

SAN CLEMENTE

SUN POST NEWS



FRED SWEGLES, THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

Testing this combination pedestrian/bicycle concourse in downtown Long Beach are visitors from San Clemente, from left, Cliff Jones of the city planning department, Pete van Nuys, executive director of the Orange County Bicycle Coalition, Brenda Miller of the PEDal advocacy group, Councilwoman Lori Donchak and Mayor Jim Evert.

PUSHING PEDALS

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Bike tour of Long Beach gives San Clemente ideas

By **FRED SWEGLES**
THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER

San Clemente aims to use lessons learned in Long Beach to help make the streets of San Clemente much more bicycle-friendly.

The city is developing a Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan 12 years after Long Beach wrote its own Bicycle Master Plan and began to carry it out. This month, some officials from San Clemente, a beach town of 63,000 residents, took a three-hour guided bicycle tour of Long Beach, a city of 460,000 people that a metal sculpture at City Hall bills as the “most bicycle-friendly city in America.”

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“With proper planning, a city can certainly become more both bicy-

cle- and pedestrian-friendly,” San Clemente Mayor Jim Evert said after the 11½-mile tour. “We need to be sure that multimodal transportation becomes a focus of the city. I was super impressed with what they’ve done up there.”

Charlie Gandy, Long Beach’s mobility adviser, showed the visitors what he described as:

- Southern California’s first separated bike facility, where three lanes of a one-way street are reduced to two, giving bicyclists a wide protected lane. It goes 1½ miles on one street and 1½ miles the opposite direction on a parallel street.
- A bicycle lane painted green and marked with “sharrows” occupying the right lane on each side of a four-lane street in the popular Belmont Shore commercial district. It serves to slow traffic and make a statement to motorists that the road is to be shared and to watch for bikes. Cars can share the green lanes.
- A 1½-mile “bike boulevard” through a residential neighborhood that has three schools. Roundabouts at intersections slow cars.
- 1,300 bike racks placed around town, the first of an eventual 2,000
- Bike corrals, each of which can replace one parallel parking space in a business district with a metal rack that can hold 14 bicycles
- A “parklet” where a restaurant with an outdoor dining permit was allowed to build a dining deck over what had been 1½ parking spaces. That space now has capacity to seat 20 patrons and park 20 bikes.



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Cyclists on a Long Beach tour depart the Bikestation. Sidewalks are usually off-limits to bikes, but tour guide Charlie Gandy said officers use discretion on that and at stop signs, where a rolling stop is accepted if cyclists look both ways, wait their turn and don't create a hazard. Running a red light or "being a jerk" gets you a ticket, Gandy said.



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San Clemente Mayor Jim Evert, left, listens as Charlie Gandy explains how a bike corral like this one, costing \$1,500, can fit 14 bikes where one car parked in the past. Two extra bikes can fit along the back.

- A membership “Bikestation” that offers bicycle commuters a safe place to store bikes. It also provides showers, lockers, repairs, rentals and more.
- “Bike-share” lockers at City Hall that store bikes for city employees to use

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JIM EVERT
SAN CLEMENTE MAYOR

- A beach trail with separate lanes for bikes and pedestrians. The city plans to build a separate running and walking path 15 feet to the side of the paved path for exclusive use by pedestrians.

Gandy told San Clemente officials that Long Beach has obtained grants to pay for many of the projects. In some cases, the city copied other cities’ innovations (the parklet from San Francisco, the green lanes from Salt Lake City) and in some cases introduced new ideas.

“We as the city – as the authority figure – clearly (are indicating) that not only are we tolerating bicycles in Long Beach, we’re welcoming bicyclists here, and in some cases, we’re actually in the business of seducing bicyclists and saying that bikes belong here,” Gandy said. “That’s what that green paint is doing in Belmont

Shore. This is a cultural shift that is happening in Long Beach.”

Some businesses have not bought into the program, he said. But most have, and Long Beach’s bike-friendly streets are attracting new businesses that want to embrace that atmosphere, he added.

“When I can show that businesses are moving to downtown in part because we’re creating this environment, we get past the opposition,” Gandy said.

Is it safe?

“We wouldn’t have this stuff on the street if it were more dangerous than the previous condition – it’s not – or two, if it caused such a disruption to the business life or to the economy or to the community that it was simply the wrong thing to do,” Gandy said. “If we have any issues with it, we’ll take it out immediately.”

The green lanes in Belmont Shore have taken unwanted bicyclists off the sidewalk, maintained the previous volume of conventional traffic and attracted cyclists to the district, Gandy said. Before, the street carried 400 cyclists a day. A year later, it carried 800 and now 1,000, he said. “And we have, at any one time, 150 to 200 cycles parked down there, spending money in those places.”