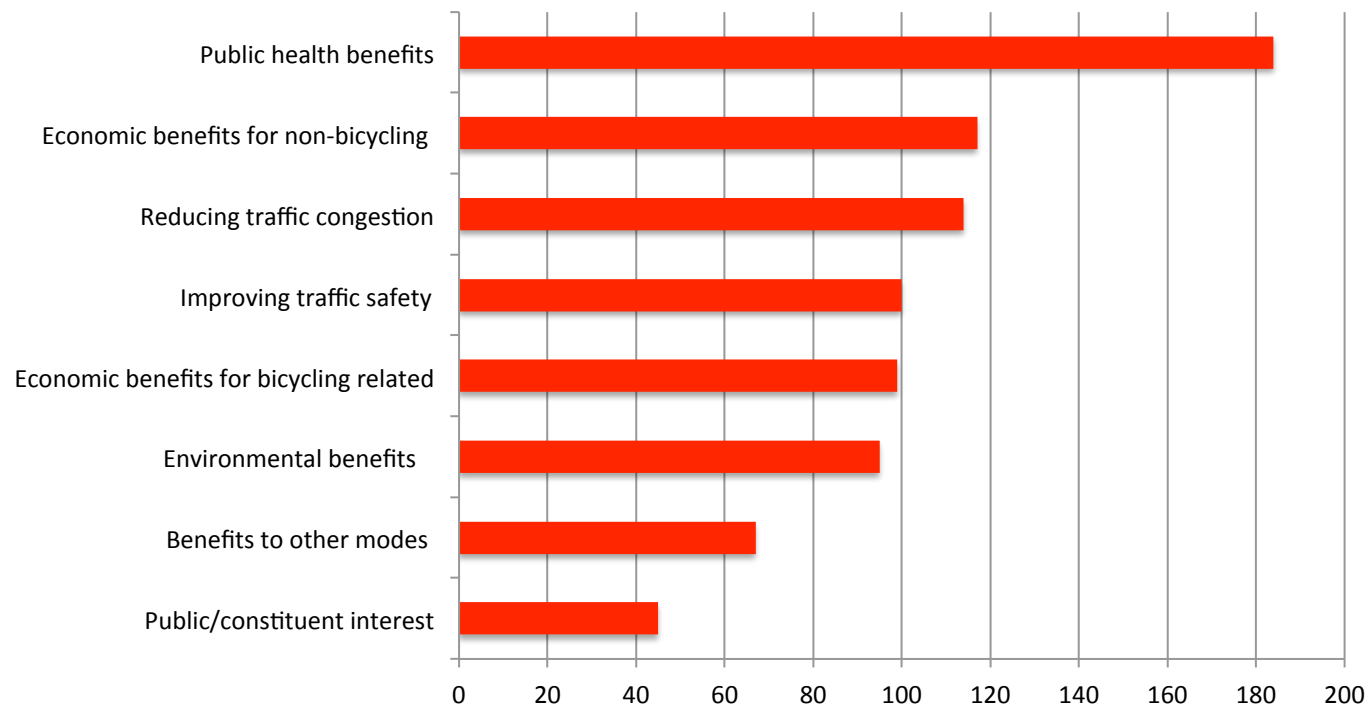




## FINDINGS: MEASURING SUCCESS

*Advocates say:*

**Advocates should stress importance of bicycling policies and programs in terms of...(Pick three)**

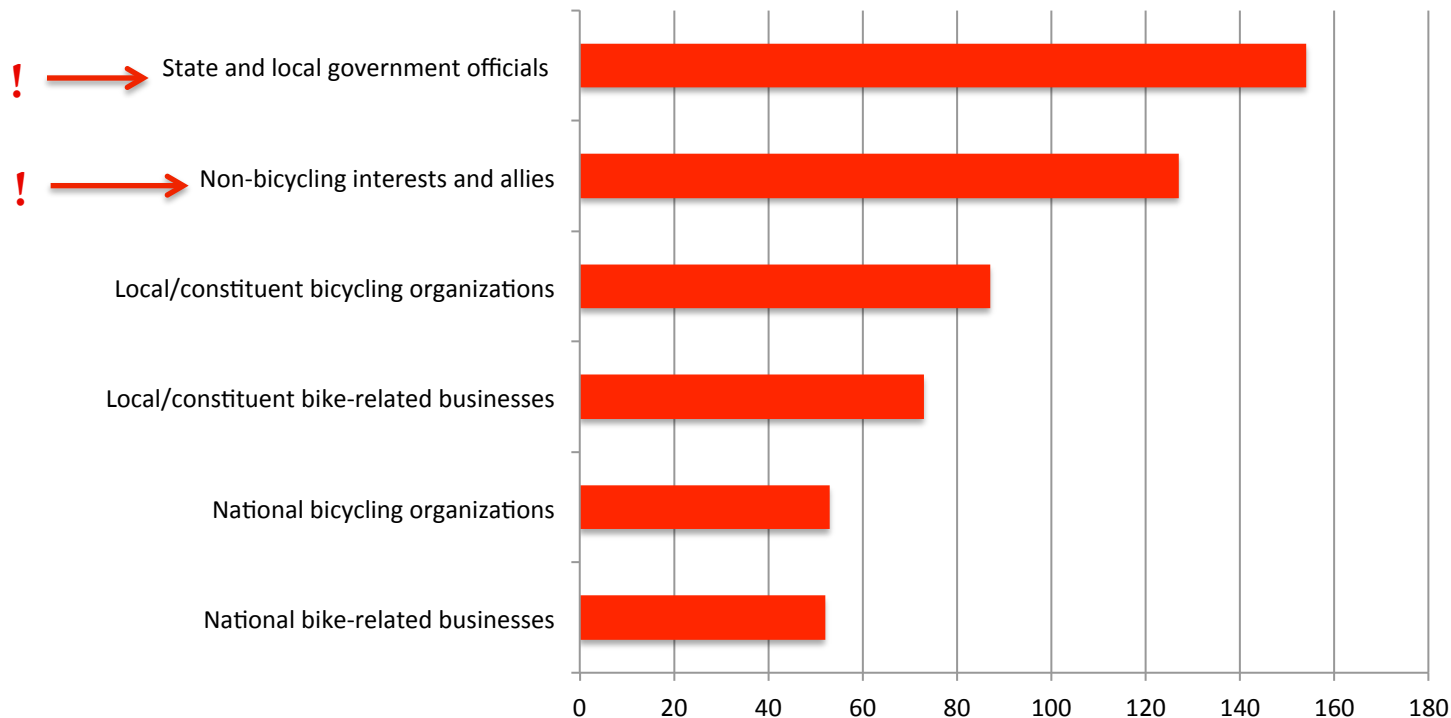




## FINDINGS: MEASURING SUCCESS

*Advocates say:*

**The following messengers are most likely to resonate with national policy leaders (Pick two)**





## FINDINGS: MEASURING SUCCESS

---

*Policy leaders say:*

**Best measured in terms unrelated to bicycling**

- *“It has to be about contributing to that bigger picture, and not just associating it with bicycling and bicyclists.”*
- *“(Bicycling advocates are) great people but (they’re) inherently suspect when they talk about the benefits for themselves.”*
- *“Bicycling has very much had a cultural aspect predicated on exclusion and identity ...they need to get away from talking about themselves to what’s in it for (others).”*
- *“When someone who is not already a supporter of bicycling hears (from an advocate) how cycling is going to save the world, they simply don’t believe it.”*
- *“If you can get the small business community to come out and understand that when traffic speeds go over 25 mph their business goes down, then its game over.”*
- *“If you’re not speaking (traffic) safety and economic competitiveness then forget it.”*

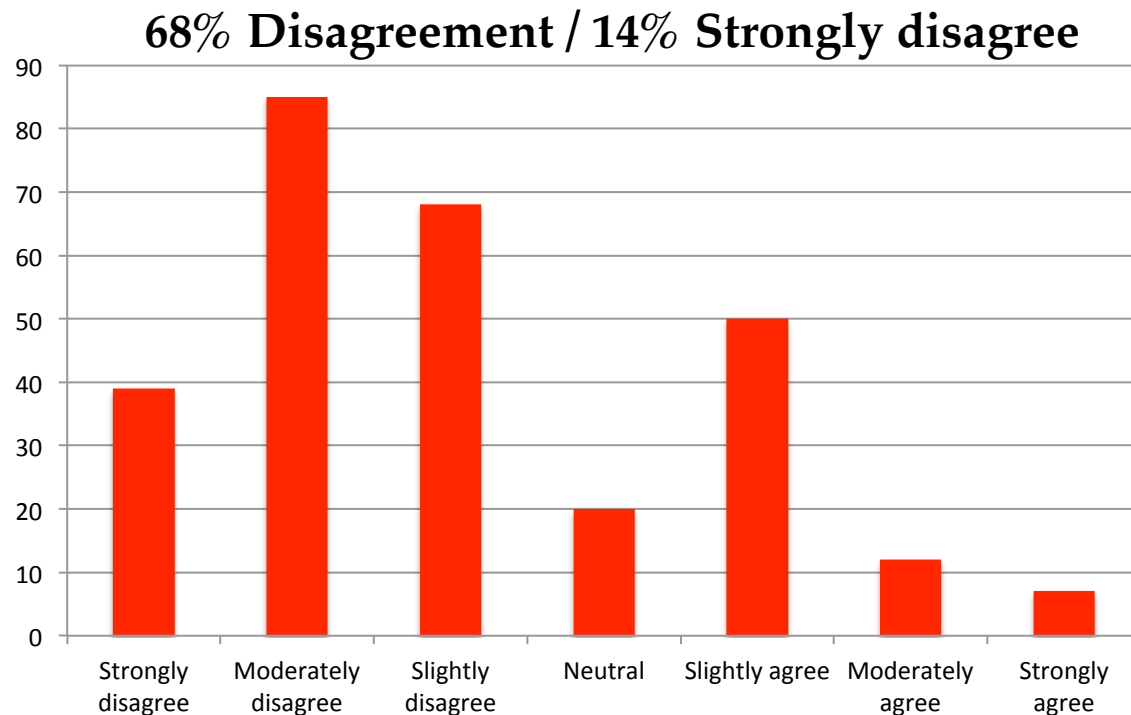




## FINDINGS: POPULARITY

*Advocates say:*

**National policy leaders are aware of the growing popularity of bicycling as local transportation**







## FINDINGS: POPULARITY

---

*Policy leaders say:*

### Seeing “urbanists” more than “bicyclists”

- *“Right now it is the trends that are bigger than the cycling movement - the price of gas, the trend towards urbanism, the interest in public health - and those macro trends are probably causing more people to be out riding than what the advocates could do.”*
- *“The best thing for biking...is that there has been this whole new school of thinking... which says that cities become economically vibrant by attracting young professionals, so mayors want to do that (and) that’s the selling point.”*
- *“A paradigm shift of younger people not wanting to move to the ‘burbs, and bike and ped is therefore becoming a stronger focus.”*
- *“The community planners I know under 40 are almost by default interested.”*
- *“Transportation agencies are starting to embrace bikes in a way I never thought I would see.”*
- *“If the state and locals think this is such a high priority then they should be able to do it, but we shouldn’t force them to do it.”*





# OVERVIEW

---

- Purpose
- Participation
- Findings
  - Acceptance
  - Obstacles and opportunities
  - Final thoughts
- Recommendations



## FINDINGS: FINAL THOUGHTS

---



*“We’re really at a crossroads...  
and if there ever was an opportunity to say,  
‘Let’s come together (across modes),’ it’s now”*



## FINDINGS: FINAL THOUGHTS

---

- *“It certainly isn’t any antipathy to biking in particular...as biking is common enough and makes sense in certain circumstances...it is just one subset of a broader issue of how we fund transportation and who makes those decisions as to where dollars go.”*
- *“I don’t think it’s an anti-bike, anti-walk sentiment, not at all. It is a lot of stakeholders fighting over the same money. The bike advocates think they’re being treated as if they’re not in the mainstream, and I don’t think that’s true.”*
- *“If I were a big bicycle guy I would concentrate my efforts much more at the local and state level, and point back to whatever growing interest that might be there. And recognize that the biggest thing (at the Federal level) is the money situation.”*
- *“The bike advocate’s best bet is to support the regional and local processes as they won’t get as much out of the states (or the Feds).”*
- *“Any mode’s success or failure is going to be based on the local level, as that is where policy is going.”*
- *“I think the local and state level is where we’re going to see the innovation, but there is still going to be an accountability role at the Federal government to say, ‘Hey, are you protecting the rights of the minority modes?’”*



## FINDINGS: FINAL THOUGHTS (CONT.)

---

- *“Without the Federal transportation funding that has existed over the last 20 years, this wouldn’t have happened. But now (bicycling is) at a more mature point, and the question becomes what’s the best way to match resources with needs?”*
- *“One of my hopes would be that (advocates) would focus not just on funding but on the planning statutes, as...then the rest falls into place.”*
- *“Don’t try to mandate things to happen. Just adjust to the trending demographics, and let it happen.”*
- *“Just make it optional and let the states and (locals) decide, and I don’t think you’d have really any push back on that.”*
- *“As long as you have such a narrow group of people advocating for something that they’re not paying into, you’re going to have a problem.”*
- *“Not just associating it with bicycling and bicyclists as then it will be associated with that one bad actor who blows through the red lights.”*
- *“After a while it’s, “Oh its the bike summit people again,” and something has to change...bringing in new champions and starting with demonstration projects.”*



## OVERVIEW

---

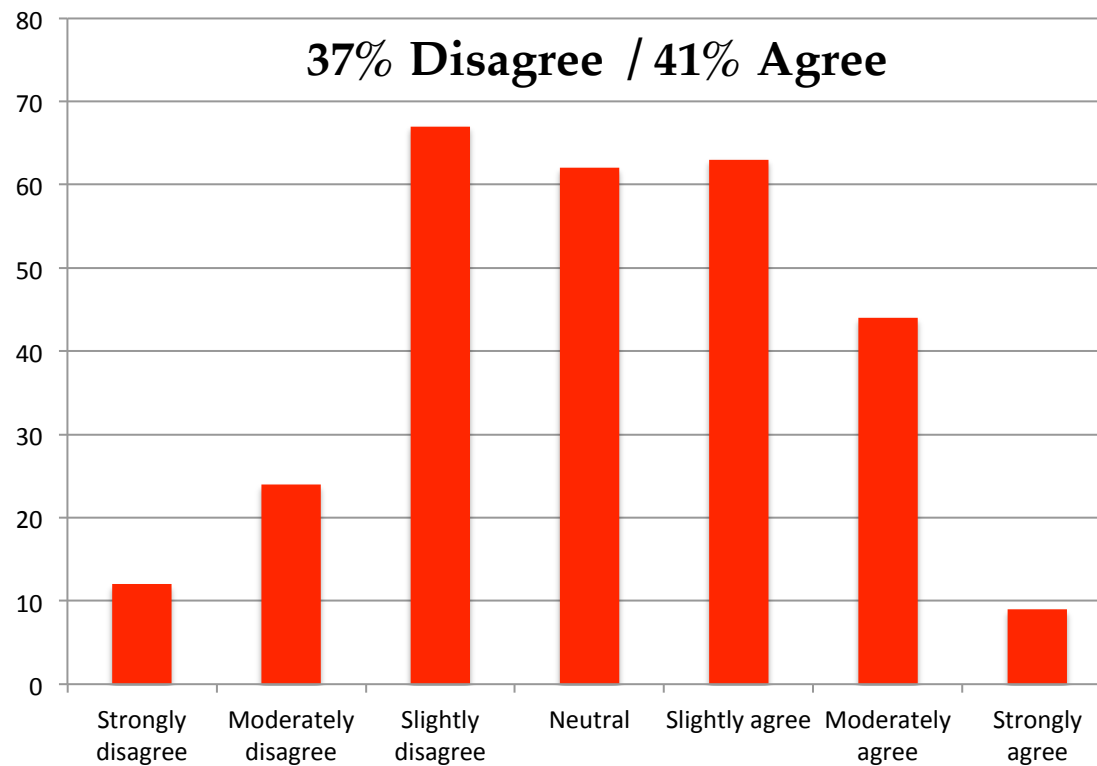
- Purpose
- Participation
- Findings
- **Recommendations**



## RECOMMENDATIONS

*Advocates say:*

**Advocates have been united in their message**





## RECOMMENDATIONS

---

- Think national, talk local (support and decisions)
- Tell success stories, emphasizing benefits to others
- Be inwardly bike-centric, but outwardly multimodal and mainstream
- Note budget constraints, explore existing options
- Thank old allies, and cultivate new ones
  - *and, of course* -
- Know your specific audience's interests and perspective (e.g. "Keeping cars safe from bikes")





BERNUTH & WILLIAMSON

---

# Perceptions and Possibilities

Stakeholder opinion on the status of bicycling in the national policy arena

*Prepared for the National Bike Summit, March 5, 2013*

Douglas Meyer  
Bernuth & Williamson  
[www.bernuthconsulting.com](http://www.bernuthconsulting.com)