January 14, 2011

The Honorable Edwin M. Lee
Mayor of San Francisco
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, Room 200
San Francisco, CA 94102

Mayor Lee:

On behalf of the 12,000 members of the nonprofit San Francisco Bicycle Coalition, we wish you sincere congratulations and enthusiastic support as you take on the task of leading the City of San Francisco for the next year.

You have inherited the challenging job of helping create the best possible San Francisco for every kind of person while balancing the City’s budget. I am excited to share a visionary plan of action that speaks to those goals.

We ask for your support of Connecting the City—a blueprint for a 100 mile citywide bike network that is designed for everyone, from an eight-year-old child to an eighty-year-old grandmother, and provides door-to-door access to shop, commute and play by bicycle.

Connecting the City is an action plan based on tremendous existing demand for family-friendly bicycling infrastructure. As you no doubt have seen in your travels around the city, San Francisco is experiencing a boom in the number of people riding bicycles—58% more people are biking today than just four years ago. In fact, 7 in 10 San Franciscans ride bicycles in the city thanks to improvements like the new green, separated bikeway on mid-Market Street and popular events like Sunday Streets and our Safe Routes to School program.

We ask you to watch our new, two-minute video—at connectingthecity.org—introducing a Richmond District family that wants to make more of their trips by bicycling. Stephanie and Joe are part of a large and growing number of San Franciscans who want to bike more—in fact, one in two people in the city say that they would bicycle more often if streets had bike lanes and were more inviting places to ride.

You will be happy to hear that the SFMTA and other agencies are already working on designing and implementing sections of Connecting the City. We hope that you will support efforts to move forward in the coming weeks and months to implement several important first-steps toward a truly connected city.

Specifically, we ask that the Office of the Mayor prioritize critical improvements along these three crosstown routes:

1. Market Street: San Francisco’s main bike boulevard

We want to bring back life to the run-down sections of our city’s main street. This street carries more people on bicycles than any street west of the Mississippi River, including commuters, shoppers, tourists and families dropping children at day care and school. Specifically, we ask for your support in the following:

- Filling in the gaps in the green pavement and soft-hit posts between Octavia and 8th Streets.
- Enhancing the required right turn at the intersection of Market and 6th Streets to force drivers—the
majority of whom disobey the requirement—to make the required right turn. This could be done by applying a similar treatment to what exists at 10th Street, including right turn arrows for drivers and a colored channel for people on bikes just south of the transit boarding island.

- Converting the outside lane on Market Street between 8th and Steuart Streets into a primarily-bike lane; the lane will be protected by large planters but will also allow for transit to enter when backed up at boarding islands.
- This project could be implemented in time for this Spring.

2. Fell and Oak Streets: Connect western neighborhoods to downtown jobs
Transform Fell and Oak Streets between Scott Street and Golden Gate Park into a safe commuting route for the large and growing number of bankers, nurses, teachers, gardeners, programmers and other people who live in the Western part of the city, while improving the walking experience on the Panhandle mixed use path. We suggest the following:

- Moving car parking ten feet away from the curb and using this new space as a buffered, protected bikeway for those bicycling between neighborhoods.
- This project could be implemented by this Fall.

3. JFK Drive: Make family biking safe and enjoyable
Convert part of JFK Drive in Golden Gate Park into a separated, bi-directional bikeway on one side of the road to finally provide safe space for the huge, and growing, number of families who want a safe way to ride bikes to the ocean, museums, playgrounds, other park facilities and the zoo.

- With good plans and funding in place already, we ask you to work with the SF Municipal Transportation Agency, SF Recreation and Parks Department, and the SF County Transportation Authority to prioritize the completion of this project by this Summer.

The support and resources to execute these cost-effective projects are already in place. But without your leadership, these plans run the risk of going nowhere. Mayor Lee, I ask you to support the already exploding demand for safe and enjoyable streets for bicycling—a city that is more accessible, affordable, and enjoyable for all—by moving these projects forward within the next few months.

We also request a meeting with you to discuss these plans and immediate next steps toward Connecting the City.

Sincerely,

Leah Shahum
Executive Director

P.S. I hope that you enjoy the very short video of the Richmond District family, at connectingthecity.org.