



To: City of Ashland Planning Commission
From: [Streets for Everyone](#), a volunteer action team of the [Ashland Climate Collaborative](#)
Date: June 27, 2023
Re: Glaring Omissions in Econorthwest's Economic Diversification Strategy

Streets for Everyone appreciates the opportunity to provide these recommendations regarding the proposed Economic Diversification Strategy.

The Economic Diversification Strategy developed by Econorthwest has a glaring omission: it completely ignores the proven benefits of transforming the city's transportation system to make bicycling a practical, safe and efficient way for people of all ages and abilities to get around town.

A safe city transportation system that meets the needs of all users would accomplish many of the strategies that Econorthwest identified and recommended including:

- Making it more affordable for Ashland's workers to live in Ashland rather than live out-of-town
- Creating a "base camp" for outdoor recreation
- Responding to climate change by reducing pollution

Here's what the data tells us:

Reducing the cost of housing

Transportation accounts for roughly 20 to 30 percent of household expenditures depending upon household size and income. It is estimated that a single person household in Ashland spends roughly \$10,000 per year on transportation (including insurance, maintenance, fuel, and car payments). ([Cost of Living in Ashland, Oregon - 24/7 Wall St. \(247wallst.com\)](#)) This expense is second only to the cost of housing. In comparison, the cost of transportation by biking is minuscule. Transforming the transportation system to conform to the requirements of the Transportation Planning Rule, would make it safe and convenient to live car-free in Ashland. It would be a game changer for the city's workforce and their ability to afford to live here.

Base Camp

While the report places considerable focus on mountain biking and the trails in the city's watershed, it overlooks the fact that even mountain bikers use Ashland's (and ODOT's) roads to get around town. An on-street transportation network that meets the needs of mountain bikers also would meet the needs of people of all ages and abilities, whether residents or visitors. Due to the city's compact footprint, for many residents, a bicycle ride is an easy way to go shopping, run errands, visit friends and family, get to the library or school, grab an ice cream, and most other trip types.

Climate Change

Choosing a bike over a car for just one trip per day reduces the average person's carbon emissions from transportation by 67 percent. (See <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ncSbM9gIM-kX-cSr9i83Yw6UAcstDRvb/view?pli=1>, <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2021/02/210208104624.htm> and <https://www.peopleforbikes.org/news/tackling-climate-change-one-ride-at-a-time>).

[Research](#) in other metropolitan areas suggests that roughly half of Ashland residents would choose to bicycle if they didn't have to share the roads with cars. Protected bike lanes on major streets makes biking possible. This is why Ashland residents have been so vocal in its support for adding protected bike lanes to major streets. If half of Ashland's residents bicycled for just one trip per day instead of driving, annual transportation emissions in the city would fall by one-third or almost 28,000 metric tons and would translate into a 9% reduction in total citywide pollution.

Economic Development

There are many examples of cities that have reaped the financial benefit to providing bike infrastructure including protected bike lanes:

- **Bikers out-consumed drivers at bars, restaurants and convenience stores**
[Cyclists and Pedestrians Can End Up Spending More Each Month Than Drivers - Bloomberg](#).
- **Salt Lake City cuts car parking, adds bike lanes, sees retail boost**
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B8tOk7_upXv5djhCajg1Z0I3bmhTVTlxWldwRzA0YjJWNW9R/view?resourcekey=0-Fr7Mp141yXvXzW6u5NBjqQ

Yes, we CAN make Ashland a better, more unique, attractive, and inviting place for residents and visitors – if we take this information into account. We'd be pleased to assist further in this effort. Thank you again for the opportunity to provide this testimony. We can be reached at info@ashlandclimate.org.