

'Sustainable Transportation' Coming Together Under New Bike Infrastructure

Bike Lanes, Transit Modes, Boulevards Gaining Momentum

■ By **SEAN BELK**
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The City of Long Beach is poised to become a model city in Southern California after receiving various grants for a new bicycle infrastructure, creating a myriad of partnerships and routes to make riding a bike safer and more convenient for residents and visitors alike.

Various citywide efforts to promote "sustainable transportation," or alternative forms of travel that promote a healthy, social and environmental lifestyle, are underway throughout Long Beach this year — with much more is yet to come.

The quality of public space, such as streets and sidewalks, have a direct impact on adjacent property values and quality of life, said Charlie Gandy, the city's mobility

coordinator. "We're looking beyond the pavement on the way people live and want to live in Long Beach," he said. "In many cases we're simply applying state-of-the-art tactics to Long Beach streets."

The city is nearing completion of two new 1.2-mile separated bikeways in Downtown Long Beach, the first of their kind in Southern California, according to city officials. The bikeways stretch along two streets, Broadway and 3rd Street, which turn into one-way couplets between Alamitos Avenue and Golden Avenue.

Sumi Gant, the city's transportation programs officer, said the new separated bikeways, along with new "bike signals," should be finished within the coming weeks, however a final date hasn't been set yet.

The city patterned the bikeways after New York City, which has installed simi-

lar lanes in downtown Manhattan, she said. "The reason we really like this set up is it's a safety feature giving the bikes their own signal and the drivers their own signal and so that eliminates the potential conflict, so it makes it safe for everybody," she said. Gant added that other countries such as China have paved all of their streets with designated bike lanes.

The city has also coordinated the effort with Long Beach Transit to make sure the bikeways don't disrupt routes for buses to pull over to the curb to pick up passengers, which is why both lanes are on the left hand side.

The new bikeways were paid for with \$700,000 in local transportation funds, which can only be used on upgrading transportation in the city. In the process of constructing the new bikeways, the 30-year-old regular traffic signals were modernized as well.

Gant said that as more people are now living and working downtown, creating the new bikeways was a way to provide a protected lane for cyclists on the streets, since riding a bike on the sidewalk is illegal in Long Beach and most cities, because of the dangers of encountering

pedestrians. "I've ridden my bike down here too and before the separated bikeways you just had to fight it out with the cars," she said.

The efforts are an expansion of the green "sharrow" lanes on 2nd Street in Belmont Shore that were the city's first attempt at bike infrastructure and a Federal Highway Administration sanctioned experimental project. Use of the sharrows has doubled within the last few years, she said. By next year, Gant said the city is working to form new sharrows on various new "bike boulevards," in addition to the existing one on Vista Street, which would interconnect various routes of the cities nine districts.

The idea is to create a more livable neighborhood for all travelers on the road, while also promoting alternative forms of transportation. "We want to really create a place of livable neighborhoods," Gant said. "The city has been supporting a livable, active community and a more healthy community by creating infrastructure that gives people a choice . . . We've been trying some different ways that would encourage the right use of the street by people on bikes and also encourage more people to



Elissa Briggs Thomas is the coordinator for California State University, Long Beach's Rideshare program in which the university carries out a widespread sustainable transportation program for students, employees and faculty. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Thomas McConville)

CSULB Named Bicycle Friendly Business And University

On April 7, California State University, Long Beach (CSULB) was designated by the League of American Bicyclists as being a "Bicycle Friendly Business" and a "Bicycle Friendly University." CSULB, according to a press release, "was among 32 universities that applied for the inaugural bicycle friendly award, and 20 received the designation. The program recognizes colleges and universities that create exceptional environments where bicycling can thrive and provides a roadmap and technical assistance to create great campuses for bicycling."

The university was one of 55 new "Bicycle Friendly Businesses, and one of only six to receive this year's Gold Award in that category. These businesses included restaurants to law offices to universities that promote bicycling in the workplace. Pictured, from left, accepting the awards are: Long Beach Vice Mayor Suja Lowenthal, CSULB Vice President Mary Stephens, and Long Beach Mobility Coordinator Charlie Gandy (Photograph by CSULB's David J, Nelson)



Cyclists take a ride down one of the city's new 1.2-mile separated bikeways in Downtown Long Beach, the first of their kind in Southern California. The lanes, including bike signals, are expected to be completed in the coming weeks. (Photograph by the Business Journal's Thomas McConville)

ride their bikes. It's good for the environment it's good for your health."

Elissa Briggs Thomas, coordinator of the Rideshare program at California State University, Long Beach (CSULB), said the efforts have also been coordinated to make the use of public transportation more practical. "Sustainable transportation and a livable community is one where you can access your resources," she said.

The city and CSULB have partnered to receive a \$900,000 grant from the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority to implement a "bike shar-

ing" program, to provide 160 bikes, for use both downtown and on the university campus, in a system to promote one-way trips, traveling from hotels to various spots in the city. Gant said the city is going out for proposals in coming weeks to find a contractor that would both operate and install the system. ■