

V. PROMOTING BICYCLE TRANSPORTATION

While the provision of safe and efficient bikeway facilities is important to encourage people to choose bicycle transportation, it is also important to get the word out about the benefits of riding and safe riding practices.

Promotional Activities

Promotional activities are those which are planned primarily to draw attention to bicycling as a transportation choice. They are typically aimed at maximum exposure in the media, with a message along the lines of "try it, you'll like it." The underlying premise is that many people are making trips by automobile without considering bicycling as an alternative. It is believed that with a little encouragement, some of these people will try using their bicycles for occasional, or even regular, trips.

There are many types of promotional activities, several of which are summarized below:

- **Advertising campaigns** consist of television, radio and newspaper advertisements or public service announcements. Typically, such a campaign would run a concentration of advertisements and announcements during a limited time period, possibly targeting a specific age group or geographic area. In recent years, advertising campaigns have been conducted by cooperative financial arrangements involving the Regional Ridesharing Program, the Council of Governments, the City of San Luis Obispo, the Air Pollution Control District, Caltrans, Santa Barbara County Ridesharing, Central Coast Area Transit and San Luis Obispo Transit. It is recommended that the County of San Luis Obispo participate in these campaigns.

Another potential promotional campaign may arise from the current activity in forming a Countywide Transportation Management Association (TMA). The TMA would be an association of major employers in the County who would join together to provide transportation services in order to meet the requirements of the Clean Air Plan, or to develop volunteer transportation demand management programs. A promotional campaign might be involved during the formative stages of the TMA, with the goal of attracting major employers to participate. The selling points of benefits to air quality and the environment would also provide encouragement to potential bicyclists.

- **Promotional events** include fairs, festivals and recognition days where members of the public gather at one or more centralized locations to draw attention to bicycling. At such events, there may be displays of bike route information, tips on safe riding, exhibitions of equipment and accessories, as well as games or contests to attract participation. In this County, there has been an annual promotional event called "Bike Fest" since 1992,

when it began as a promotional activity of the City of San Luis Obispo and the Regional Ridesharing Program. The County's BAC helped organize this event in 1993, when it was increased to include four satellite locations around the County. This is expected to continue to be an annual event, and this Plan recommends the County's continued participation in it.

Another ongoing promotional event is California Rideshare Week, a statewide event held in the fall each year which is not specific to bicycling, but rather promotes all alternatives to the single-occupant automobile. The San Luis Obispo Regional Rideshare Program has traditionally sponsored a "Bike Commute Day" during California Rideshare Week.

As other options for promotional events occur the County will coordinate with the BAC to coordinate a participation for these events.

- **Promotional materials** include maps of bikeways, flyers and brochures describing safe riding techniques, as well as premiums such as printed T-Shirts which are produced as enticements for people to participate in the promotional events described above. The Regional Ridesharing Program has obtained funding to produce a County Bike Map, which will depict existing bike routes, as well as providing safety information and riding tips. This Plan recommends the County's continued participation in the production of these materials.

One objective of any promotional activities engaged in by the County should be to make potential riders aware of new bikeway facilities, as they are implemented. Two ways to get the word out would be to send notices to bicycle clubs and to post notices at key locations.

A potential added benefit to conducting promotional activities is an increase of tourism business for San Luis Obispo County. There is already much bicycle-related tourism in the County. Bicycle Adventures and Central Coast Outdoors currently run bicycle tours through the area. The San Luis Obispo Bicycle Club sponsors two Century rides each year that bring in thousands of people from out of the County. Several long distance and Double Century rides also pass through this county. The Great Western Bicycle Rally has been held in San Luis Obispo County for about thirty years. All of these events attract people who stay in local hotels and motels, dine at local restaurants and spend money for other purchases. As word gets out about improvements to the already favorable bicycling conditions in this area, it should help to increase the level of bicycling-related tourist travel, to levels such as has been experienced in places like Oregon and Montana.

Safety Education Activities

The most important message that can be conveyed to the public is that of safety. A key factor in encouraging more people to choose bicycle transportation is to increase safety

for those who participate. One major way of accomplishing this is by provision of improved bikeway facilities, as described in Chapter III. The other, and equally important, element of this is education. This Plan proposes safety education programs with two major target audiences and goals:

- Bicyclists- Teach them to drive defensively and to accept that motorists are sharing the roadway and drive safely in their presence.
- Motorists - Teach them to drive defensively and to accept that bicyclists are sharing the roadway and drive safely in their presence.

In addition options for a bike safety program with the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) are being pursued. The OTS provides grants for programs that are supported by public agencies and increase awareness of safety involving traffic. The Public Works Department has been actively trying to secure a grant from OTS to help promote safety in conjunction with other public agencies.

This Plan recommends that the County support safety education activities by:

- Using promotional campaigns, as described above, to reach the "motorists" target audience. The campaigns should be tailored to alerting drivers to the presence of cyclists around them, and advising them how to interact safely through specific driving techniques with those riders.
- Aggressively pursue funding that can be used in conjunction with other local groups to support Bike Month, Bike Helmet Giveaways, Bike Safety Rodeos, and other safety related programs.
- Supporting the Bike Helmet Program by making referrals for interested groups to contact Regional Ridesharing.
- Support Bike Rodeo Programs such as the program that the San Luis Obispo Bicycle Coalition conducts.
- Providing staff support of the Bike Helmet Program and other bicycling promotions and activities, such as Rideshare Week.
- Working with school districts in the County to develop safe routes to school for those children who ride.
- Assisting in the production of safety education flyers and of the County Bike Map, which can be distributed to the students.
- Working in conjunction with other public agencies to maximize the benefits of funding for these programs.

Law Enforcement

As a complement to the above-described safety education activities, the County should also work together with the California Highway Patrol, who provides traffic enforcement on County roadways, to emphasize enforcement of the traffic laws which deal with bicyclists and bikeway facilities. This County is served by two CHP offices: the San Luis Obispo office covers the portion of the County south of the Cuesta Grade, and along the coast as far north as Harmony; the Templeton office covers the area north of Cuesta Grade, and the coastal area north of Harmony.