



# League of Illinois Bicyclists



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## BICYCLE FUNDS IN DANGER FOR THIRD STRAIGHT YEAR

**For Immediate Release  
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AURORA, IL. – Funds for bicycle trails are in jeopardy of being slashed by the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) for the third straight year, the executive director of the League of Illinois Bicyclists has warned.

Ed Barsotti said, "In the last two years, IDOT has been forced to return federal transportation funds to Washington. Instead of sharing the pain with proportional cuts across the board for all its funding categories, IDOT has raided unfairly funds used for bike trails and other local projects. It's a real prospect again this year unless the state takes a different approach and treats funding for bike trails more equitably than in the past."

Barsotti has sent a letter to Gov. Rod Blagojevich and Illinois Transportation Secretary Timothy Martin urging them to avert another raid and treat bicycling funding in this state with more fairness. "These cuts have been blatantly wrong and against the intent of the federal legislation," Barsotti's letter said.

He pointed out that in Fiscal Year 2006, nearly half of the bicycle money in one category and 23 percent in another category were returned to Washington. Those figures compare with an overall 4.5 percent cut from other funding categories. "That's bad, and Fiscal Year 2005 was almost as bad," he added.

In Fiscal Year 2005, the reduction in other federal transportation categories for Illinois was 3.7 percent, but the cuts were 17.3 percent and 15 percent, respectively, in two categories involving bike trails and local projects.

To reverse their past raids and to avert one this year, Barsotti urged the state to correct the situation over the next three-four years by sparing bicycle and trail funds from further reductions. He suggested taking April's cut and future cuts from other transportation funding categories so that over time the total cuts from all funds are as balanced as possible.

IDOT has argued unconvincingly that the cuts were proportional and based on unobligated balances in the various funds. "While it seems logical to return funds that look like they are not being spent, appearances are deceiving," Barsotti said, "The decision is definitely not fair because IDOT's state programming methods and specific decisions are the leading causes for the large balances in the two funds in the first place."

"Engineering often takes a long time," Barsotti said. "The shortage of IDOT staff and its competing demands have worsened the situation. Until engineering is approved, the much larger construction contract money sits

unobligated.” Because this money is unobligated, it then becomes a tempting target for raiding by the state, he added. “This should not be happening, and it should be corrected by the governor and his transportation secretary.”

To make matters even worse, IDOT has not awarded bike trail grants since 2001 and is sitting on announcing grants for 2005. “To then base these cuts on unspent dollars is disturbing and blatantly wrong,” Barsotti said.

The funding categories that have been raided the last two years and are in danger again this year are the Illinois Transportation Enhancement Programs (ITEP) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ). The state uses some of these program funds to engineer and construct bikeways and trails.

In Fiscal Year 2006, IDOT slashed \$11.6 million from its budgeted \$25.6 million in ITEP money and \$19.1 million from its \$81.9 million CMAQ fund. These cuts amounted to \$30.7 million of the \$70 million returned to Washington.

Barsotti said, “The public, Congress and Illinois towns have spoken loudly for bike trails. They are local assets that make a community more attractive for families and businesses. Despite cyclists and pedestrians accounting for 15 percent of Illinois traffic deaths, trails receive less than 2 percent of federal transportation dollars. Now, even that is being slashed. This impropriety must be corrected and can be by the Blagojevich administration starting this year.”

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