

CASCADE BICYCLE CLUB

Strategic Plan for 2003 to 2005

Executive Summary

Introduction by the President of the Board

At its 2002 retreat, the Cascade Bicycle Club Board of Directors launched the Club into the development of its first ever strategic plan. On behalf of the board, staff, and members of CBC, and all those who had a hand in providing input, it is my pleasure and honor to introduce this strategic plan.

Over the last six months it has been my pleasure to work with staff, board members, other key Club volunteers, and our consultants, Kate Roosevelt and Meg Goldman, at The Collins Group to develop this plan. As Club President and a member of the Strategic Plan Development Committee, I want to thank the several hundred people who participated in interviews, focus groups, surveys and other information gathering efforts. This internal and external environmental scan of the Club provided the critical information upon which this strategic plan is based. I also want to thank the twenty or so key volunteers who participated in our Strategic Planning Retreat. It was this group that analyzed the data we collected and laid the foundation for our strategic plan goals and objectives.

I want to extend my personal thanks to my fellow committee members: Jim Shedd, Jen Smith, Elizabeth Burke, Peter Hartmaier, Chuck Ayers, Julie Salathe, Scott Marlow, and Mark Keller. This group did the yeoman's work on our plan. They met monthly, provided critical input, and asked the tough questions to move the plan forward. My sincere thanks to all of you. Finally, I want to thank CBC's great staff, some of whom sat on the Planning Committee and some who didn't. These folks were charged by the board to lead this planning process. Their efforts have been monumental. The results of all our efforts together—this strategic plan—are key to ensuring the Club's future success.

As part of this plan, the Board reaffirmed CBC's commitment to its vision of "Creating a Better Community Through Bicycling" while updating our mission statement and goals to embrace the Club's commitment to (1) getting more people riding, (2) bicycle education and safety, and (3) advocating for cyclists' rights and an improved cycling environment.

At this point we have achieved a detailed view of our Club—its internal strengths and weaknesses, its external opportunities and threats, and the strategic issues facing us. Via the Board's approval of this plan, a critical level of internal agreement on our future has been achieved. That future includes the continued focus on the Club's four key program areas: advocacy, daily rides, education and safety, and events. However, it also will include a focus on core organizational issues and cross-program interaction and promotion. Each piece will have ramifications for both our internal operations and our interactions with the larger community.

Our next big steps are to fulfill the goals and objectives laid out in this plan; to build on the Club's strengths, shore up our weaknesses and to take advantage of the opportunities that are before us. By using this plan as the measuring stick for our future actions, initiatives, and programs, I believe we ensure a strong future for our Club and the likelihood that we create that better community.

Sincerely,

Jim Paige

President of the Board, Cascade Bicycle Club & Cascade Bicycle Club Education Foundation

Executive Summary

Background

Cascade Bicycle Club (CBC) is one of the most active and successful bicycle clubs in the U.S. In our 30 plus years in existence, we have earned a reputation as a successful riding club—with 150 ride leaders and over 1000 rides lead annually; a professional sports production company—producing eight major events grossing 1 million dollars annually; an effective political voice—building the Greater Seattle area into one of the best cycling communities in the country; and a nationally recognized leader in bike safety and education programming.

Today, Cascade is the largest recreational cycling club in the U.S., with nearly 5,500 members, nine staff and literally hundreds of volunteers. We are producing more activities and programs than ever before. Upwards of eight thousand cyclists participate in each of our largest events (The Greater Seattle International Bicycle Expo and The Seattle to Portland Bicycle Classic, STP). We can turn out hundreds of activists for political action; we can reach over 20,000 cyclists electronically through our in-house data base; and our website draws over 19,000 unique visitors each month.

So Why A Strategic Plan?

Cascade's phenomenal reach into the local cycling community and the leverage we bring to bare on Greater Seattle has not come by default. Rather, it has come from the hard work of many individuals. And yet, surprisingly, much of this labor of love has been disjointed, almost outside of the sphere of a cohesive organization and often without strategic intent. Today, our Club leadership believes that the chances of continuing our success—fulfilling our mission and accomplishing our goals—is greatest if we understand our internal strengths and weaknesses, as well as our position within our community, and intentionally and strategically plan for our future.

Consequently the Cascade Board of Directors launched our first ever foray into strategic planning. This plan was developed to assess the most critical issues and promising ventures facing us and to there upon focus Club-wide attention. To this end, this plan sets the strategic direction for the Club for the next three years, 2004 to 2006. It is predicated on building a shared vision of success between Club leadership, staff, volunteers, members, and other stakeholders. The goal is to use the plan as a roadmap for "Creating a Better Community Through Bicycling."

The Process

In February 2002, the Cascade Bicycle Club Board of Directors voted to produce the Club's first ever strategic plan. A month later, the Board laid the plan's foundation by approving the Club's mission, vision, and goals. In July 2002, the Club contracted with The Collins Group to assist in developing the plan and to take the lead in developing the fundraising portion of it. In late summer, a ten-member Planning Committee was formed to bring the project to fruition. This committee consisted of board members, key volunteers, and staff.

To complete this plan, we first gathered data to assess: (a) the Club's internal strengths and weaknesses; (b) the opportunities and threat that exist outside the organization; and (c) the most critical issues facing us. Data for this assessment, or environmental scan, was culled from one-on-one interviews, focus groups, questionnaires, and research into other organizations. The data gathered was organized and passed five subcommittees representing the four programmatic areas of the Club—advocacy, daily rides, education, and events—and the Club's overall organizational infrastructure. These subcommittees drafted the goals and objectives for their program areas and, with the Planning Committee, created an on-going feedback loop for reviews and redrafts. Ultimately the work was passed onto the Board for input and approval.

The Plan

A. Strengths and Weaknesses

The environmental scan and subsequent data analysis affirmed that Cascade is a strong organization with a rich history and bright future. However, it also brought to light our weaknesses. Our strengths include:

- 1) Our ability to get people bicycling and to provide the public opportunities to ride;
- 2) Our expertise as a cycling events production company;
- 3) Our expertise regarding cycling issues, advocacy, and education and safety;
- 4) Our reputation, size (membership, staff, volunteers), and reach;
- 5) Our ability to mobilize people around political issues.

The weaknesses of the Club identified in the environmental scan include:

- 1) The lack of clearly defined organizational roles, organizational structure, and cross-program interaction;
- 2) Poor organizational branding to our activities and limited awareness of our advocacy and education programming;
- 3) The paucity of community networking;
- 4) Reliance on two stagnant income sources: an aging membership and aging events;
- 5) The lack of volunteer management, development and coordination.

C. External Opportunities

- 1) Focused organizational and community networking around cycling and transportation issues as well as coalition building with broader scope—public health and livable communities networks
- 2) Ability to bring the cycling community and its many facets together
- 3) Creating and championing an urban vision for recreational and commute cycling
- 4) Being the conduit for cycling information to the cycling community as well as the public at large
- 5) Diversifying revenues via support for the Education Foundation and advocacy work
- 6) Diversifying rides, events, and educational programming
- 7) Increasing membership
- 8) Extensive room to build upon existing programs

D. External Threats

- 1) Public's perception of the club as older, white, exclusively road oriented
- 2) Cycling not seen as cool by younger generations
- 3) Specialty bike clubs (tandem, recumbent, mountain biking)
- 4) Poor riding on events
- 5) More events competing for people's free time and recreation dollars
- 6) The silent PR approach to advocacy efforts.

In an assessment of organizational strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats, three areas were identified as critical issues facing Cascade. They are:

1. The need for more internal organizational identity, cohesion, and capacity;
2. The need to build Club identity, networks, and working relationships in the greater community; and
3. The need to diversify revenue sources.

B. *Mission, Vision & Overarching Goals* _____

Cascade's mission, vision and overarching goals were reviewed and discussed by the Board of Directors over a period of several months—clearly indicated the importance the Board placed on such critical Club statements. In the end, the Board reaffirmed our historical mission and updated both our vision and goal statements. They are:

Club Mission: Creating a Better Community through Bicycling

Club Vision: The Cascade Bicycle Club is dedicated to providing bicycle activities to promote individual health and recreation, and education and advocacy to promote a more bicycle friendly environment and a more livable community for members, bicyclists and the community at-large.

Club Goals: To get more people riding more often more safely.
To increase the voice and visibility of the Cascade Bicycle Club and the cycling community to improve facilities and the environment for cyclists.
To promote cycling as a transportation alternative.

C. *Strategic Goals*

The strategic goal of Cascade Bicycle Club is to become the go-to bicycle advocacy and education and safety organization in the central Puget Sound region and the premiere cycling sports production “company” in the Pacific Northwest. To accomplish this, each programmatic area of the Club (advocacy, daily rides, education, and events) has set strategic goals. Goals also have been identified for a category called “General Organization.” Critical issues identified during the strategic planning process are addressed in each section by embedding them in the goals and objectives of the program and its components (e.g. Events – STP) rather than calling them out as stand alone sub-sections. This provides a program-focused approach to addressing critical issues rather than a problem-focused approach. The key goals playing across all areas - and which are the cornerstone of the Club’s three year efforts - include:

1. Expanding central programming - advocacy, daily rides, education, and events - and increasing cross program interaction, support, and promotion;
2. Increasing organizational capacity via professional staff, volunteers, and community networks
3. Increasing public awareness of Club activities, public relations, community networks, and relationships with key community “power brokers;”

It lays the foundation for creating a solid organizational infrastructure, for expanding programs to get more people riding more often more safely, for increasing the voice and visibility of Cascade and the cycling community, and for promoting cycling as a transportation alternative within a broader livable community.

Implementation and Evaluation

In order to implement this strategic plan, annual action plans will need to be developed. These later plans should provide an appropriate level of detail to guide actual action, including detailed annual objectives, action steps and accountability. Furthermore, annual budgets will need to support the programming goals. Finally, progress will need to be monitored and evaluated to provide course guidance and resource allocation for both short-term and long-term priorities. Monitoring and evaluation should be practiced on a regular basis by those charged with the implementation of this plan as well as on an annual basis by the organization’s top leadership.