



August 28, 2025

To: Regional Transportation Planning 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 with local jurisdictions, key stakeholders, and the public to support development of a balanced multimodal transportation system. An update on recent and upcoming activities is provided.

Recommendation

Receive and file as an information item.

Background

The Orange County Transportation Authority (OCTA) is engaged in regional active transportation projects and programs in Orange County (OC). These efforts support OCTA's vision for a balanced multimodal transportation system. To realize this vision, OCTA works with local jurisdictions, stakeholders, and the public to advance the development of safe, accessible, and connected bicycling and walking networks. Updates on these projects and a summary of additional active transportation efforts are discussed below.

Discussion

OCTA Electric Bicycles (E-bikes) Safety Initiative

In December 2024, OCTA finalized the OCTA funded E-Bike Safety Action Plan (Plan), which identifies gaps in e-bike safety efforts at the local, regional, and state levels and outlines strategies to address these gaps. OCTA reviewed existing data and non-infrastructure resources related to e-bike safety such as crash data, usage trends, local and regional initiatives, legislation, and other safety efforts. The team reviewed these efforts and resources to determine where additional efforts are needed.

OCTA staff is beginning implementation of the Plan by forming four stakeholder groups. One stakeholder group will be formed for each of the following e-bike safety strategy areas identified in the Plan: policy, education, enforcement, and data. The fourth group serves as the E-bike Safety Steering Committee (Steering Committee) and will be composed of the chairperson from each of the three strategy area groups, along with additional critical stakeholders. The Steering Committee's purview will be coordinating the input from the strategy area groups, guiding implementation of the Plan, and general e-bike safety coordination. Together, the Steering Committee and strategy area groups will work collaboratively to support a broader vision for e-bike safety, accessibility, and integration. OCTA staff is seeking out a variety of stakeholders that have expertise in each of the strategy areas. Invitations for these four stakeholder groups have been made, but rosters have not yet been finalized. Stakeholders invited include, but are not limited to, education officials, local and county law enforcement, city staff, county staff, Orange County Health Care Agency, healthcare workers, first responders, California Department of Transportation, and OCTA staff. Meetings are anticipated to begin in fall 2025.

Next Safe Travels Education Program (Next STEP) Project

In June 2024, OCTA, in partnership with the Orange County Health Care Agency, launched the Next STEP Project. The Next STEP project team partners with city staff, schools, and school districts to conduct walking and bicycling education, encourage activities, and conduct walk audits to assess infrastructure needs at participating schools. The Next STEP Project will be implemented at 25 eligible public elementary schools across OC. The Next STEP Project is funded by an \$850,000 California Transportation Commission Active Transportation Program (ATP) grant and a \$1.25 million Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) 2.0 grant and will be completed in 2027.

The Next STEP project team has completed walk audits at eight schools (Attachment A). These audits include observing drop-off and/or pick-up activities followed by evaluation of surrounding roadway, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities. During the walk audits, parents and school staff are encouraged to provide feedback on infrastructure conditions and performance as well as safety and access needs. Traffic data collection efforts and student travel tally surveys are also completed to help analyze the use and movement of vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians near schools. Recommendations based on the audits will be developed by the project team and reviewed with city staff prior to being finalized.

The project is continuing to solicit participation from schools that are eligible based on criteria established in OCTA's Safe Routes to School Action Plan. The Next STEP project team is anticipating having all schools recruited by the end of the calendar year 2025, to deliver the concepts by June 2026, and the

educational programming by the end of 2027. To date, 14 schools have expressed interest in participating, and two - Jefferson Elementary School and Melrose Elementary School - have been recruited. Once schools are recruited, the project team will begin delivering walking and bicycling education and encouragement activities at the participating schools.

Active Transportation Outreach and Engagement Project

The Active Transportation Education and Engagement Project began in summer 2024 and continues through June 2026. The project team is attending community events, conducting bicycle rodeos, and deploying mobile street team ambassadors to distribute safety materials to the public, empowering residents to safely and confidently use bicycling and walking as a viable mode of transportation. The project also develops and strengthens existing partnerships with community-based organizations, in support of active transportation safety to help increase community engagement and participation in active transportation-related events. This project is funded with a \$400,000 SCAG REAP 2.0 grant.

The project team is working with local jurisdictions and stakeholders to identify community events where providing active transportation engagement and education can be beneficial to the safety and wellbeing of the community. Collateral and educational materials have been developed and are being distributed to aid in this messaging including:

- Bicycle stickers
- E-bike safety flyers
- E-bike stickers
- Vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle safety tips flyers

The project team identified and procured walking and bicycle safety equipment. Depending on the focus of the events attended, the project team has been distributing the following:

- Branded water bottles
- Bicycle bells
- Bicycle helmets
- Bicycle lights
- Reflective ankle wraps and keychains

Through the end of June, the project team has attended 31 events, engaged 3,410 attendees, distributed over 4,988 safety items, and 4,239 educational materials (Attachment B). Board Members who are interested in having the project team participate in an event with a pop-up, street team, or bicycle rodeo in their jurisdiction are encouraged to contact staff for further coordination.

OC Connect Project

The OC Connect Project proposes approximately four miles of Class I shared-use path connecting the cities of Garden Grove and Santa Ana (cities) and closing an active transportation gap for the communities around the former Pacific Electric Right-of-Way (PE ROW) corridor. The Project Approval and Environmental Document (PA/ED) phase was funded by a \$3 million ATP grant and includes preliminary design, determining the trail's feasibility, estimating project costs, and completing the requisite environmental documentation. OCTA completed the PA/ED phase of the OC Connect Project in June 2025 in cooperation with the cities, California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 12, and Orange County Public Works.

OCTA has secured \$6 million in funding to advance OC Connect through the final design phase. OCTA is preparing to initiate the procurement process for the plans, specifications, and estimates phase and, concurrently, OCTA is working with the cities to obtain commitments to operate and maintain the trail, should it be constructed. In addition, a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (ESA), additional corridor re-use design, and several outreach activities have been added to the existing environmental contract. These efforts, scheduled to begin in fall 2025, will include two public meetings, participation in up to three community events, and a comprehensive notification campaign. The Phase II ESA includes soils testing recommended by the Phase I ESA completed during the PA/ED phase. This identifies any cleanup efforts which would be incorporated into the design phase and undertaken as a part of construction.

Constructing the OC Connect trail would greatly improve the active transportation connectivity by providing a safe, well connected active transportation corridor linking the cities' downtown areas to the surrounding communities as well as the Santa Ana River Trail, multiple transit stops, and the OC Streetcar. In addition to increased connectivity, the project creates a valuable and lasting community greenway that benefits both city's downtown areas and the neighborhoods surrounding the corridor. Transformation of the former PE ROW corridor into a vibrant community asset will promote health and wellbeing and create a positive identity using recreation and leisure amenities not currently available in the surrounding areas.

Orange County Bicycle Counts

OCTA collected bicycle count data from 450 locations on roads and bicycle paths around the County and updated the OCTA bicycle counts database. This effort provides data for analysis, grant applications, and project development in support of active transportation. OCTA provided a web-based platform for local agencies to request counts at specific locations.

In January and February 2025, outreach emails were sent to key city and Orange County Public Works staff with the purpose of encouraging all jurisdictions to request bicycle count locations within their areas. Data collection took place in May 2025. Counts were taken at each location for one weekday and one weekend day during the collection period. The count information includes a range of data categories such as direction of travel, sidewalk versus street usage, electric versus non-electric bicycles, and helmet usage. The final 2025 bicycle count data have been added to the database and are available to cities upon request.

Move OC: A Vibrant Path to Active Transportation

OCTA is undertaking an update to the 2019 OC Active Countywide ATP. Staff applied for and secured \$1 million in funding for the project through Caltrans' Sustainable Transportation and SCAG Sustainable Communities grant programs. The new plan, titled "Move OC", will provide infrastructure, programs, policies, and funding recommendations aimed at advancing the forthcoming vision, goals, and objectives of the plan. The overarching purpose of the project is to help make OC an area where residents of all ages and abilities can easily choose active transportation as a primary mode of travel for everyday trips.

Building upon the foundation of the 2019 OC Active ATP, "Move OC" will take a more proactive and forward-looking view of active transportation in OC. It will be shaped through a comprehensive, multi-phase public outreach process designed to guide the development of a clear vision, supported by specific goals and objectives. Community engagement activities will include bicycle and pedestrian safety rodeos, open house events, virtual workshops, pop-up installations, on-the-street intercept surveys, social media outreach, and platforms for ongoing public feedback. Due to varying transportation challenges and opportunities in different parts of the County, the plan will have regionally tailored analysis that is organized around four distinct geographic areas to be determined during the initial stages of the project. This project scope is currently in development and the project is planned to begin by July 2026.

Summary

OCTA supports efforts to improve active transportation throughout OC. This includes ongoing education, encouragement, engineering, and evaluation efforts for active transportation. Coordination and collaboration will continue among state, regional, and local agencies, key stakeholders, and the public to encourage and support safer walking and bicycling in OC.

Attachments

- A. Next Safe Travel Education Program Completed Walk Audits
- B. Active Transportation Outreach Support

Prepared by:



Peter Sotherland
Active Transportation Coordinator
(714) 560-5386

Approved by:



Rose Casey
Executive Director, Planning
(714) 560-5729