

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM



CITY OF PALMDALE

**ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM
TECHNICAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

February 17, 2016

4:00pm to 6:00pm

*Development Services Conference Room
38250 Sierra Hwy, Palmdale, CA 93550*

TAC Members in Attendance:

Lt. Glenn Brandon

Mandy McConaha

Rhonda Hanson

Brian Kuhn

Mary Hines

Mike Behen

Dr. Larry Freise

Alan Thompson (by phone)

Dietter Aragon

*Elaine Macdonald (*Change name tent/Correct last name)*

Consultant Team in Attendance:

David Barquist, Kimley-Horn

Arlene Granadosin, Kimley-Horn

Ryan Snyder, TranspoGroup

Melody Wu, TranspoGroup

I. Welcome

Members of the TAC and the Consultant Team introduced themselves to the rest of the group.

II. Update on Bicycle Master Plan

- Community Input from Bicycle Plan Workshop, December 17, 2015

Ryan Snyder, of TranspoGroup, provided the committee with a summary of the Bike Plan Community Workshop held on December 17, 2015. He stated that workshop participants brought up the main issues of the effects of vehicle speed on cyclist safety and the maintenance of bike facilities after they are installed. He remarked that workshop participants were excited about the bike plan and eager to participate.

- Existing Bikeways

Ryan Snyder described the fieldwork that his team has conducted in order to map all of Palmdale's existing bikeways. He stated that they were able to update the update the current inventory of bikeways within the City.

Mike Behen, from the City of Palmdale, asked whether the City's current data for bikeways closely matches the fieldwork data that was collected. He stated that bikeways within the City are deficient.

Ryan Snyder responded that the City's current data did not closely match the fieldwork data so now the City has an updated inventory of bikeways that are currently on-the-ground. He also stated that the roadways in Palmdale are very wide and bicycle facilities can be added on to the existing roadways without the need for road widenings or many road diets. He stated that the transportation engineering field is experiencing a complete 180 degrees when it comes to roadway design. There is now more emphasis on creating more opportunities for people to walk, bike, and take other modes of transportation.

Mike Behen stated that the majority of available funding is now in multi-modal transportation planning.

Ryan Snyder stated that multi-modal transportation planning, including facilities to incorporate more walking and biking into daily life, has effects on safety, health, mobility, and livability. He proceeded to review the different bikeway types, stating that Class 1 (Bike Path), Class 2 (Bike Lane), and Class 3 (Bike Route) classifications are the more traditional bikeway types. He stated that there are additional types emerging, including: colored bike lanes, buffered bike lanes, protected bike lanes, and greenback sharrows.

Ryan Snyder stated that colored bike lanes are fairly new in the United States and can pose different challenges such as maintenance costs and the use of appropriate materials. The City of Palmdale has many miles of streets so the use

of colored bike lanes may cost a lot of money. Ryan stated that it is important to use discretion on where to appropriately use colored bike lanes because of their cost and maintenance requirements.

Ryan Snyder stated that cyclist can be categorized in multiple ways. Some of the major categories include: 1) “strong and fearless”; 2) “enthused and confident”; and 3) “interested but concerned”. The challenge is to balance the needs of these different groups when determining recommendations for future bikeways.

Alan Thompson, of SCAG, stated that the Mineta Institute has published a study that looks at the level of stress a cyclist experiences from the speed of vehicles on streets and busy roadways.

Ryan Snyder stated that during their fieldwork inventory of existing bikeways in the City, his team also noted the existing conditions of roadways and identified all roadway segments within the City that could potentially be appropriate for a bikeway. He stated that their analysis assumed 11-foot travel lanes, which the City previously identified as the preferred width. Proposed bikeways were based on the current configurations of lanes, and Ryan noted that many roadway segments could potentially accommodate a buffered bike lane. His team also reviewed the available right-of-ways, such as the Amargosa Creek, for additional bikeway opportunities. Their fieldwork also noted large gaps along Sierra Highway, Avenue S, and other segments in the City.

Mike Behen explained that often bike facilities are built according to available funding. Some bikeways are incomplete because there was not enough funding or there is no surrounding development that can fund the bikeway.

Brian Kuhn, of the City of Palmdale, asked what type of recommendations can be made for pavement that is not consistent. He asked whether there were many instances where proposed bikeway types changed multiple times because of the width or condition of the existing roadway. He also reminded the committee that Antelope Valley Transit Agency has future plans for a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system in the valley.

Ryan Snyder responded that in other cities, bicycles and BRT buses share a lane.

Dietter Aragon, of AVTA, stated that there are currently proposed plans for a “BRT-lite” system utilizing the current bus stops. The proposed system is not currently designating dedicated bus lanes and will share the travel lane with vehicles. Current headways are currently 30 minutes, but AVTA is pushing for 20-minute headways. The proposed BRT route generally follow the existing Route 1 along 10th Street West, Palmdale Boulevard, and 47th Street East. Dietter stated that it would be important to look at the City of Santa Clarita and that City’s experience with bus and bicycle conflicts. He mentioned that there is existing GIS data that he will forward to City staff that shows the proposed route of the BRT.

Ryan Snyder stated that bike facilities along with the BRT route will depend on the width of the street. He asked whether the preferred width of bus lanes in the City is 14 feet.

Mike Behen asked how the California Aqueduct fits in with the overall bikeways system.

Ryan Snyder stated that he is not sure who is in charge of allowing bicycles along the California Aqueduct. He stated that there can be a lot of safety issues, especially with people attempting to swim in the aqueduct.

Dietter Aragon stated that walking along the aqueduct is allowed but not bicycling.

Elaine Macdonald, of AV Trails, Recreation and Environment, stated that the Department of Water Resources (DWR) was the agency that her group corresponded with in the past about riding bicycles on the aqueduct. She recounted that in the 90’s her group corresponded with DWR and was successful in getting a section of the aqueduct open for bicycling in 1994. The section was from 165th Street East to Hesperia. Elaine stated that after the events of 9/11, the aqueduct was closed for bicycling due to fears of security and water contamination/poisoning. She stated that individuals can ride along the aqueduct but group rides are not allowed.

Dr. Larry Freise, of Antelope Valley High School District, asked whether there is available data on what Antelope Valley residents think about biking in the community. He stated that Palmdale is different from other communities and maybe there is not enough interest to justify more bikeways in the City. He is concerned with the approach of “if you build it, they will come.” Dr. Freise stated

that though the City of Lancaster has built more bikeways, ridership has not increased significantly. He stated that it is important to think about the purpose of the additional bike lanes. He pointed out that most people in Palmdale commute to Los Angeles and the weather in the valley can affect how often a person rides their bicycles. Dr. Freise stated that it is important to survey a random sample of the community in order to gain a better understanding of how residents view bicycling in the community. He explained that most people who attend community workshops for the bike plan will most likely be bicycle advocates.

Alan Thompson stated that adding more pronounced and visible bike lanes can improve safety for both motorists and cyclists.

Dr. Larry Freise asked whether the City has included the County in the process of updating the bike plan. He stated that since there is a large unincorporated area that essentially bisects the City that a coordinated effort with the County is essential.

Ryan Snyder stated that his team reviewed the existing County bike plan, and when the County updates their bike plan, they should also look at the City of Palmdale's bike plan.

Mike Behen stated that the City will work with the County and the City of Lancaster. He also stated that the City will explore the opportunity for developing an online survey for the bike plan.

Brian Kuhn, of the City of Palmdale, stated that there is a necessary balancing act between proactively providing bike facilities and addressing the needs of bike users. He pointed out that many of the roadways in the City are wide because some of these areas are not developed. The existing capacity of roadways may dictate the most appropriate future bikeway improvement. Brian stated that this is the beginning of the conversation and the City will need to consider the need for active transportation facilities along with other existing issues of roadway capacity and available funding.

Dr. Larry Freise asked why there isn't an increase in bike ridership in Lancaster. He stated that this may indicate an issue of whether the facilities are actually serving the population.

Alan Thompson stated that it is important to determine whether the bikeways connect key destinations. If a bikeway does not go to a destination then that affects whether someone uses that bikeway.

Elaine Macdonald stated that there is a buffered bike lane from Ave J to 10 East, which causes bottleneck issues for motorists along the roadway. There is a general bad feeling towards cyclists by motorists. She stated that bike routes may be more appropriate on major streets because more serious cyclists will be able to navigate these streets without the need for buffered bike lanes.

Ryan Snyder stated that the street network within the City is designed in a way that if you want to go anywhere then you have to use major streets. Palmdale has been developed in a "super block" system, and bike users will need to use major streets in order to completely connect the bikeway network.

Dietter Aragon asked whether the City wanted to slow down traffic.

Mike Behen replied that in some instances slowing down traffic is the goal.

Ryan Snyder stated that he did not observe many instances in the City where a road diet would be necessary. He stated that vehicle travel rates flattened out after 2006 and has only picked up again in the last few years. Ryan stated that in the past a two percent growth in travel every year could be assumed, but not vehicle travel rates are not growing as much and people are not traveling as much as they used to.

- Initial Recommendations

III. Update on Suggested Routes to School Plan

- Meeting with School District Representatives

Ryan Snyder discussed plans for outreach to all schools within the City. He stated that a meeting with the school district representatives was held before the TAC meeting. Tentatively, the outreach meetings for AVHSD and Palmdale School District may be held on selected Wednesday afternoons and outreach meetings at the Westside School District will be coordinated with Rhonda Hanson.

- Schools Outreach

Ryan Snyder stated that the Suggested Routes to School Plan will include recommended improvement to increase safety for students walking and biking to schools.

Mike Behen stated that the plan will be a comprehensive look at the system because the City has not done an extensive study in the past.

Elaine Macdonald stated that education of the public on how to ride safely on the roads is important and the project should include some type of outreach to the general public.

Alan Thompson stated that LA Metro has a program for educating the public and may serve as an additional option for community outreach.

Dr. Larry Freise stated that he will be inviting security officers to attend the SRTS workshops and suggested that the other school districts invite their crossing guards.

Mary Hines, of the Palmdale School District, stated that many kids do not walk and bike to schools anymore. Parents do not feel safe letting their kids walk or bike because of traffic safety and general safety issues.

Rhonda Hanson, of Westside School District, stated that Lancaster solved some of the safety concerns of parents by implementing walking school buses. She mentioned that the walking zone for 1.5 miles for elementary schools and 2 miles for intermediate schools is a challenge. There is also weather issues and the criminal element in the community that parents worry about.

Ryan Snyder stated that since the programs in Lancaster were established, "ridership" has increased for students who walk and bike to school.

Rhonda Hanson, stated that connected sidewalks in Lancaster encouraged parents and students to walk and bike more. She stated that the busing service policy in the City affects whether kids walk and bike to school.

Dietter Aragon stated that there are increased morning trips to schools on AVTA lines but the demographics of students are mostly high school-aged and/or junior high-aged, there are less elementary school-aged children riding the bus.

Mike Behen stated that because of recent policies and required buffers from schools, playgrounds, etc., there has been an increase in the concentration of criminals and predators in the City.

Brian Kuhn stated that the perception of the criminal element versus the reality does not really matter because parents want to protect their children, and having a discussion with them about these issues will be difficult.

IV. Public Comments

Kevin Walsh, bicyclist and local bicycle advocate, introduced himself and stated that he was looking forward to participating in future outreach meetings for the project.

V. Next Steps/Adjournment

- Community Workshops

Mike Behen stated that future dates for the upcoming SRTS workshops and later General Plan update workshop will be determined.

- Future TAC Meetings

Mike Behen stated that the next TAC meeting date will be determined but will most likely be on a Wednesday.