



Letters to the Editor:

A letter to the editor has the best chance for publication if its content builds upon an issue previously covered in the paper. Transportation articles are fairly common – wait for one, then quickly craft your response. Timeliness is critical.

While your letter should touch on the article to which you are responding, it should not repeat the author's argument – the purpose is to make your point. Average length is 150 words, but you should check with your specific publication for length limits and other guidelines.

Letters that get printed often follow a standard pattern. Start off by referencing a prior article or letter from that paper (by title of article and/or author of letter, and date), then consider mentioning some statistics or facts, such as:

- Nearly one half of all trips taken in the United States are three miles or less, and one quarter are one mile or less.
- According to the Center for Disease Control, the prescription for good health is just 30 minutes of walking or biking a day.
- We could easily get more physical activity in our lives by building walking and biking into our basic daily trips.
- Solving the problem of global climate change will take many different approaches. One of them must be walking and biking.
- Because we are driving more as a nation, cars are the fastest growing major source of greenhouse gases.

Then consider inserting a personal sentence about your experience:

- I and many others would like to get some exercise by walking or biking for short trips, but can't without safe and convenient places to do so.
- I attempted to make a trip by bike recently but found it dangerous and clearly saw the lack of funding we have put into creating safe and convenient places to walk and bike.
- Gas prices have negatively impacted my family's budget. With more safe and convenient places to walk and bike, we would be able to avoid these costs for many of our short trips.

If possible, close your letter with a call to action for readers:

- Write a letter to your senator or representative.
- Meet at town hall or other location to rally around an issue.
- Call the office of your congressperson and share your views on active transportation with them.
- The action can also be directed at a specific public official: "I urge _____ to represent our interests for more safe places to walk and bike in the upcoming transportation reauthorization."