

Women Bike SF

Final Report to the SFBC on Findings & Suggestions for Moving Forward

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Executive Summary:

We undertook this project in partnership with the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition with the goal of gathering information that will be useful to the SFBC as they launch the Women Bike SF Initiative and proceed with the difficult task of increasing the number of women riding bikes in San Francisco. To cover a diversity of topics and provide a comprehensive set of findings, we formulated the following five questions and used them to structure our approach to the project.

1. Where, geographically, do female cyclists in San Francisco bike?
2. What would encourage women who don't bike to do so?
3. What motivates the active female members of the SFBC to keep biking?
4. How can SFBC make the best use of its resources to increase women bike ridership in SF?
5. What kind of branding would be most representative of, and appealing to, the women we hope to target with this initiative?

To answer these questions, we compiled two surveys--one to be completed by female members of the SFBC and one to be completed by non-biking female members of the San Francisco community. We also helped facilitate two focus groups at SFBC headquarters with women in the SFBC community. This report details the results of these data methods and provides suggestions for future steps to be taken by the SFBC as they move forward with this initiative.

Findings

I. Survey Results:

We answered the majority of our research questions after analyzing the responses of a survey sent out through the San Francisco Bicycle coalition's weekly newsletter. This survey was made up of 11 questions ranging from demographic questions to write in recommendations. At the end of the survey period, we compiled the data from over 400 respondents. The following sections provide a summary of the findings of the survey responses.

II. Survey Results: Qualitative

One component of the SFBC-administered survey was a write-in response opportunity at the end of the survey. The optional question we posed to participants was:

What are other ideas you have that would encourage more women to bike in San Francisco? What would encourage you to bike more? (Include specific speakers, workshops, rides or classes you may be interested in. All other ideas are also welcome!)

Out of the 392 responses that we received to the survey from female-identifying people, 309 (or 79% of respondents) answered this question. The responses varied in content, but there were several common topics that were referenced multiple times throughout the responses. We read through each of the 309 responses and developed a list of these recurring themes. After discussion among ourselves and with our community partner, Janice Li, we were able to synthesize the list of themes into six major categories that encompassed the majority of the topics that were brought up. The themes were as follows:

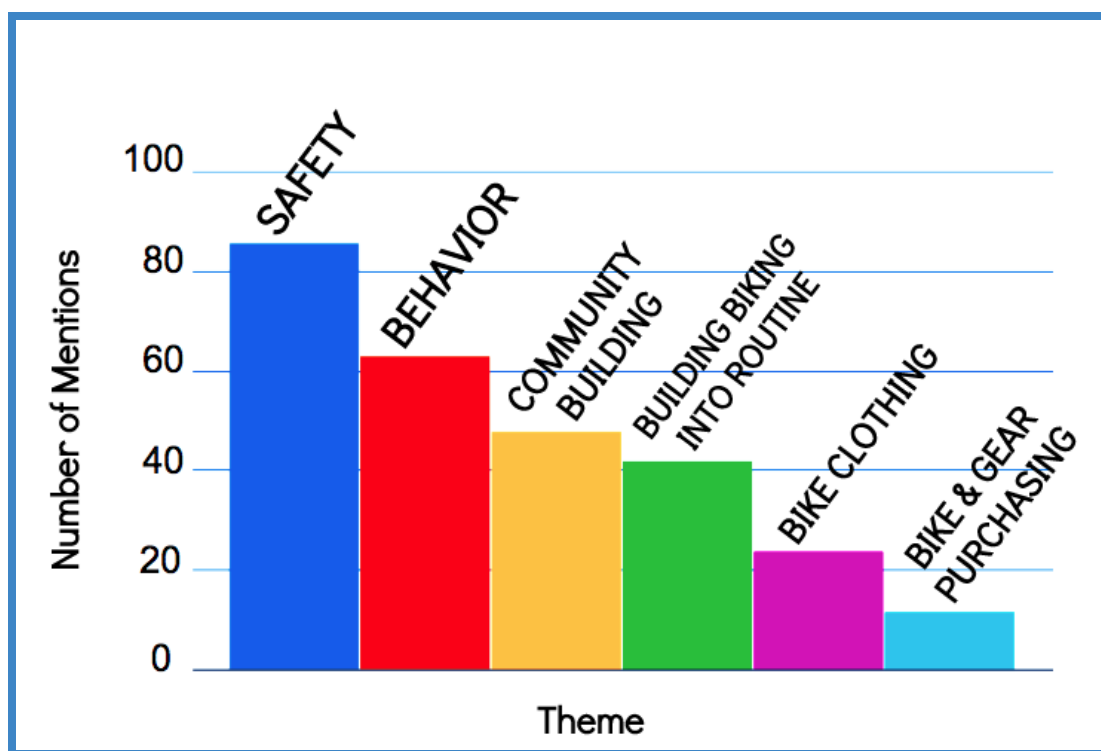
- 1) SAFETY: Mainly related to infrastructure such as separated bike lanes, as well as other measures to protect cyclists from automobiles.
- 2) BEHAVIOR: Tools to increase confidence and skills on the road. These include things like workshops, group bike rides, bike safety or skill classes, and increasing women's knowledge of things like bike routes and rules of the road.
- 3) COMMUNITY BUILDING: Facilitating friendships and support networks between female cyclists in women-only spaces, as well as making sure the existing bike community is more inclusive and creating a culture of tolerance and encouragement from fellow bikers as well as drivers and pedestrians.

4) BUILDING BIKING INTO DAILY ROUTINE: This includes things like aesthetic/hygiene concerns (ie getting to work without being too sweaty and finding a hairstyle that works with a helmet) and bike storage options/theft avoidance.

5) BIKE CLOTHING/GEAR: This relates to women-specific bike clothing and gear--something that many women find to be an underdeveloped area when it comes to the cycling community.

6) BIKE AND BIKE GEAR PURCHASING: In addition to helping women find bicycles and bicycle-related gear that works well for them and are worth the investment, this includes things like helping women find friendly and helpful spaces for bike maintenance.

After going through the survey responses once more and tallying the number of times each of the above categories came up, we collected the following data:



Overwhelmingly, safety was the biggest concern that was brought up. Most of the respondents talked about bike infrastructure in San Francisco and changes that would need to be made (such as the installation of protected, separate bike lanes, or stricter penalties

for drivers who double park in bike lanes) in order for them to be encouraged to bike more, or to convince their friends to bike. Behavior came next, with many of the respondents suggesting that SFBC host more workshops or classes to help women improve their biking skills and gain more confidence in their abilities. Suggestions also included things like promoting the SFBC bike map and other helpful materials so that more women know they exist. The responses regarding community building, which was the next most frequently mentioned theme, varied in nature. Many of them praised SFBC for events like coffee chats and other social gatherings, and suggested having more bike rides like that. Mentorship programs and group commutes were also recommended. Many of the responses, however, brought up cultural changes that they'd like to see in the bike community, specifically regarding women being taken seriously and not feeling intimidated by fellow cyclists. The women frequently brought up concerns about incorporating biking into their everyday lives. They addressed the matter in reference to themselves, but also, more frequently, brought it up as a concern that they could imagine other women having. Many of the suggestions and comments in this category were in regard to spreading information about the safest places to park bikes in the city to avoid theft, as well as tips to help women stay fresh and put-together after biking to work.

III. Survey Results: Quantitative

When we developed the survey we knew that safety would probably be the primary concern for women in San Francisco. Considering that dealing with safety concerns is a long term process, we developed a question in our survey to better understand what activities could be implemented immediately to increase women bike ridership.

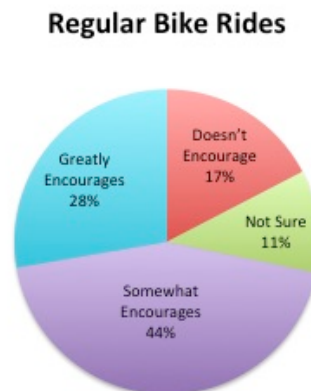
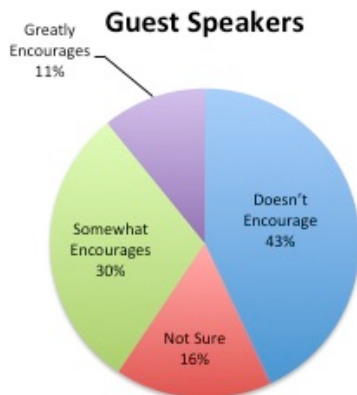
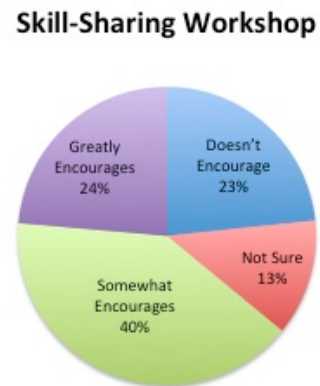
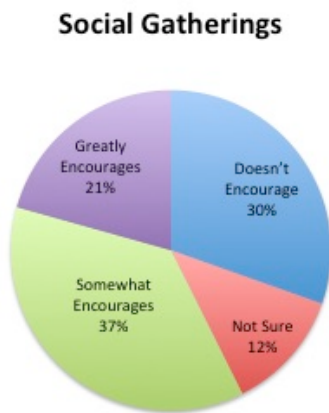
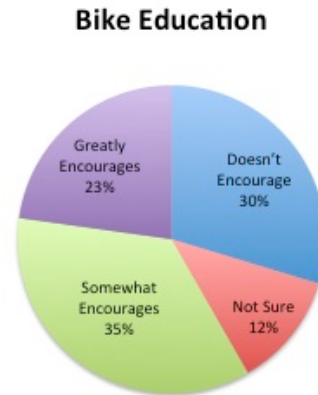
10. What activities or events would encourage you to bike in San Francisco?

	Not sure	Doesn't encourage	Somewhat encourages	Greatly encourages
Social gatherings (i.e. coffee chats, happy hours, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Guest speakers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Skill-sharing workshops	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Regular bike rides	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Online discussion forum	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bike education (i.e. urban biking classes, learn-to-ride classes, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

We decided on 6 activities to analyze based on suggestions from women in the San Francisco Bike Coalition and a review of what other cities in the United States are doing to increase women bike ridership¹.

Our first analysis of this results was simply quantifying how women responded to each of the proposed activities. Below is the result of that analysis:

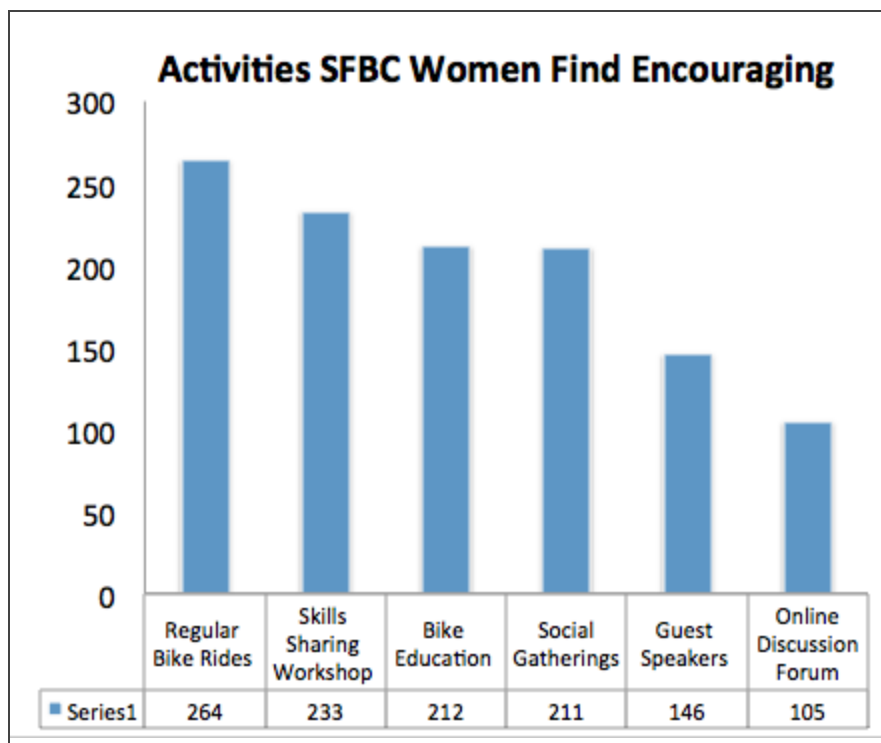
¹ See for example: Murphy, Liz. "Get Moving: Women and Bicycles Toolkits." League of American Bicyclists. News From the League. April 2, 2014. Accessed on January 24th 2015. Available at: <http://bikeleague.org/content/get-moving-women-bicycles-toolkit>



These figures show the percentage of women that thought that the proposed activity would: greatly encourage, somewhat encourages, not sure, and doesn't encourage women bike ridership.

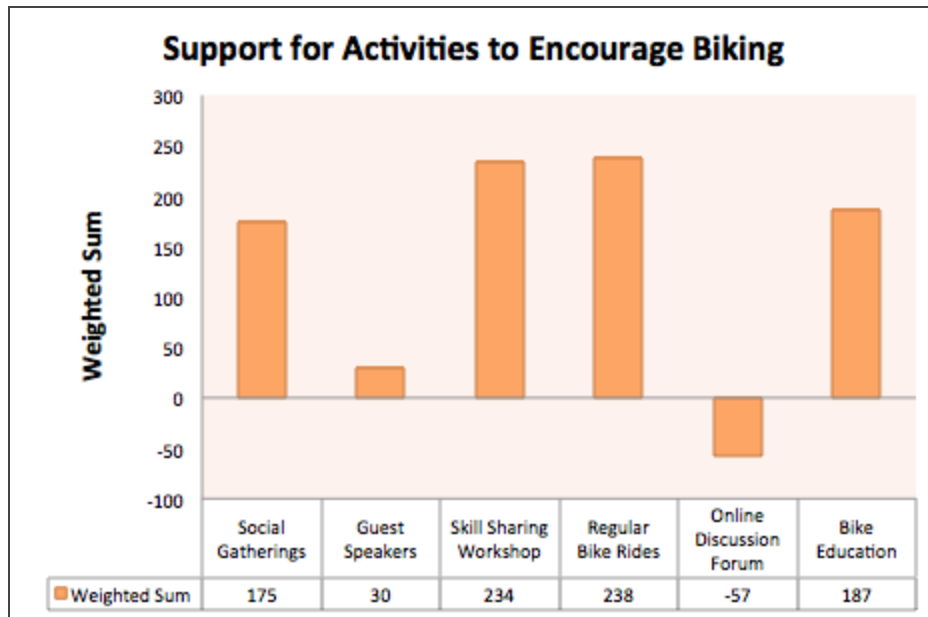
After this initial analysis we wanted to see how these different activities compared to each other. In order to do so we eliminated the all responses that marked "not sure." We then combined the number of women that thought that an activity "somewhat encouraged" and

“greatly encouraged” women bike ridership. We took this number to mean the number of women that thought the activity was encouraging.



This graph illustrates that most women thought that regular bike rides would encourage bike ridership.

Even though the previous graphs illustrate generally how women feel about different activities, we wanted to better understand how strongly women felt about the different activities comparatively. In order to do so, we numerically quantified each option to describe how strongly women felt an activity would encourage women bike ridership. We assigned the following numerical values: 2 to “Greatly Encourages”, 1 to “Somewhat Encourages”, 0 to “Not sure”, and -1 to “Doesn’t Encourage.” By summing up all of the responses we were able to come up with the following graph.



This graph illustrates how strongly women felt about a particular activity. What is surprising about this graph is that more women felt that an online discussion forum would not encourage women bike ridership than those who thought it would.

IV. Survey Results: GIS Mapping

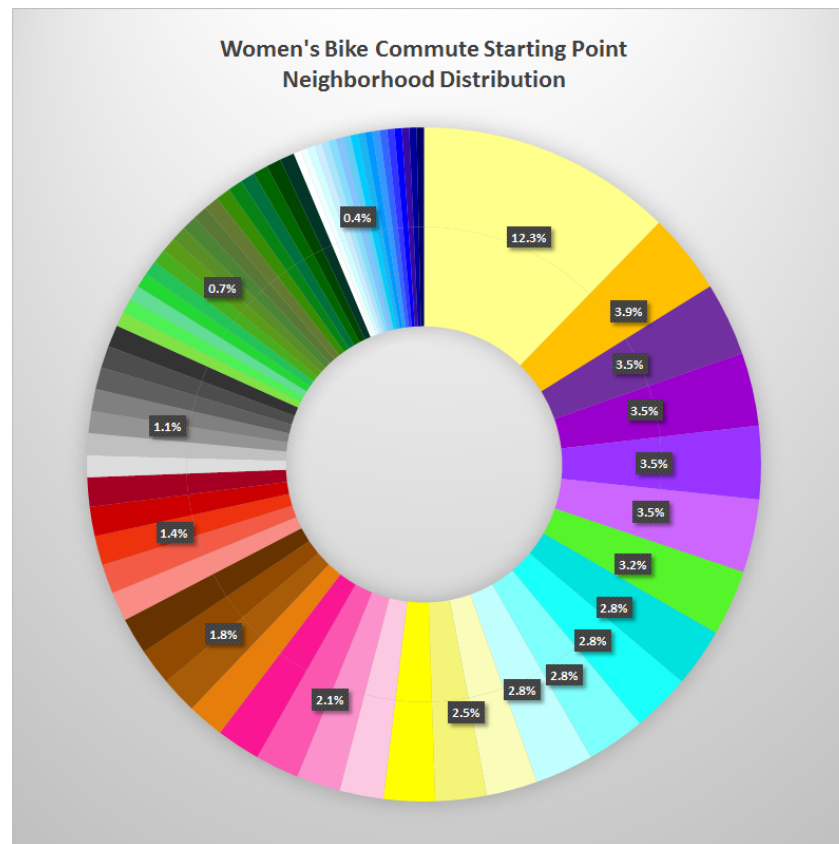
Data extracted from surveys:

After cleaning up the data due to incomplete addresses or addresses not located in SF, there were 286 useful starting point entries and 282 endpoint entries. Since we were just looking at concentration in neighborhoods and not mapping exact routes, the difference in the number of entries does not affect the findings.

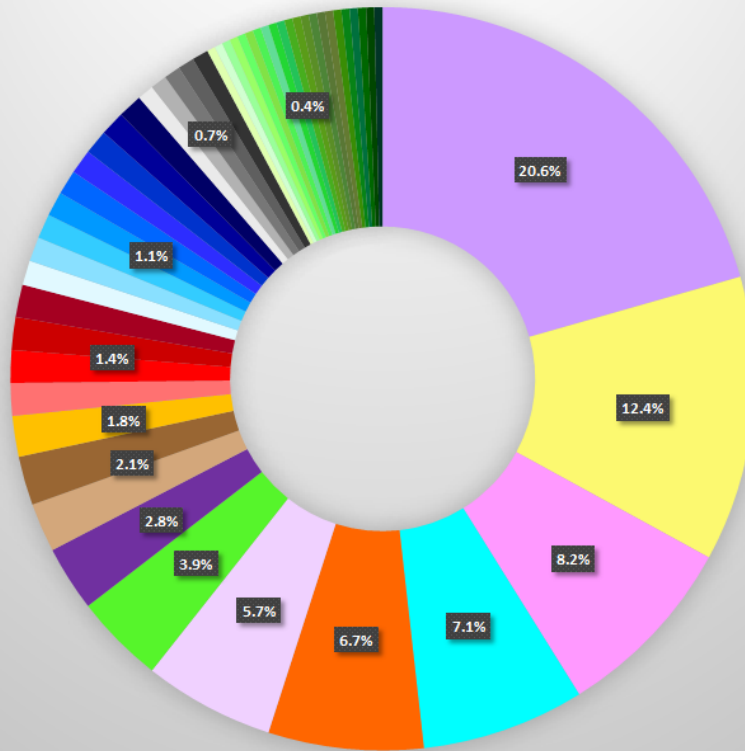
Findings:

After analyzing the data in two separate categories, Women's Bike Commute Starting Points and Women's Bike Commute Destinations, there were some intriguing findings. In the first category based on starting points, the data was fairly dispersed throughout the entire city with data points in 69 different neighbors. However, a significant number of women's starting points were concentrated in the Mission (12.2%) with the next popular neighborhood being Potrero Hill (only 3.9%), followed by Mission Dolores, Bernal Heights, Haight Ashbury, and the Panhandle (all at 3.5%). The graph showing the complete data distribution can be found on page 10.

In the second category based on endpoints, the data suggests less dispersal throughout the entire city since only 51 neighborhoods came up in the responses in comparison to 69 in the first category. Also the riders are most concentrated in the following neighborhoods: South of Market (20.6%), Financial District (12.4%), Mission Bay (8.2%), Mission (7.1%), Civic Center (6.7%), Downtown/Union Square (5.7%) with about 60% of the total responses concentrated in these six neighborhoods. The graph showing the complete data distribution for destination neighborhoods can be found on page 11.



Women's Bike Commute Destination
Neighborhood Distribution



South of Market	20.6%
Financial District	12.4%
Mission Bay	8.2%
Mission	7.1%
Civic Center	6.7%
Downtown / Union Square	5.7%
Potrero Hill	3.9%
Rincon Hill	2.8%
Northern Waterfront	2.1%
Showplace Square	2.1%
South Beach	1.8%
Chinatown	1.4%
Parkmerced	1.4%
Parnassus Heights	1.4%
Tenderloin	1.4%

Aquatic Park/Ft. Mason	1.1%
Dogpatch	1.1%
Duboce Triangle	1.1%
Inner Richmond	1.1%
Laurel Heights / Jordan Park	1.1%
Lower Pacific Heights	1.1%
North Beach	1.1%
Pacific Heights	1.1%
Russian Hill	1.1%
Fairmount	0.7%
Golden Gate Park	0.7%
Lower Nob Hill	0.7%
Mission Dolores	0.7%
Noe Valley	0.7%
Bayview	0.4%
Bernal Heights	0.4%
Castro	0.4%
Excelsior	0.4%

Glen Park	0.4%
Golden Gate Heights	0.4%
Hayes Valley	0.4%
Ingleside	0.4%
Inner Sunset	0.4%
Lakeshore	0.4%
Lower Haight	0.4%
Marina	0.4%
Merced Heights	0.4%
Mint Hill	0.4%
Oceanview	0.4%
Outer Richmond	0.4%
Outer Sunset	0.4%
Polk Gulch	0.4%
Presidio National Park	0.4%
Presidio Terrace	0.4%
Union Street	0.4%
West Portal	0.4%

GIS Map:

The GIS map will be sent separately from this report and it will contain the visual representation of the data distribution. Along with the survey data, I used data from the SF Planning Department to assist me in its creation.

Considerations:

Elevation changes are unique to San Francisco but they pose significant challenges when biking depending on where the starting point and destination is . This should be kept in mind when considering the dispersal of bikers and the popular or unpopular neighborhoods .

V. Focus Groups Themes and Takeaways

Empowerment

One of the most valuable takeaways from the focus groups were in regard the women's individual experiences while biking, and the positive changes they felt in their identities and personalities after they began to bike around the city. The women often described a sense of freedom--as though all of San Francisco was suddenly unlocked and available to them for exploration and discovery. They talked about experiencing increased confidence and assertiveness after biking for a while--qualities that they carried into other areas of their lives. The women also discussed a sensation of strength. They feel physically capable, and generally stronger than they did before they started biking.

All of these experiences are extremely important, and truly answer the question "why should we get more women on bikes." Getting more women into an arena that is currently dominated by men opens the door to get them into even more arenas that are similarly male-heavy. The women are making their bodies and minds more resilient, and this is so critical in improving gender equality.

Community

Many women in both focus groups touched upon this idea of community. Some said they did not know a lot of women that they could bike with. They wished that biking could be the mechanism that brings like minded females together either through coffee chats, group rides, or some sort of social network.

Us vs them mentality

Several suggested one of the biggest barriers to getting more women on the road was concern for safety but more specifically the us vs. them mentality that has manifested in the dynamics between bikers and drivers. The women would like to see a shift in this negative culture that has erupted on the streets of San Francisco and likely many other

places. Until that shift occurs, the women brought up something we have not thought about yet and that is to prepare by predicting what the cars are going to do. As you are biking, think about how cars drive and their predictable tendencies like stopping at lights and stop sign or turning and adjust your biking accordingly. This takes biking safety more into your hands.

Better preparation for mentors

Lastly, when the women were asked if they had ever attempted to get other women involved in biking, many said they were unsuccessful. It was for lack of trying or enthusiasm for biking in SF. However, they said it was more a difference of skill and they became intimidating to the people they were trying to encourage. This calls for preparing the women to be mentors. They need to learn to be aware of other's level of biking and adjust their biking and teaching style to the beginner. They need to learn skills that suggest support rather than intimidation or being patronizing. This way it is a much more enjoyable time for the beginner and could encourage her to continue to bike.

Recommendations

Based on the things we learned throughout this project, we'd like to provide a few recommendations for moving forward with this initiative.

I. Branding

We had a chance to get feedback on our drafts of the branding materials (all of which are included in the Branding Kit that we sent) during the focus groups, and via email, and we were exposed to a variety of opinions regarding everything from color scheme to font to spacing. The 'final' logo that we came up with is more of a foundation for moving forward. There is intentionality behind many of the components, but we also have suggestions for moving forward based on feedback we've already received.

Color scheme: Out of three possible color schemes (salmon and green, purple and yellow, and orange and blue), the focus group members favored orange and blue (they found salmon and green to christmas-y). Orange and blue also incorporates one of San Francisco's (and SFBC's) colors in, but put's a spin on the other (changing black to a light blue). Suggestions for moving forward would be to experiment with the intensity and brightness of the orange and blue palette to find something vibrant and attention-grabbing.

Furthermore, since colors are relatively easy to change, a larger survey population giving feedback on their desired color scheme could be helpful.

Font: People have found the current font to be more readable than the previous one, and find that the bold capital letters work well. The coloration of the letters and the use of all capitals are both employed to highlight the WE in WOMEN BIKE SF. Suggestions for the future include finding ways to better incorporate the chain logo into the design, particularly if it should still replace the O (in which case, perhaps a more harmonious font could be used).

Symbolism: There was generally positive feedback about the hybrid bike wheel/feminism symbol. One suggestion from a focus group participant was to make the spokes in the wheel overlap to make them look more like a true bike wheel. Future steps could include doing that, as well as solidifying the color scheme of the symbol itself, and deciding what the best placement of it is. Furthermore, incorporation of the SFBC chain logo was rather difficult for some versions of the logo, so finding better ways to add that in is another priority.

II. Activities and Workshops

Based on the data we gathered, we recommend the inclusion of the following activities/events in SFBC Women Bike SF programming:

- Group Bicycle Rides (for women of all levels--including beginners)
- Bike Safety Workshops/Classes to increase women's confidence biking in an urban setting
- Skill Swaps/Exchanges where women can learn from one another
- Show and Tell events where women can get a look at other female cyclists' bikes and gear, which may help them make their own purchases
- "Bikepool" groups who can ride to work with one another, based on their neighborhoods
- Events that are family friendly, such as picnics or slow group rides
- Coffee chats (perhaps host some on weekends)
- Workshops on hairstyles/outfits for biking to work
 - Perhaps a publication about this?
- Feature a female biker on the SFBC website on a monthly basis so other women have someone to identify and connect with
- Publish guides to finding women-friendly mechanics and bike shops

III. Event Locations & Neighborhoods to Focus On

Convenience and popularity:

The Mission would be a crucial area to hold events and activities due to the high concentration of women bikers who reside there. Also for after work events, South of Market, Financial District, Mission Bay, Mission, Civic Center, and Downtown/Union Square neighborhoods would be convenient for bikers since these are the most popular route destination neighborhoods according to the data.

Outreach Neighborhoods:

All other neighborhoods could be areas with the most potential for growth encouraging new bikers since less women are riding bikes to and from these areas.

IV. Outreach

We recommend that the SFBC continue to use surveys (in English and Spanish) to reach out to women in areas that are underrepresented in this data, and to women in SF in general who don't bike. However, we recommend that SFBC utilize a different method of contacting survey participants, as our attempts to do so through the Women's Building were not very successful (we only had about nine participants). Recommendations for gaining participants include advertising about the online survey in grocery stores and coffee shops in neighborhoods where we hope to gain participation. An additional suggestion would be to administer the survey in person or on the phone, or via another method that might encourage more accountability and participation.

Conclusion

We hope this report has provided SFBC with valuable information that will play a role in the continued development of this very important initiative. We each learned a great deal from this project, and have been happy to have contributed our time and energy to work that is so meaningful. Please feel free to contact us with further questions:

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