



June 5, 2023

To: Regional Transportation Planning Committee

From: Darrell E. Johnson, Chief Executive Officer

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "DEJ", with the word "For" written in smaller letters above the signature.

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. 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) is engaged in regional active transportation (bicycling and walking) projects and programs in Orange County. 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, easy to use, and connected bicycling and walking networks. OCTA's recent efforts include sharing information, encouraging people to walk and bicycle (education/encouragement), planning and design of pedestrian and bikeway projects (engineering), and collecting data for measuring projects and programs (evaluation). Details on these activities are described below.

Discussion

2023 Bike to Work Day

OCTA celebrated its first Bike to Work Day since 2019 on May 18 by holding a bicycle rally between the Orange Metrolink station and OCTA headquarters. Over 70 cyclists participated including Board members, OCTA management and staff, and members of the public.

Electric Bicycles (E-bikes)

OCTA continues its work related to E-bikes in Orange County. This includes data gathering, interagency coordination, and developing education and encouragement materials. E-bikes are included in OCTA's Cyclic Counts Program and play a role in ongoing planning studies.

E-bike Multimedia

In 2022, OCTA developed an e-bike video with a local social media influencer. The video delivered basic e-bike safety and courtesy messaging accessible to multiple age groups. The video was very successful with over one million plays on Instagram, over 450,000 views on TikTok, and 22,000 views on OCTA's YouTube channel. The video is available on OCTA's OC Active website under the e-bikes tab. OCTA will develop additional videos in the upcoming year with the goal of reaching out to other user groups.

OCTA developed several e-bike-related resources hosted on the e-bike page of OCTA's website including an e-bike basic operation video, a database of existing Orange County e-bike ordinances, and other information on e-bike operation and safety. OCTA will continue to develop associated materials for local jurisdictions and residents.

E-bike Quarterly Coordination Meeting

OCTA initiated a reoccurring, quarterly e-bike coordination meeting in October 2022. These meetings will bring together staff from cities and enforcement agencies to discuss emerging issues and approaches to e-bike use and safety in Orange County. OCTA hosted the second meeting in February. The meeting was attended by 36 participants from 25 different city and enforcement agencies discussing topics including legislative updates, outreach events, promotional materials, planning studies, and enforcement activities and concerns. OCTA provides meeting notes and information on any follow-up requests by participants. OCTA will continue holding meetings to provide a forum to discuss e-bike-related information, issues, and concerns.

E-bike Safety Study

OCTA is developing a study focusing on a gap analysis of existing e-bike safety resources and strategies at the local, regional, and state levels. Based on the findings of the gap analysis, strategies will be developed to bridge the identified gaps and inform future planning, outreach, and other safety efforts pertaining to e-bikes. The study outreach efforts will include two e-bike rodeo safety events, stakeholder engagement, and community outreach. The project study is in the

process of kicking-off and will be completed by December 2024. A final report and presentation will be included at that time.

OC Loop

The OC Loop is a vision for 66 continuous miles of infrastructure for the County's active transportation users (Attachment A). Approximately 88 percent of the multijurisdictional loop is complete with the most recent construction taking place in the cities of Yorba Linda and Anaheim, as well as the County of Orange, marking the completion of the Segment H portion of the El Cajon Bikeway. OC Loop Segments O, P, and Q, located in the City of Buena Park, were funded for construction through the Active Transportation Program (ATP) Cycle 6 call for projects. The cities of La Habra and Brea are in negotiations for purchasing right-of-way (ROW) from Union Pacific Railroad Segments A and B, as well as seeking funding to complete construction of these segments. There is currently no major work planned for Segments L, M, or T, which are California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and local roadways.

Garden Grove – Santa Ana Gap Closure Study

This study will complete the Project Approval and Environmental Document for a proposed active transportation facility along 3.1 miles of OCTA-owned, former Pacific-Electric ROW (PEROW). The corridor is between Raitt Street and Euclid Avenue and includes a spur along 0.85 miles of the Wintersburg Channel that would connect to Hazard Avenue. Funding is provided through a \$3 million State ATP Cycle 5 grant. The project will involve close coordination with the cities of Garden Grove and Santa Ana, Orange County Flood Control, and internal OCTA stakeholders. Key tasks include a baseline analysis of the corridor, agency coordination, preliminary engineering studies, environmental documentation, and public outreach. Challenges for the study will be the potential creative reuse of the historic PEROW bridge that spans the Santa Ana River, roadway crossings, and any soil contamination along the PEROW corridor. Staff is in the process of kicking off the project and it will be completed in approximately 18 months. The completion of this study will support the advancement of subsequent project phases.

Bike Gap Closure Feasibility Study

The current Bike Gap Closure Feasibility Study is evaluating potential alignments for three key regional bikeways including the OC Central loop, the OC South loop and the OC Connect (Attachment B). Study recommendations will be available to local agencies to pursue funding opportunities. The project team is developing draft concepts and cost estimates and the study is anticipated to be completed this summer.

Multiple strategies were used to engage with the public and stakeholders to solicit feedback on the project's overall approach and to increase public awareness. Outreach for the study included the following elements:

- **Virtual Workshops:** Two public virtual workshops took place on March 24, 2022, and February 16, 2023. The meetings reviewed gap closure concepts, project partners and background, as well as solicited feedback on facility types, level of comfort on roadways, and concerns with bicycling in Orange County.
- **Events:** Staff attended ten community events to promote the project and solicit feedback from residents on bicycling in Orange County. The most recent event occurred on February 5, 2023.
- **City Meetings:** To evaluate the OC Loops corridors, the project team met twice with city staff where the feasibility analysis work was being undertaken. The first meeting aimed to vet potential concepts and alternatives. The second meeting reviewed the feasibility analysis that was conducted and made updates or changes to the bikeway concepts.
- **OCTA Committees:** The project team presented twice to the OCTA Bicycle and Pedestrian Active Transportation Subcommittee and once to the OCTA Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). A final presentation is scheduled for the TAC on June 28, 2023.

Safe Travels Education Program

The Safe Travels Education Program (STEP) focuses on the implementation of safe routes to school programs. The STEP Campaign is funded through a \$500,000 ATP Cycle 4 grant. The project is a collaboration between OCTA, the Orange County Health Care Agency, and local partners and stakeholders that include schools, local jurisdictions, and the public.

This project develops and delivers education and encouragement activities for walking and bicycling to 25 public elementary schools (Attachment C) serving disadvantaged communities. Most recently, the project team initiated semiannual meetings between staff from the cities of Anaheim, Buena Park, Costa Mesa, Garden Grove, Orange, Santa Ana, Placentia, Westminster, and Yorba Linda, OCTA, and participating schools and parents. These meetings coordinated Safe Routes to School efforts, concluded work with schools for the spring semester, and began work on the final report which will be completed by November 2023.

The executive summary of the final report for both the Bike Gap Closure Study and the STEP Campaign will be included in the December 2023 staff report.

OCTA Cyclic Count Program

OCTA continued its cyclic count program in 2022 and 2023 by taking bi-directional counts at 120 locations across Orange County. Based on recommendations from the 2019 Active Transportation Count Program report to establish a countywide bicycle flow map, count locations are evenly distributed across geography and bikeway facility types. This data will be incorporated into the countywide bicycle flow map as well as be made available to partner agencies for their use. The data provides critical information to local agencies for grant applications, evaluation of existing facilities, and assists with decision making on where to locate facilities in the future.

Funding and Policy Shift

Over the past several years, a shift in funding and policy priorities at the state and federal level has been taking place. Highlighted by a \$1 billion augmentation to the state ATP grant program, development of new grant programs such as the Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) 2.0 being administered by Southern California Association of Governments and funded by the California Department of Housing & Community Development, and the Rebuilding America Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity Grants focusing almost entirely on multimodal transportation and resiliency. Mirroring this shift, Caltrans is issuing guidance documents focusing on land-use context, multimodalism, and complete streets with their Complete Streets Contextual Design Guidance, Complete Streets Elements Tools Box, and Main Street, California Guide all being published in quick succession. These changes are shaping the way that OCTA develops and delivers grant funded projects.

Grant Pursuits

OCTA active transportation continues its commitment to implement active transportation projects and concepts outlined in OCTA's guiding planning documents (i.e., OC Active, Safe Routes to School Action Plan, Regional Bikeways Strategies, the Long Range Transportation Plan, and the Systemic Safety Plan) by applying to grant programs such as the ATP, the Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Grant, and REAP 2.0. The list of recent grant pursuits is provided as Attachment D. If awarded funding, these projects would support OCTA's ongoing Safe Routes to School, active transportation safety, data collection, and first and last mile connectivity efforts.

Summary

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

Attachments

- A. OC Loop – Funding Award Summary
- B. OC Loops – Bike Gap Closure Study
- C. OC STEP Campaign Participating Schools
- D. OCTA 2023 Active Transportation Grant Pursuits

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