



June 1, 2020

To: Regional Planning and Highways Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

Subject: Active Transportation Update

Overview

The Orange County Transportation Authority coordinates regional active transportation efforts in Orange County. An update on recent and upcoming activities is provided for review.

Recommendation

Receive and file as an information item.

Background

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) Board of Directors (Board) receives regular updates on regional active transportation actions. These efforts support OCTA's vision for a multimodal transportation system.

Discussion

This report provides an update on education, safety, and evaluation programs and projects. In response to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), OCTA has been adapting project and program deliverables to fit the current situation, creatively undertaking public involvement, and evaluating the effects COVID-19 is having on active transportation in Orange County.

Education and Encouragement

Over the past four years, OCTA has secured grant funding from the California State Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) Highway Safety Program. These funds were used to create educational safety videos, host bicycle and pedestrian skills classes, and develop campaigns to distribute safety equipment. Based on OTS grants from previous years, the current pedestrian and bicycle safety project consists of four components: Travel Safe classes, Play It Safe videos, Operation

Bright Lights, and Operation Be Seen. OCTA has retained consultant services to deliver this project.

The overall project focuses on promoting safe walking and bicycling for transit riders, and person-to-person interaction is desirable to successfully complete the project. While COVID-19 has made these interactions challenging, OCTA, working with the consultant, developed alternate approaches to deliver project tasks while providing for the safety of the contractors and the public during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, OCTA will be hosting 12 virtual Travel Safe classes. The curriculum will be tailored to Orange County residents with modules promoting safe travel covering the following topics:

- Teaching process and outcomes for walk audits;
- Education on traffic safety laws for distinct demographic groups;
- How to develop action plans for behavioral and physical safety improvements, and;
- Instruction on creating interactive exercises to provide input to local agency staff.

Two Play It Safe videos will be produced and will be updated on previous year's videos, focusing on educating motorists about safe and responsible driving behavior around bicycles. These videos will be used in conjunction with the other key tasks to educate motorists on the safe operation of vehicles around bicycles.

The Operation Bright Lights events will focus on the safety and visibility of Orange County bicyclists and will specifically target geographic areas with a high number of bicycle and pedestrian incidents. Bicycle safety equipment, including bicycle helmets and lights, will be distributed at these events. To address the challenge COVID-19 poses to person-to-person contact, OCTA will use social and other media to prompt individuals to pick up safety equipment at "Stop and Grab" distribution events. Holding the distribution events in this way will allow proper social distancing.

Operation Be Seen will focus specifically on distribution events at key OCTA transit stops. OCTA and the consultant will set up stations at transit stops along these corridors to distribute safety materials, including reflective arm bands and keychains to improve pedestrian visibility in low light conditions. Conducting the distribution events at the transit stops instead of on buses will also allow proper social distancing measures while still distributing safety materials to riders of specific routes.

Safety

OCTA received two grants related to Safe Routes to School (SRTS) and pedestrian safety efforts. This includes the SRTS Action Plan (Action Plan), as well as the Safe Travels Education Program (STEP) Campaign. These two efforts will help demonstrate SRTS activities to schools and increase the reach of SRTS programs countywide. Both studies will foster continued collaboration and partnership between OCTA, school districts, the Orange County Health Care Association, cities, law enforcement agencies, and the California Department of Transportation.

The Action Plan is evaluating ongoing SRTS efforts countywide, developing a list of action items that could be undertaken, and identifying potential lead agencies and organizations. The Action Plan aims to improve safety for youth who walk and bike to school. This will be done through collaborative efforts, promotion of transportation safety education, strengthening of education and enforcement partnerships, and advancing encouragement programs that will benefit families throughout Orange County. The project will conclude in March 2021.

The STEP Campaign will lead educational and encouragement activities for walking and biking at 25 public elementary schools serving disadvantaged communities. A range of activities will be offered based on school interest and time availability for assemblies, walk/bike-to-school day events, and training activities. These student activities will be held during and after school, as well as with families on nights or weekends. The campaign will continue through June 2022.

Both safety efforts are proceeding through virtual team meetings at this time, and updates will be provided in future active transportation reports.

System Evaluation

OCTA is undertaking several initiatives to better understand how active transportation users experience Orange County's transportation system. These projects include the cyclic counts program and an update to the Orange County bicycle map.

The cyclic counts program kicked off in April 2020 and will collect bicycle counts at a minimum of 100 locations throughout Orange County twice during the month of May 2020 and again in 2021. These counts will be taken on one weekday and on one Saturday. The project team recommended, after much discussion, to collect counts in May 2020 notwithstanding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Assessing changes in active transportation travel behavior during this time presents a unique opportunity for data collection that can be used in future transportation model development.

OCTA is currently refreshing the OC Bike Map, which was last updated in 2015. OCTA finished updating its bicycle facility data and will collect feedback from the cities to validate the data provided. To be conscious of the additional demands the COVID-19 response has put on many city staff, coordination for this project is on hold; however, staff is still planning to have the final map complete to coincide with OCTA's September Bike Month activities. Nationally, Bike Month is normally held in May, but many states, counties, and cities are postponing events due to COVID-19. The final 2020 OC Bike Map will be available on the OCTA website and will be printed and distributed throughout Orange County at outreach events.

Grant Application

OCTA is pursuing an Active Transportation Program Cycle 5 Grant for a Pacific Electric Right-of-Way (PE ROW) bikeway project. The grant application focuses on environmental clearance for a potential bikeway on a four-mile section of the PE ROW between Raitt Street and Euclid Street. The application funding request will be for \$3 million. Applications are currently due September 15, 2020.

Summary

OCTA has advanced planning, education, encouragement, and enforcement efforts to improve active transportation throughout Orange County. Coordination and collaboration will continue between the Southern California Association of Governments, California Department of Transportation, and stakeholders to encourage and support pedestrians walking and bicycling within Orange County. These activities require interaction and coordination with stakeholders and have proven to be challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Active Transportation Program at OCTA, and its partners, have been and will continue to make use of technologies and techniques to adapt to new reality presented by COVID-19 while continuing provide for the safety and mobility of Orange County residents.

Attachment

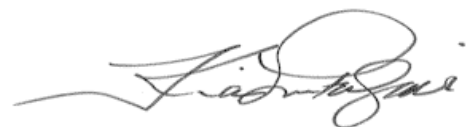
None.

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