

January 31, 1972

Joint committee on transportation
State House
Boston Ma 02133

SENATE BILL S 1047

This is a statement in support of the bill S 1047 introduced by Senator Tobin, to permit the use of a small proportion of the revenue from gasoline taxes for the construction and maintenance of pedestrian and bicycle paths.

Legislation of the type suggested would be classed as extremely progressive. The reason is that it would transfer funds directly from an activity which is incurring external, social, costs to some of the injured parties. There would be absolutely no need to look for any subsidy of pedestrian or bicycling transportation if the automobile were not so heavily subsidized. Studies at M.I.T. and elsewhere have shown that an automobile driven in town in the rush hour is incurring social costs to other citizens of around two dollars per mile per vehicle. Some small attempt to redress this gross injustice is therefore to be welcomed.

Other studies have also shown that a comparatively small reduction of traffic congestion leads to a large increase in freedom of movement (the so-called 'cocktail-party equation' from the sudden increase in noise level when a number of people in a room trying to hold independent conversations becomes congested beyond a certain level). Bicycling may seem unimportant, but if only a small proportion of drivers found conditions bicycling to be tolerable enough for them to forsake their automobiles, at least occasionally, traffic could well move much more freely. The trends have been in the reverse direction. It used to be possible, and even pleasant, to bicycle from the direction of Concord along Route 2; now that it has been 'upgraded' it is not safe, and probably illegal. A quite small additional expenditure could have provided a commuting bicycle path which would also have been a recreational delight.

This bill deserves the committee's enthusiastic support.