



November 2, 2020

To: Regional Planning and Highways Committee
From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer
Subject: Active Transportation Program Biannual 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 biannual updates on regional active transportation (bicycling and walking) projects and programs. These efforts support OCTA's vision for a multimodal transportation system.

Discussion

This report provides an update on active transportation education, safety, and evaluation programs and projects. In response to the 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 Highway Safety Program. These funds have been used to host bicycle and pedestrian skills classes and develop campaigns to distribute safety equipment. OCTA completed the 2020 Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Project in September. This project consisted of three components: Travel Safe classes, Operation Bright Lights, and Operation Be Seen.

The overall project focused on promoting safe walking and bicycling for transit riders. Although person-to-person interaction is desirable to complete the project successfully, COVID-19 has made these interactions challenging. OCTA, working with the support of a consultant, developed alternate approaches to deliver project tasks. A project summary can be found attached (Attachment A).

Safety

OCTA received two grants related to the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Program and pedestrian safety efforts. These included the SRTS Action Plan (Action Plan) and the Safe Travels Education Program (STEP) Campaign. These two efforts deliver SRTS activities to schools and increase the reach of SRTS programs countywide. Both projects 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 (Caltrans). More information on these efforts is included in Attachment A.

System Evaluation

OCTA is undertaking several initiatives to better understand how active transportation users experience Orange County's transportation system. These projects include the Bike Gap Closure Feasibility Study, the Cyclic Counts Program, and an update to the Orange County bicycle map.

Bike Gap Closure Feasibility Study

A comprehensive assessment is being initiated to evaluate three bikeway gaps in Orange County. Regional bikeway trails in central and south Orange County, as well as the Cross County Connector bikeway, will be studied. The study will recommend a backbone network that links to other regional and local bikeways. It will also provide grant-ready cost estimates and trail alignments, which can be used by cities to pursue funding opportunities for implementation. The project is funded by \$160,000 in Caltrans Sustainable Community Grant funds, and \$40,000 in State Transportation Improvement Program Planning, Programming, and Monitoring funds and will be completed in spring 2023.

Cyclic Counts Program

This program kicked off in April 2020, and collected bicycle counts at 120 locations throughout Orange County between May 1 and June 6 (not including Memorial Day weekend). Assessing changes in active transportation travel behavior during the pandemic presented a unique opportunity for data collection. When using this data in the future, it will be noted that it was collected during the pandemic. Cities and the County request facility use data to help compete for grants, evaluate existing facilities, and inform decision making about where to locate facilities in the future. Counts will be repeated in May and June of 2021. Below are preliminary results:

Weekday Trips Total	22,513 (34.3 percent)
Saturday Trips Total	43,157 (65.7 percent)

Orange County Bikeways Map Guide

OCTA released the 2020 Orange County Bikeways Map Guide in October 2020 (the last update occurred in 2015). OCTA updated bicycle facility data and collected feedback from the cities to validate the data provided. The final 2020 Orange County Bikeways Map Guide (Attachment B) is available on the OCTA website and will be printed and distributed throughout Orange County at outreach events.

Grant Application

OCTA submitted an Active Transportation Program Cycle 5 Grant application to fund the environmental clearance phase of the Garden Grove – Santa Ana Rails-to-Trails Gap Closure Study. This project has been consistently identified in planning documents for the County and the cities as an important gap closure. The trail would provide direct bicycle and pedestrian access to downtown Garden Grove and Santa Ana, as well as several regional trails in central Orange County. The grant application is to study a potential bikeway on a four-mile section of the Pacific Electric Right-of-Way between Raitt Street and Euclid Street. The funding request is for \$3 million. The application was submitted on September 15, 2020, and awards will be announced in spring 2021.

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, Caltrans, and stakeholders to encourage and support 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 the new reality presented by COVID-19 while continuing to provide for the safety and mobility of Orange County residents.

Attachments

- A. 2020 Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Activities
- B. Orange County, Bikeways Map Guide

Prepared by:



Peter Sotherland
Active Transportation Coordinator
(714) 560-5386

Approved by:



Kia Mortazavi
Executive Director, Planning
(714) 560-5741