

# NEWS

**For Immediate Release**

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**Date:** March 22, 2011

## **The Bittersweet Victory of Separated Bicycle and Pedestrian Paths on the Gerald Desmond Bridge Replacement Project Highlights Mark Bixby's Legacy of Advocacy.**

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**Long Beach California** – Long Beach's lead bicycle advocate Mark Bixby's last triumph in supporting Long Beach to become "the most bicycle friendly city in the nation" happened at the Port of Long Beach Harbor Commission meeting on Monday March 14<sup>th</sup> 2011 just two days before his untimely death on Wednesday March 16, 2011 in a plane crash. At the meeting the port staff presented a new position – and one that Mark had been advocating passionately for – general contractors bidding for the bridge project will be required to include both separated bicycle and pedestrian paths in their proposals.

According to Dr. Bob Kanter, Environmental Planning director for the Port "the solicitation package to the design-build team bidders will require their bid include a Class One bike and pedestrian path on the Gerald Desmond Bridge. The bike path is a mandatory requirement. When the bid is received it must include those elements in order to be a responsive bid." He also noted, "The coastal trail path...is part of the project...it will be built in addition to the class 1 path." The plan is to serve a larger cycling and pedestrian community and create access all around the Port.

"We're elated that the Harbor Commissioners, Port staff and Caltrans have come to understand the importance of including bicycle and pedestrian access on the new bridge," said Martin Howard, a longtime friend of Bixby's and a fellow board member of Bikeable Communities, a nonprofit advocacy organization. "You only have one opportunity to build a billion-dollar bridge in a century. And Mark felt passionately that the bridge needed to be constructed to benefit everyone and to connect as many places as possible. He called it, 'the bridge to everywhere.'"

As a member of the non-profit bicycle advocacy group Bikeable Communities, Bixby was tireless in his efforts to educate and inspire all parties involved to understand the importance of these facilities both to the Port with its focus on sustainability, and the City as it endeavors to become one of the most bike-friendly cities in the nation. Through Bixby's efforts, Bikeable Communities leadership and volunteers worked in partnership with nearly 20 organizations, clubs and advocacy groups to raise awareness of the need for bicycle and pedestrian paths to create viable and safe routes to Terminal Island. The support of the California Coastal Commission (Deputy Director John Ainsworth supplied Mark with a specific letter of support for the March 14<sup>th</sup> meeting), the Sierra Club, the League of American Cyclists, Long Beach Cyclists, Vice Mayor and 2<sup>nd</sup> District Council member Suja Lowenthal and many more were critical to the success of the outreach effort.

In her response to the Harbor Commissioners' decision, Lowenthal stated: "This bridge will be the envy of cities not only in the state, but around the globe. I hope the commissioners see this as an opportunity to showcase the many advances that the Port has made in goods movement and green technology, bringing residents and visitors to the best location from which to view a working port. If I can just say how very excited I am at this possibility; it would be an understatement. I think it really is more than iconic it is such a progressive bold step made on behalf of this board. And that is just in your DNA. You have continually taken bold progressive steps. And this is just the next installation. I thank you for that."

Commissioner Mario Cordero, the longest sitting Harbor Commissioner, and one of the original Green Port supporters voiced his strong support for the bike and pedestrian path: "The more I have read about what's involved...and examined statements from other policy makers...like the federal government and like Caltrans, our partner on this project, it seems to me that we must consider a clear policy so there is no misunderstanding of the feasibility of the Class One route on the bridge. We are only going to build one bridge for the next century here in Long Beach. I now very much see implementation of a Class One pedestrian and bike facility as an integral part of the bridge."

Chris Quint, a co-founder of Long Beach Cyclists, cycling safety instructor and car-free-by-choice cyclist pointed out in his remarks to the commissioners, fully one-third of adult Americans don't own an automobile either because they can't afford a car or choose not to own one. Many of these people, noted Quint, commute by bicycle.

Advocates and professionals alike who worked with Bixby on bicycle and community related issues appear to all agree there could be no greater tribute to the passionate leader than to see the bicycle and pedestrian path on the new Gerald Desmond Bridge named in Bixby's honor. "It was Bixby's vision, passion, negotiating skills, work-ethic and ability to forge a collaborative coalition that took the bike and ped path from concept to a world-class idea that will impact thousands for generations to come," said Howard. "His leadership and vision on many issues will be sorely missed by many in Long Beach, but in particular, by the cycling community."

For further updates on the Gerald Desmond Bridge bicycle and pedestrian path project, please visit: [www.bikeablecommunities.org](http://www.bikeablecommunities.org)

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### **About Mark Bixby**

Long Beach native Mark Bixby (1966 – 2011) was a member of one of the most influential families in the history of the city. A passionate, focused, and inspiring individual Mark was committed to "improving the lives of others through everything he did...with his family, at work and through his remarkable efforts within the community."

Mark attended Wilson High School and earned a Master of Science from MIT, and a Bachelor of Science from Duke University. He was both a licensed real estate broker and general contractor and worked with Pacific Retail Partners where he oversaw the Fresh & Easy, Home Depot, Boeing Realty Corp., and CSULB Foundation accounts.

It was in his commitment to his community however, that Mark shone brightest as an exemplary and memorable "active living" citizen of the city he loved and knew so well. Mark served as the President for the Rotary Club of Long Beach and chaired the YMCA of Greater Long Beach Camping Services board for three years. As one of the preeminent bicycle advocates in the city he was a member of "Off the Front," and was a

member of the board of directors of Bikeable Communities. He was the founding director of the Long Beach Bike Festival and the driving force behind the effort to put a bike and pedestrian facility on the new billion-dollar Gerald Desmond Bridge. Much of what Long Beach has accomplished in the last three years with regard to achieving a bike-friendly city was in part due to Mark's vision, passion, hard work and most of all his ability to connect with and influence people.

Mark was an avid athlete and gifted photographer. He is survived by his wife Theresa, his three children Ryan, Kirra and Jessica, his mother Betsy, and two brothers Grant and Brett.

### **About Bikeable Communities**

Founded in 1998, Bikeable Communities is a 501(c) 3 organization dedicated to connecting communities and people through the benefits of cycling. For further information please visit: [www.bikeablecommunities.org](http://www.bikeablecommunities.org).

**Editor's Note:** Both a web and print quality image of Mark Bixby are available upon request.