



Messaging

In Local Bike & Walk Advocacy

(and Remember, it's always Local, so modify as you wish)

Use the right words and phrases.

Southern messaging:*

- *family friendly facilities*
- *local control*
- *livable communities and streets*
- *economic empowerment and development*
- *healthy streets*
- *safe streets*
- *freedom to choose how to get around*

*Nationally studied messaging**:*

- *Roads, protected bike lanes, access to parks and sidewalks that can accommodate all users*
- *Improving the quality of life for people in the neighborhood*
- *People walking, walkers, walking*
- *People riding bicycles, bike riders, biking*
- *Neighborhood, town, city, school, church, family*
- *local business*
- *Crashes, collisions*
- *Helping children grow up at a healthy weight*

Avoid these words and phrases.

Southern messaging to avoid:*

- *Environment*
- *reducing car travel*
- *bicycling as fun/likeable/recreational*
- *cyclist*
- *federal spending*
- *fair share*

*Nationally studied messaging to avoid**:*

- *Built environment, active transportation, infrastructure*
- *Pedestrians, bicyclists*
- *Accidents*
- *Preventing childhood obesity*
- *“Community”, since it means something very different to each person*

Other Good Strategies**

1. Connect with Supporters
 - *Use language that will move people to take action. Frame your message like you are painting a picture of the environmental challenges they face to be physically active. Create a sense of urgency. Clarify that the change and action you're calling for is about transforming environments to make it easy for people to be physically active and less about creating personal behavior change.*
2. Use the right messenger
 - *Is the person delivering the message credible, respected, representative of the community most affected, have personal experience.*
3. Emphasize choice
 - *People want choice, not removal of options. This is tricky, so if there is a cost, the benefit must be very clearly illustrated as larger.*
4. Alleviate skepticism and build trust
 - *People are very skeptical of government and framing our solutions only from that lens can prevent us from getting our message through to key audiences. Introduce policy, systems, and environmental change efforts to the public with words like "services," "resources," "partnerships," as people are more inclined to embrace this terminology instead of "regulations," "mandates," "bans," "funding," and "government."*

**These work in the Southern States (in addition to those at the national level), as studied in 2015 by Southern States bike/walk advocacy organizations, facilitated by the Alliance for Biking & Walking*

***Voices for Healthy Kids study of messaging, a program of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and American Heart Association*