At Bikes Belong, we believe that bike shops can serve as effective voices for bicycling in their communities by providing important support for local advocacy initiatives and groups. Partnerships between the advocacy and retail sides of the bicycle industry help to ensure that more people ride—and that safe, enjoyable and convenient pedaling options are available.

To better understand how bicycle retailers perceive and support bicycle advocacy—local, regional, and national—we surveyed 116 retailers from 34 states. Here’s what they told us.

Respondents:

116 retailers
277 individual shops
34 states

56% Bikes Belong members
44% non-members
According to retailers, bike advocacy...

- Helps make bicycling easier, safer, and more widespread: 87%
- Helps create a bike-friendly community: 84%
- Positively influences our local government: 71%
- Helps our shop sell more bikes and accessories: 61%
- Is difficult for most cyclists to understand: 16%
- Isn’t a good investment for our business: 5%
- Is too time consuming to get involved with: 3%

Bike advocacy “helps bring our business into the cycling community and helps customers and potential customers to see the value bike shops bring to the community,” said one retailer.
Other popular advocacy actions included participation in local bike-related government committees and planning groups, supporting recreational bicycling events, holding bicyclist education and safety classes, and making the shop itself bicycle friendly.
During the last five years, how has the importance of supporting bike advocacy changed in retailers' minds?

- Now much more important: 28%
- Now more important: 31%
- Same: 37%
- Now less important: 2%
- Not sure: 3%

59% of retailers said supporting bike advocacy is more important to them now than it was five years ago.

Some comments from retailers:
“Advocacy is key to our industry’s sustainability.”
“I’ve chosen to become more involved as the organization of advocacy has improved over the years.”
How important is it to retailers for a brand they carry to support bike advocacy?

- Very important: 45%
- Somewhat important: 34%
- Neutral: 16%
- Not very important: 2%
- Not important at all: 2%
- Not sure: 2%

79% of retailers said it is important for brands they carry to support bike advocacy.
If a brand that retailers carry stopped supporting bike advocacy, would they continue to carry the brand?

- Very likely: 12%
- Somewhat likely: 16%
- Neutral: 41%
- Somewhat unlikely: 17%
- Very unlikely: 9%
- Not sure: 5%

More than 1/4 of retailers said they probably would stop carrying a brand that stopped supporting bike advocacy.
Do retailers use a brand's commitment to bike advocacy as a selling point for customers?

Half of retailers said they use a brand’s commitment to bike advocacy as a selling point for customers.
Average retailer contributions to bike advocacy, including funding, product, and payroll dollars

- $0-$49: 1%
- $50-$99: 3%
- $100-$499: 16%
- $500-$999: 17%
- $1,000-$4,999: 36%
- $5,000-$9,999: 11%
- $10,000-$49,999: 11%
- $50,000-$99,999: 1%
- $100,000+: 1%
- Not sure: 3%

Retailers are most likely to contribute between $1,000 and $5,000 annually to bike advocacy.
Finally, we asked retailers to describe the creative tactics they use to support bike advocacy. Their answers included:

- Sending advocacy alerts to store e-mail lists
- Including advocacy messages in radio advertisements
- Getting involved with bike to school programs
- Becoming an elected official
- Giving deep discounts to hard-working volunteers
- Encouraging advocacy awareness in customers
- Teaching people the benefits of cycling
- Promoting bicycling for transportation on social media pages and websites
- Hosting marketing rides for local media representatives
Survey Methodology:

Retailers were solicited for the online survey via e-mail. The survey was initially distributed on July 8, 2009 and closed on July 20, 2009. Because the majority of the respondents were Bikes Belong members, a second phase was conducted from August 25, 2009 to September 4, 2009 to gather an unaffiliated response. The original survey is available at http://bikesbelong.oli.us/Surveys/retaileradvoquestions.pdf. The complete public dataset and any other information can be requested by e-mailing kate@bikesbelong.org.

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About Bikes Belong:

Bikes Belong Coalition is the U.S. bicycle industry organization dedicated to putting more people on bicycles more often. Bikes Belong works to increase federal bike funding, awards grants to support innovative bike projects, promotes bicycling and its benefits, and backs crucial national efforts such as Safe Routes to School, Bicycle Friendly Communities, and the National Bike Summit. The affiliated Bikes Belong Foundation focuses on improving bicycle safety and enhancing children's bike programs.

Visit us on the web at bikesbelong.org.