



“We have a real opportunity to lead. We’re very well positioned for 2035 to maybe even show OCTA the way it should be done.”

BRENDA MILLER
MOBILITY ADVOCATE

ALTERNATE ROUTE

City plan encourages biking, walking and skateboarding to ease traffic and parking pains.

BY FRED SWEGLES
ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

San Clemente’s Brenda Miller says she’d love to get people to walk, scooter, skateboard or bicycle on short trips, leaving the car at home.

Miller, 51, is a mobility advocate and founder of a bicycle/pedestrian group she calls PEDal. As a volunteer, she also is one of the chief architects of a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan that the city is close to adopting after three years.

The plan aims to make it safer and easier to get around town without driving. Miller said nearly half of all trips are fewer than 3 miles. By not taking the car on those trips, Miller said there’d be less congestion at schools, fewer parking hassles downtown and healthier people who’d have more fun getting to the beach or the park.

A decision could come early next year.

A TOUGH ROAD

“The OCTA is now acknowledging that by 2035, the demand on the transportation system will outstrip the capacity to pay for improvements,” Miller said of the Orange County Transportation Authority. “The key is moving people around by nonmotorized means. We need to enable safe travel.”

But a city survey found many residents are scared of getting hit if they bicycle around town regularly, because “drivers don’t watch for bikes,” as survey respondents indicated.

Pedestrians complained of gaps and obstacles impeding sidewalks, short driveways where cars stick out, forcing people to walk in the street. There were gripes about bicyclists running red lights and stop signs.

The 220-page master plan offers ideas, including:

- Converting low-volume streets into one-way avenues, making room for sidewalks
- Creating a long alley through town as a bike and pedestrian route

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PHOTOS: ANGELA PIAZZA, THE REGISTER

Brenda Miller, founder of a pedestrian and cycling advocacy group, bicycles with her dog Foxy.



Planned renovations to the public restroom near the San Clemente Pier would turn it white with a red tile roof, rework the interior and add two self-contained family-style bathrooms in front.

Bottom line: Add-ons push price for beach restroom to \$439,000

**STORY AND PHOTO
BY FRED SWEGLES**
ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

A remodeled restroom building on the beach next to the San Clemente Pier will cost local taxpayers \$439,000.

Some members of the City Council flinched Tuesday night when asked to pay \$73,743 for cosmetic features the Planning Commission tacked on to the pro-

ject.

Council members Bob Baker and Chris Hamm balked as their three colleagues voted to plunk down the extra money for roof tiles, a decorative metal screen, a simulated wood finish on the door, a nicer floor, a stucco finish on a trash enclosure and stucco on the back of the building, which will be screened and little-seen by the public.

“The cost is spiraling out of control for me,” Baker said.

Planning commissioners added cosmetic touches as requirements when they approved the restroom permit Oct. 16. They reasoned that the city would require the design features of anyone else requesting a permit. City staff had wanted to do without

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TRAFFIC: Goal is to make streets safer

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- Building a safer passage over or under I-5
- Putting clustered bicycle parking downtown
- Painting the slow lane along El Camino Real green to invite cars and bikes to share the lane

There's also an education component: asking motorists to share the road, watch for bikes and look before opening the car door, and teaching cyclists to ride more safely so as not to anger drivers.

Some of the ideas came from a 2012 bicycle tour that San Clemente officials took around Long Beach, a city that calls itself the most bicycle-friendly city in America.

The plan is based on California's Complete Streets Act, which orders cities to design streets and upgrades to move not just cars but bicycles and pedestrians safely and efficiently. The plan views skateboarding as transportation. It sets a goal of creating safer ways to walk or bicycle to school.

Tom Frank, the city's transportation engineering manager, said San Clemente is using the Complete Streets mandate now. A current repaving of four-lane Camino de los Mares inland of Avenida Vaquero adds buffered bike lanes.

An upcoming repaving of Avenida Vaquero proposes replacing a continuous left-turn lane with buffered bike lanes. Some residents at a workshop objected, wanting to keep the lane. City officials said it isn't needed on that street.

POSSIBLE PROJECTS

- A two-way bicycle/pedestrian path, separated from traffic, along El Camino Real from Avenida Estacion (Metrolink station) to Dana Point's two-way protected path at the San Clemente city limits. This could be a year away.
- A new way for bicyclists to take Avenida Pico to North Beach, creating a separate passageway tunneling beneath I-5 and using a drainage channel. The city is looking at feasibility and funding.
- Painting of "sharrows" – symbols meaning cars and bicycles should share the road – on Avenida Del Mar and other streets
- More bicycle parking downtown and other key areas
- Reconfiguration of El Camino Real from North Beach to Calle del Comercio. Instead of four traffic lanes with parking on each side, there would be two traffic lanes, a center turn lane, parking lanes and bicycle lanes.
- As an alternative, El Camino Real would remain four lanes with parking on each side, but two lanes would be painted green with shared-lane markings. A third option is to leave El Camino Real as is and paint sharrows.
- Reconfiguration of El Camino Real at the south end of town to reduce traffic lanes, add bike lanes and add parking
- Conversion of an alley that parallels El Camino Real into a low-speed, two-way pathway for bicyclists and walkers
- Removal of sidewalk gaps in older parts of town
- Adding sidewalks to schools, such as along Avenida Vista Hermosa toward Marblehead Elementary
- A Complete Streets project along Camino de los Mares' business district to improve safety
- Reconfiguration on the Avenida Vista Hermosa bridge over I-5 to improve safety

The Planning Commission will take it up in a few weeks.

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Pete van Nuys, chairman of the Orange County Bicycle Coalition and a San Clemente resident, said it's crucial for the city to follow through on projects and policies in the plan.

Frank said implementing the program will set priorities and seek grants to achieve safety and connec-

tivity, together with Miller's dream of getting more people out of cars and into walking, jogging or cycling.

"The challenge is balancing it with all the other users," Frank said.

"Cities are realizing that they're choking on automobile traffic," van Nuys said. "They want to motivate residents to consider alternatives."

Charlie Gandy, Long Beach's mobility adviser,



FILE PHOTO: FRED SWEGLES, ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Could this be coming to San Clemente? It used to be one lane of a four-lane road in Long Beach. Businesses asked the city to get bicyclists off the sidewalk.

RESIDENTS SPEAK OUT

"Cyclists totally ignoring stop signs. Until these types of riders are dealt with, bike-safety improvements are a waste of time."

"The biggest problem is the drivers who think cyclists are a nuisance and they don't look out for people on bikes. Having a bike lane painted will give drivers a constant reminder to pay attention for cyclists."

"I would like to see a good safe path along Coast Highway from Camino Capistrano to North Beach that can be seamlessly in-

tegrated with the Dana Point path."

"We have five-way stops and I'm lucky to be seen by even one of the drivers. In fact, I would say that on a daily ride, I have to make at least one heroic move just not to get hit. The roads just are *not* user friendly."

"Oh my God! How can San Clemente allow illegal parking with cars sticking out of the driveways and into the street?"

"Too many hills. Please make the town flat."
Source: City of San Clemente survey

said motorists and businesses resisted some bicycle innovations in that city's business districts. In the end, motorists adjusted, traffic flowed and business improved. Innovation prevailed.

"The best evidence we had is we didn't pull it out," Gandy said.

Cyclists embraced better access. Businesses welcomed them. Their choice

of vehicle opened up more parking for cars. The community mindset changed. More people cycle.

IT'S ABOUT CHOICES

Will San Clemente residents leave the car home for short trips?

"We have a real opportunity to lead," Miller said. "We're very well positioned for 2035 to maybe even show OCTA the way it

should be done."

Said Frank: "People will choose their best mode of transportation. I'm hopeful."

He said he hopes people choose fitness.

"Better for the environment, better health for the individual," he said, "and it's fun."

CONTACT THE WRITER:
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them, citing the cost. Commissioners said the city shouldn't get special treatment.

The pierside facility is the most-used beach restroom in town, commissioners said. One commissioner called the site "iconic."

The City Council ratified the commission's action Nov. 5 when it approved the panel's meeting minutes. On Tuesday, Baker and Hamm objected when asked to approve a transfer of funds to pay for the cosmetic additions.

Baker said he hadn't realized there were added costs, and he wanted to call back the approval. Too late, said Sharon Heider, director of beaches, parks and recreation. She already had applied for a California Coastal Commission permit, which could take three to six months.

The council debated calling back the permit application but decided 3-2 to push forward, focusing scrutiny on five other restrooms due for upgrades soon.

Mayor Tim Brown said the council should proceed, with lessons learned, rather than risk unforeseen consequences of calling back the plan. He wondered whether the council could modify it after getting the coastal permit.

"Don't we have the ability at some point to be able to say, 'We can't afford this' or 'We don't want to do this' or pulling it up during the construction process?" Brown asked.

Heider said no, that the Coastal Commission wants

Why it matters

- In 2010, San Clemente developed a plan to upgrade and better maintain all six beach restrooms at North Beach, Corto Lane, the base of the pier, on the pier and at T-Street and South T-Street.
- Then-Councilman Wayne Eggleston described the restrooms as deplorable and the worst in Southern California.
- Work on the highest-priority restroom next to the pier was estimated to cost \$200,000 to \$250,000.
- "Public restrooms are often a measure people use to determine their perception of a city," the 2010 plan said. "The impression one gains entering a well-designed, well-maintained, bright and clean facility rather than a dark and unappealing one is significant. "With over 2 million visitors to our beaches each year, our six beach/pier restroom facilities are well-worn and showing signs of deterioration."

a project built as specified in the coastal permit.

Hamm said he would be fine with simpler renovations. Heider said even that would require that the building and all the fixtures meet federal accessibility mandates. That can mean significant alterations to the interior, and those make up much of the cost of this renovation, she said.



Conor Hayo, co-manager of SC Vape Lounge in San Clemente, blows a plume of vapor from an electronic cigarette. Hayo says the city has welcomed the new shop.

Second e-cig shop puffs into S.C.

SC Vape Lounge is the second such store to open in the city.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY JOSH FRANCIS FOR THE REGISTER

The growing trend in electronic cigarette use has brought another "vape" shop to San Clemente.

SC Vape Lounge at 401 S. El Camino Real opened in November and plans a grand opening from noon to 5 p.m. today, with music, food, raffles, giveaways and free samples of e-cig juices.

The store, owned by longtime San Clemente resident Derek Worden, is between two other smoke shops, but its management says SC Vape Lounge isn't saturating the market, since it sells only e-cigs.

It does have a competitor in town, Vix Vapes at 239 Avenida Del Mar.

Electronic cigarettes include a battery that heats an often-flavored liquid



SC Vape Lounge, an electronic cigarette retailer that opened in November at 401 S. El Camino Real in San Clemente, is scheduled to hold its grand opening today.

known as "juice" into an inhalable vapor.

The juice contains varying amounts of nicotine, from 0 to 18 milligrams.

The devices come in a variety of shapes, sizes and materials.

Co-manager Conor Hayo said SC Vape Lounge carries more than 300 flavors of juice and more than 25 models of e-cigs – a selection he said is among the largest in Orange County.

"You name it and we have a flavor for it," he said.

The shop caters to customers ranging from older people seeking an alternative to traditional tobacco-burning cigarettes to younger adults drawn to the e-cig trend, Hayo said.

The store has built a loyal customer base in the five weeks it has been open, he said.

Chairs and couches in a lounge area provide cus-

SC Vape Lounge

Address: 401 S. El Camino Real, San Clemente
Hours: 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. Sundays through Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays
Phone: 949-498-8273
Web: scvapelounge.com

tomers a comfortable environment in which they can "vape" or hang out.

The store's tasting bar provides visitors with sample flavors before they buy. While some Southern California cities, including Seal Beach, have placed restrictions on e-cig sales, SC Vape Lounge's move-in was fairly easy, Hayo said.

"The city has been really nice to us and welcomed us with open arms," he said.

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