

October 28, 2013

Barely a week after I started at Hawaii Bicycling League as a Non-Profit Management intern, I was already in the thick of it. Instead of spending my time in orientation or filing papers, the Executive Director put me right to work studying Hawaii's roads, reading design manuals, and talking to public officials. Coming from a job as a teller, this was exciting. Though I knew little about road design or the complexities of how City Hall worked, Hawaii Bicycling League respected my enthusiasm and was willing to let me learn by trying rather than leaving me to sit in the shadow of a more experienced co-worker.

By the end of my three-months at HBL, I discovered I had become something of a road-design wonk. While I had previously paid little attention to the roads I traveled on, now I couldn't ride across Kapiolani without pondering its history, design, and how adequately or inadequately it served the people who drove, trod, or rode upon it. Given how much space and time roads occupy in our lives, this experience could only be described as eye-opening. I realized how dysfunctional the roadways of Hawaii are, how dangerous, inefficient, and costly they are. Though I had gone in to the internship thinking of HBL as mostly a resume builder, I came out believing more strongly than ever that change is a necessity in Hawaii's transportation system.

Four months later, I'm working for a well known non-profit in Honolulu. Though the mission of this non-profit is about as far as you can get from bicycles—we deal primarily with youth—I've found that much of the experience and passion I found at HBL remains. I've kept in touch with my co-workers at HBL and I'm trying to start a joint program between our two programs that will help teach more youth about safe cycling. When I think about my future, I now consider cycling a vital part of it. If you had asked me previously where I saw myself in twenty years I would have told you as a businessman or a lawyer. Now I think again and again of getting my degree in Urban Planning, going to work in city hall, and changing bit by bit the way in which Hawaii travels.

Sincerely,

Richard G. Galluzzi