

For Immediate Release

Cyclists to Protest Chicago Auto Show

What: Fifth Annual Chicago Auto Show Protest

When: February 7, 2004, noon

Where: Starting at Daley Plaza, and proceeding in a bicycle parade to McCormick Place.

Who: Up to fifty cyclists and alternative transportation advocates are expected.

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How: In a lighthearted jab at car culture, cyclists will parade and put on an alternative show, using banners, flyers, and street theater to give Auto Show attendees something else to remember besides the shiny new cars.

Why: The reasons for protesting against car culture are numerous, and deadly serious.

Cars Kill more Americans than All Other Transportation Modes Combined

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration statistics show that over 40,000 Americans are killed by cars every year (<http://www-fars.nhtsa.dot.gov/>), and hundred of thousands more are injured. Despite the automobile industry's claims that cars are getting safer, these numbers have held steady for several years.

Events like the Auto Show, which promotes and even glorifies driving, encourage automobile dependence and indirectly contribute to thousands of auto-related fatalities every year.

Cars are the Number One Killer of America's Children

According to the U.S. Department of Transportation's 2001 report on Traffic Safety and Children (<http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/pdf/nrd-30/NCSA/TSF2001/2001children.pdf>), "Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children of every age from 4 to 14 years old" in the United States. The report goes on to say, "In the United States, an average of 6 children 0-14 years old were killed and 732 were injured every day in motor vehicle crashes during 2001." And cars threaten the health of our children in other ways: from mounting child obesity, to smog-induced asthma and bronchitis, children pay a disproportionate price for our addiction to automobiles. (See the World Health Organization report at <http://www.who.int/inf-pr-1998/en/pr98-57.html>.)

Cars Worsen Chicagoans' Quality of Life

Automobile advertisements feature shiny cars humming down empty roads, but the reality of commuting by automobile is a much different picture. Congestion, smog, road rage, noise, and sprawl: these are the effects of car culture on our city. The shiny new cars at the Auto Show aren't the problem, of course; it's the millions of them clogging our streets and poisoning our air. But the Auto Show's purpose is to put more cars on the roads, which will only make these problems worse. Our city, our nation, and our planet deserve better.

It's Not About the Drivers

The Auto Show Protest is a demonstration against the automobile and oil industries, not against individual motorists. Most drivers are unwitting victims of automobile dependence, and of the automobile industry's concerted efforts to make other transportation options seem unfeasible or undesirable. Even people who genuinely love cars don't necessarily enjoy the realities of driving, especially in the city, nor are they likely to appreciate the rising costs of parking, insurance, and gas, especially given our nation's increasing dependence on overseas oil. And the oil won't last forever, no matter where it comes from.

There's a Better Way

There are plenty of ways to get around without a car, especially in Chicago, despite the Auto Show's message. Most car trips can be replaced by walking, biking, or public transit. The Auto Show Protest will demonstrate that cars aren't the only cool, sexy, fun, and practical means of transportation available. As H.G. Wells said, "Every time I see an adult on a bicycle, I no longer despair for the future of the human race."

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