

City of Oceanside Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee

BikeWalk Oceanside

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March 5, 2019

Mr. Russ Cunningham, Principal Planner
City of Oceanside
300 N. Coast Highway
Oceanside, CA 92054

RE: Input on Draft Oceanside Climate Action Plan

Dear Mr. Cunningham,

The Oceanside Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee is a citizen's advisory committee, whose role is to advise the City on programs and projects which improve bicycling and walking in the community. The Committee's membership includes over 75 Oceanside residents who are concerned about bicycling and walking infrastructure and opportunities.

In our advisory capacity, the Committee has met multiple times with staff to discuss the potential strategies to include in a Climate Action Plan and previously provided detailed input for staff consideration, including our March 20, 2018 letter to the City. The City's Climate Action Plan is of direct interest to the Committee because every mile cycled or walked is potentially a mile less traveled in a motor vehicle, thus reducing emissions and benefiting our environment. We are writing this letter to provide updated Committee input on the City's draft Plan.

The Committee applauds the City for taking the first step in addressing climate change at the local level by developing the draft Oceanside Climate Action Plan. As pointed out in the Executive Summary of the Plan, the California Environmental Quality Act has been revised to require local governments to address the impacts of Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions in both long-range planning and project review. In addition, the San Diego Association of Governments is requiring Oceanside to adopt a Climate Action Plan in order to be eligible to begin drawing on \$600,000 in recently-awarded active transportation grants. The City's adoption of the draft Climate Action Plan will help the City address both of these critical requirements and make the City eligible for additional SANDAG grants in the future.

Given the Committee's purpose and bylaws, our primary focus in reviewing the draft Plan is the section on Transportation and Land Use strategies. We support the five strategy areas identified in the Plan and recommend they be expanded to have additional objectives, either in the CAP itself or in the subsequent implementing ordinances or support plan documents that the Plan identifies, to make the Plan more effective in reducing Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT) and Greenhouse Gases. Our specific recommendations are as follows:

Measure TL1 – Smart Growth Policies

This is a crucial strategy area, to ensure that as the City develops in the future, it does so in a responsible and sustainable way, and in a way that supports all transportation modes, not just the

solo occupant automobile. We recommend that the CAP or implementing ordinances specifically identify the Coast Highway Corridor Project as a key example of encouraging and supporting alternative transportation modes in the designated Town Center area, and the Mixed-Use Transit Corridors along Coast Highway between Mission Avenue and Buena Vista Lagoon, and along Oceanside Blvd. between I-5 and Canyon Drive.

We also recommend that traffic calming improvement measures be included as strategies to slow down traffic and make biking and walking safer and more viable.

Measure TL4 – Expand the Complete Streets Program

We strongly support this group of strategies, including in particular the following:

Establish criteria for identifying opportunity sites for new off-street multiuse pathways along transportation corridors. Incorporate these criteria into the next update to the City's Bicycle Master Plan, Pedestrian Master Plan, and General Plan Circulation Element.

We believe this strategy should go further by recognizing that the Bicycle Master Plan (BMP) identified the completion of the Coastal Rail Trail (CRT) and the Inland Rail Trail (IRT) as the top two BMP priorities many years ago, that these projects are part of the regional bike trail network, and that these two projects should have discrete implementation phasing and milestones like many of the other strategies in the Plan.

We also believe that this strategy group should include objectives for making cycling on existing major thoroughfares safer, in view of the long time period it will take to fully implement the CRT and IRT. Cycling safety issues on Oceanside Blvd. and Vista Way, in particular, should be addressed either in the CAP, implementing ordinances, or next updates to the Bicycle Master Plan. Past surveys in other metropolitan areas show that, without improved bicycling infrastructure, many potential cyclists may be uncomfortable using that mode due to safety concerns, thus reducing the growth in cycling mode share and resulting GHG reduction to be obtained.

And, most importantly, a dedicated, on-going funding level needs to be identified and budgeted in the Annual Operating and Capital Budget so that the City has the financial means to implement these strategies and make progress each year toward accomplishing them.

Measure TL5 – Transportation Demand Management Programs

This is an important group of strategies and we applaud their inclusion. However, we feel three additional strategies need to be included in this section, as follows:

1. The City should be an active participant in the regional bikeshare program being developed by the other north county coastal cities, to provide a viable additional first mile/last mile connection between transit and jobs. This is in direct keeping with the Plan's findings that 48% of total Oceanside GHG emissions are from transportation, and that 80% of Oceanside residents commute out of the City for work. The Plan correctly observes that the City has an incredible transportation hub right downtown with Oceanside Transit Center, which provides four different rail lines that serve areas

throughout San Diego County and beyond: COASTER, Metrolink, Amtrak, and SPRINTER. These offer the opportunity to handle many of those commuters leaving the City for work. Offering sustainable alternatives to access the Transit Center and SPRINTER stations other than the single-occupant auto is essential.

2. Another City-related strategy should be for Oceanside to take a leadership role in encouraging mode shift and VMT reduction among its own employees by studying alternatives to its current “free” parking policy. Allowing City employees to park free without any consideration of use of alternative modes is a disincentive to decreasing solo-occupant auto commuting, and the City is the largest single employer downtown and should be setting an example. The City should work with SANDAG’s iCommute program - <https://www.icommutesd.com/employers/employer-services> to conduct an employee transportation survey and determine what parking and alternative mode strategies and incentives would best serve the City’s goals of reducing VMT and GHG through carpooling, vanpooling, rail and transit use, cycling, or walking among City employees. The selected strategies should become part of the City’s own Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan, similar to the requirement the Plan proposes as a TDM Ordinance for new or expanded commercial and industrial developments. These strategies could involve incentive or reward programs to encourage City employee commuting by alternative modes, or implementation of Dividend-Account Parking Systems that financially reward commuters who use alternative modes without penalizing those that drive alone. Even a City program to encourage employees to commute by transit just one day a week could produce up to a 20 percent reduction in City-employee commute-related GHG.
3. The City should explore what means are available to incentivize or require employers over a certain size to participate in SANDAG’s icommute transportation surveys so that employees are made aware of the alternatives to driving alone that are available, and are linked up with fellow commuters making the same trips. SANDAG’s services are free to the employers and employees; incentives should be put in place to encourage their use.

In conclusion, the Committee supports the City’s effort to establish a Climate Action Plan with quantifiable goals and strategies that support all transportation modes. We thank the City for the opportunity to provide input.

Sincerely,



Tom Lichterman
Chairman

cc: Oceanside City Council
Oceanside City Manager
David DiPierro
Members of the Oceanside Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee