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5-24-2010

## Interview with Stephanie Noll, Bicycle Transportation Alliance, 2010 (audio)

Stephanie Noll

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# PORTLAND STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

## INTERVIEW INDEX

INTERVIEWEE: \_\_\_\_\_Stephanie Noll\_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_Sean Cochran\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010\_\_\_\_\_

Location of Interview: \_\_\_\_\_Bicycle Transportation Alliance Offices, Portland, OR\_\_\_\_\_

Research Assistant: \_\_\_\_\_Andrew Morse\_\_\_\_\_

Interview Series: SUSTAINING HISTORY PROJECT

Recording Equipment: DIGITAL RECORDER (WINDOWS MEDIA AUDIO FILE) WITH AN  
EXTERNAL, OMNIDIRECTIONAL MICROPHONE

Time	Notes
:22	<i>How long have you lived in Portland?</i>
	Seven years.
:29	<i>What brought you here?</i>
	Came over after finishing undergraduate degree because thought about studying urban planning or urban design. Had heard Portland described as a “healthy city”.
1:01	<i>Where were you educated after high school? What field did you study?</i>
	Small liberal arts school in Missouri called Truman State. Got her BA in English. Studied a lot of environmental studies.
1:32	<i>What did you know about Portland’s bicycle culture before you moved here?</i>
	Nothing. Didn’t know about the bike lanes or the history of the Bike Bill.
2:00	<i>How would you describe the bicycle culture when you arrived to Portland?</i>
	Was here when Portland hosted “Bike Summer,” which made an impression on her about the bike culture. From a commuter perspective, Portland felt more like a college town than a bike city. Large percentage of people were on bicycles. “Bicycle culture” made her think of group rides and events.
3:56	<i>How would you describe the bicycle culture in Portland now? Differences from when you first arrived?</i>
	The “Critical Mass” culture is now fairly nonexistent. Much less group rides and they are now more for fun. All the “quirky” parts of bicycle culture are still around. Biggest change is that biking is becoming more “normalized.” There is much less of the counter-culture and more families and diverse groups of people. Biking has become less of a statement and more of means of transportation. The bicyclists have become safer and follow the rules of the road more.
6:25	<i>What do you attribute that to (seeing the counter-culture change more to the</i>

	<i>normalized)?</i>
	The increase number of people on bikes (from Portland bike counts). A lot more education by the city, BTA, other organizations get more people on bikes. The city has built infrastructure for biking, which has turned people on to biking. Bike maps have helped point people towards good routes. “Share the Road” is educating people on rules of the road. BTA is meeting people at the places they work to teach about bike laws and skills.
8:21	<i>How did you get involved in the BTA?</i>
	First worked as a volunteer with the BTA, helping with the bike safety programs they taught at school. Also volunteered with bike parking at events.
8:45	<i>How would you describe a typical day/week working with the BTA?</i>
	Worked with the programs team. In school youth programs and statewide encouragement programs. Bike commute workshops and bike commute challenges. Most of the staff is out of the office all day teaching bike safety in the schools. She spends part of the day in the office and the other part giving presentations or meeting with community partners. BTA advocates travel to Salem to lobby (forum tomorrow in Washington County).
10:04	<i>What’s on the agenda for the meeting tomorrow?</i>
	Washington County issues – how the BTA can help serve the concerns of the county.
10:27	<i>What are some of your proudest achievements with the BTA?</i>
	Before her time, the BTA was a big advocate for getting bike access on TriMet. Assuring all buses were equipped with bike racks and making sure bikes were allowed on MAX trains. The Bike Commute Challenge is something she is proud of. This Bike Commute Challenge (once a year) has people from different work places competing against each other to see who can get more of the coworkers biking to work. She asks participants if they are new bike commuters. Has received 2,500 new bike commuters each of the last two years. These new cyclists become safer drivers because of the new perspectives they gain.
12:53	<i>What are some of the persistent challenges you’ve faced while working with the BTA?</i>
	Transportation funding is a major roadblock. With more and more people biking, there is not enough transportation funding spent on bike infrastructure – even though it costs less than car infrastructure. The city is dependent on how funding is allocated. Kids aren’t biking or walking nearly as much as they used to 30 years ago. Kids are growing up without having experience using active transportation is a major barrier.
15:16	<i>How would you describe the overall safety for bicycle commuters in Portland compared to other cities?</i>
	Portland is a very safe place to bike. Crash data shows that Portland is safe. When a community sees an increase in bike commuters, the traffic crashes for all modes of transportation goes down. Portland is safer because of how many bicycle commuters we have. More bicyclists equals less crash rate. Bike Plan for 2030 that the city has adopted is a great outline for how the whole city will be covered with proper infrastructure.

17:23	<i>Please describe the “Bike Plan” and BTA’s involvement.</i>
	Plan to build out Portland’s bike infrastructure: off street paths, neighborhood greenways, and bike lanes. BTA was a major contributor in writing the plan. Also advocated to get the plan adopted by city council. The Plan is not getting funded enough to be finished in 2030. BTA still advocating to get more funding.
19:03	<i>What specific ways is the BTA advocating for better funding?</i>
	Campaign to adopt the Bike Plan is called the “Build It” campaign. Getting the word out at city council hearings. Inform network of contacts and members. Hold open houses to educate and campaign for proper funding.
20:17	<i>What would you say to someone who is considering ditching their car to begin commuting by bicycle but has feelings of trepidation about safety, weather, etc.?</i>
	We do one hour Commute Workshops we present at workplaces. We share information about laws, skills, dealing with traffic (sidewalks, crosswalks, etc.), basic gear and maintenance (helmets, locks, lights). That information makes people feel more comfortable about biking. First step is getting someone onto a bike for a recreational trip – get them feeling comfortable.
22:57	<i>An article in 2003 from the “Transportation Research Record” listed Portland as being in the top three U.S. cities as far as percentage of bicycle commuters despite having the second most rainy days per year. What is unique about Portland in this aspect?</i>
	Portland is an active city in general. Part of it is that the overall outdoor ethic and environmental ethic of the city. She feels that the rainy period of the year is her favorite time to commute by bike because the commuter is the only time she will spend outside all day. During rainy periods she will stay inside all day, so the commute allows her to get fresh air and get through the rainy season.