



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Doctors Overwhelmingly Support Greenway

Over 150 Santa Cruz County doctors and medical professionals support removing the railroad tracks to build a safe, healthy and socially equitable trail

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY, CA—JUNE 13, 2017—150 doctors and medical professionals announced today that they support the trail proposal advocated by the Santa Cruz County Greenway organization (sccgreenway.org) as the safest and healthiest option for the Santa Cruz County community. The group of professionals reached this conclusion after studying the alternatives and decided the medical community should speak out about issues of health, safety, and the environment. Greenway advocates replacing the unused tracks with dedicated paths for pedestrians and cyclists as the backbone of an improved county active transportation network.

“The health benefits of regular exercise are well documented,” said Dr. Robert Quinn, Medical Director for Rehabilitation Services at Dominican Hospital and President of Santa Cruz Medical Group. “Greenway provides the best opportunity for the Santa Cruz County community to walk, cycle, use wheelchairs and get active. Commuting by bicycle more than halves the likelihood of experiencing a heart attack.¹ And with the obesity crisis among our youth, we have to take every measure to encourage an active lifestyle at early ages.”

The doctors and medical professionals also emphasize safety in their endorsement of Greenway. The Greenway plan calls for an off-street pathway without detours onto dangerous streets, more protected bike lanes, and separation of bikes and pedestrians so that commuters and recreational users can safely go at their own speeds. In 2014, Santa Cruz was first among more than 100 California cities of similar population—about 60,000 inhabitants—for wrecks with injury or death involving bicycles, according to the California Office of Traffic Safety. In 2016, the city had 106 wrecks involving cyclists.²

¹ Celis-Morales, Carlos A., Donald M. Lyall, Paul Welsh, Jana Anderson, Lewis Steell, Yibing Guo, Reno Maldonado, Daniel F. Mackay, Jill P. Pell, Naveed Sattar, and Jason M R Gill. "Association between Active Commuting and Incident Cardiovascular Disease, Cancer, and Mortality: Prospective Cohort Study." *BMJ. British Medical Journal Publishing Group*, 19 Apr. 2017. Web. 09 June 2017. <<http://www.bmj.com/content/357/bmj.j1456>>.

² Todd, Michael. "Santa Cruz Cyclists Are Highly Prone to Wrecks, According to Report." *Santa Cruz Sentinel. Santa Cruz Sentinel*, 23 May 2017. Web. 03 June 2017. <<http://www.santacruzsentinel.com/article/NE/20170523/NEWS/170529858>>.



“The more often you ride a bicycle in Santa Cruz County, the more likely you are to be injured,” said Dr. Anne-Marie Jackson, an Obstetrician-Gynecologist with Dominican and Director of Physicians Medical Group. “Despite the fact that I have been hit by cars twice while commuting along Soquel at heavy traffic time in the afternoon, I continue to commute by bicycle as often as possible because it allows me to stay healthy without finding a separate time to exercise. I know that every time I get on my bike I will be riding in an unprotected lane alongside people who might be distracted by text messages, phone calls, or the need to find places on their map apps. I look forward to the day when I can commute safely along the Greenway.”³

“Safety isn’t just for cyclists,” said Dr. Dana Welle, MD—a local resident and Chief Medical Executive, Stanford Healthcare. “Cities with high bicycling rates have lower crash rates for *all* road users.”⁴ Dr. Welle experienced a bicycle accident that changed her life forever, “A bicycling accident on a local road forced me to reevaluate my career. In car and bicycle accidents, the car always wins and many cyclists lose more than just careers. I was lucky.”

Social equity is another key reason for the medical professionals’ support of Greenway. Households earning less than \$20,000 per year are roughly twice as likely to bike for transportation than all other income groups.⁵ Dr. Casey KirkHart, Medical Director at Santa Cruz Community Health Centers, sees many low income families whose poor health stems from lack of access to jobs, education, and affordable housing that Greenway can address.

“Greenway is an engine for equity in Santa Cruz County,” said Dr. KirkHart, “and not just by providing free and healthy transportation for my patients and staff. Let’s create affordable housing along Greenway so anyone can access this incredible resource from their own backyard. Local, minority-owned businesses can build Greenway, creating jobs while connecting our diverse communities to their own jobs and schools. Greenway, can—and should—provide opportunity and high quality of life for everyone in Santa Cruz County.”

“It’s time to prioritize community safety, health, and well being,” said Dr. Quinn. “Let’s stop dreaming about an unaffordable train with low ridership in the wrong place, and set our sights on better transit options that can get large numbers of people to and from our medical centers, our schools and colleges, and other major employers. Let’s build the Greenway NOW!”

³ Fernandez, Elizabeth. "Soaring Medical Costs from Bicycle Accidents." UC San Francisco. UC San Francisco, 02 June 2017. Web. 09 June 2017. <<https://www.ucsf.edu/news/2017/06/407211/soaring-medical-costs-bicycle-accidents>>.

⁴ Garrick, Norman W., and Wesley E. Marshall. "Beyond Safety in Numbers: Why Bike Friendly Cities Are Safer." Planetizen: The Independent Resource for People Passionate about Planning and Related Fields. N.p., 27 June 2011. Web. 09 June 2017. <<https://www.planetizen.com/node/50020>>.

⁵ Anderson, Michael, and Mary Laurant Hall. BUILDING EQUITY: Race, Ethnicity, Class, and Protected Bike Lanes: An Idea Book for Fairer Cities (n.d.): 33. PeopleForBikes. PeopleForBikes Green Lane Project and Alliance for Biking & Walking, 4 Mar. 2015. Web. 9 June 2017. <http://b.3cdn.net/bikes/60e4ef1291e083cada_8ym6ip7pw.pdf>.



About Santa Cruz County Greenway

Santa Cruz County Greenway is a nonprofit which advocates for a scenic, safe, and functional 32-mile bicycle and pedestrian path from Davenport to Watsonville. Greenway's vision is to transform Santa Cruz County into a world-class active transportation community.

Contacts

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ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Why separating fast moving cyclists from slower foot traffic, etc. is important:

Vivanco, Leonor. "Does Separation of Lakefront Trail Put Chicago on the Right Path?" Chicagotribune.com. N.p., 29 July 2016. Web. 03 June 2017.

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/breaking/ct-lakefront-trail-separation-reaction-met-0323-20160322-story.html>

Children's Health Benefits

Bicycling to school improves children's cardiorespiratory fitness. *Borrestad, L., et al., 2012 - [Experiences from a randomised controlled trial on cycling to school: Does cycling increase cardiorespiratory fitness?](#), *Scandinavian Journal of Public Health*, 7 March 2012*

Cycling to school is associated with lower odds of being overweight or obese for adolescents. *Ostergaard, A.G. et al, 2012 - [Cycle to school is associated with lower BMI and lower odds of being overweight or obese in a large population-based study of Danish adolescents.](#) *Journal of Physical Activity and Health*, Volume 9*



Community Health Benefits

After a bike and pedestrian lane was installed on a South Carolina bridge, 67% of users indicated that their activity levels had increased since the opening of the lane. *McCarthy, D., 2009 - ["Wonder's Way Bike Pedestrian Pathway on the Arthur Ravenel, Jr. Bridge: A Successful Model for Facilitating Active Living in Lowcountry South Carolina"](#)*

A report estimated that Portland, Oregon's regional trail network saves the city approximately \$115 million per year in healthcare costs. *Beil, K., 2011 - [Physical Activity and the Intertwine: A Public Health Method of Reducing Obesity and Healthcare Costs](#)*

A San Francisco Bay Area study found that increasing biking and walking from 4 to 24 minutes a day on average would reduce cardiovascular disease and diabetes by 14% and decrease GHGE by 14%. *Maizlish, N. et al 2012 - [Health Cobenefits and Transportation-Related Reduction in Greenhouse Gas Emissions in the San Francisco Bay Area](#)*

On average, New York City residents who walk or bike to work get more than an hour of transportation physical activity per day. *New York Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, 2011 - [NYC Vital Signs Special Report: Health benefits of active transportation in New York City, 10, 3](#)*

After bicycle lanes were installed post-Katrina on a New Orleans, Louisiana street, there was a 57% increase in the number of cyclists. The number of female cyclists increased 133%, and the percentage of cyclists riding in the correct direction increased from 73% to 82%. *Parker, K., et al., 2010 - ["If you build it, will they come? The health impact of constructing new bike lanes in New Orleans, Louisiana." Active Living Research Conference 2010 Abstract](#)*

Countries with the highest levels of cycling and walking generally have the lowest obesity rates. *Bassett, Jr., et al., 2008 - [Walking, cycling, and obesity rates in Europe, North America, and Australia. Journal of Physical Activity and Health, 5, 795-814](#)*

Health Benefits of Active Commuting

A study of nearly 2,400 adults found that those who biked to work were fitter, leaner, less likely to be obese, and had better triglyceride levels, blood pressure, and insulin levels than those who didn't active commute to work. *Gordon-Larsen, P., et al., 2009 - [Active commuting and cardiovascular disease risk, Archives of Internal Medicine, 169, 1216-1223](#)*

Active commuting that incorporates cycling and walking is associated with an overall 11% reduction in cardiovascular risk. *Hamer, M., and Y. Chida, 2007 - [Active commuting and cardiovascular risk: A meta-analytic review, Preventive Medicine, 46, 9-13](#)*

According to the federal government, biking for transportation can count toward the minimum 150 minutes/week of moderate-intensity aerobic activity recommended for physical health. It is also listed as the safest way to get physical activity. *U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008 - [2008 Physical Activity Guidelines for Americans](#)*

Women who walk or bike 30 minutes a day have a lower risk of breast cancer. *Luoto, R., et al., 2000 - [The effect of physical activity on breast cancer risk: A cohort study of 30,548 women, European Journal of Epidemiology, 16, 973-80](#)*



30-60 minutes of daily physical activity such as biking to work is associated with low blood pressure in women and low hypertension in both genders. *Hu, G., et al., 2002 - [Commuting, leisure-time physical activity, and cardiovascular risk factors in China. Medicine and Science in Sports and Exercise. 34, 234-8](#)*

An adult cyclist typically has a level of fitness equivalent to someone 10 years younger and a life expectancy two years above the average. *Paffenbarger, R., et al., 1986., and Department for Transport, 2007 - [in "Safety in numbers in England," CTC](#)*

Mental Health Benefits

One study found that cycling improves levels of well-being, self-confidence, and tolerance to stress while reducing tiredness, difficulties with sleep and a range of medical symptoms. *Boyd, H., et al., 1998 - [in Cavill, N., and Davis, A., 2007, Cycling & Health: What's the evidence. Cycling England](#)*

Bike commuters report lower stress and greater feelings of freedom, relaxation, and excitement than car commuters. *Appleton, M., 2011 - ["Cycle-commuting the secret to a happy life says New Economic Foundation report," Road.cc, 28 February 2011](#)*

Commuting by active modes – in particular, by bicycling, walking and transit – correlates with higher levels of “commute well-being” in Portland, Oregon. *Smith, O. 2013 - [Commute well-being among bicycle, car and transit commuters in Portland, Oregon \(Transportation Research Board Poster Presentation\)](#).*

A 30 minute round trip bicycle commute is associated with better mental health in men. *Ohta, M., et al., 2007 - [Effect of the physical activities in leisure time and commuting to work on mental health, Journal of Occupational Health, 49, 46-52](#)*

People exercise for longer when they are outside compared to at home, work, or a gym. *Dunton, G., 2009 - ["Environmental influences on exercise intensity and duration in a U.S. time use study," Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise, 41, 1698-1705](#)*

Benefits for Seniors

In a study of adults with knee osteoarthritis, 80% of patients who started cycling and walking said the exercise helped ease their condition. *Centre for Ageing Research and Development in Ireland, 2010 - [Lifestyle changes cut arthritis pain](#)*