

# BICYCLE- FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES:

LESSONS FROM  
LOS ANGELES COUNTY



# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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# INTRODUCTION

**Dan Rosenfeld**

## 4 CREATING BICYCLE-FRIENDLY COMMUNITIES

The vast majority of public space in Los Angeles County is currently used for just one purpose: as roadway for cars. Prioritizing the car above all other forms of transportation has contributed to inactivity and obesity, two serious and related problems that harm communities throughout the county.

Numerous studies provide evidence that becoming bicycle-friendly can help alleviate these problems. Countries with high rates of walking and cycling have lower rates of obesity than countries where people are car-dependent. Active transportation, which includes bicycling, is linked with lower rates of diabetes. The risk for asthma and hypertension decreases with more bicycling and walking.

Supporting bicyclists offers additional benefits for communities. Bicycling and walking projects provide more jobs per dollar spent than highway projects: 11 - 14 jobs per \$1 million compared with just seven jobs for the same amount spent on highway projects. Making bicycling a feasible transportation option would help reduce the traffic gridlock plaguing many L.A. County communities and improve local air quality.

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4th Street Bridge, CicLAvia / PHOTO: Gary Leonard



The Most Bicycle-Friendly City in America plaque, Long Beach / PHOTO: Brian Minami

## BICYCLE-FRIENDLINESS IN L.A. COUNTY AND THIS GUIDE

Many cities, organizations, and advocates in L.A. County are promoting and supporting bicycling as an effective response to the county's challenges. A number of bicycle-friendly initiatives have been started, and progress can be seen in communities throughout the county.

This guide was created to reinforce that progress and help more communities move toward bicycle-friendliness. It was written for anyone who wants to bring the benefits of bicycle-friendliness to his or her community – that is, for anyone who wants to use bicycling as a tool to make the built environment more people-focused, create conditions that support access to daily physical activity, and develop a more sustainable, livable, and healthy community.

The guide details five bicycle-friendly initiatives implemented by community-based organizations working with cities. These are described on the next page. The guide's authors are the individuals who led and organized the initiatives.

## **THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY CYCLING COLLABORATIVE**

The collaborative gathers underused bikes and repairs and redistributes them to low-income communities. It also offers communities free bicycle skills workshops on riding a bicycle safely in an urban environment and maintaining and repairing a bicycle.

## **THE SOUTH BAY BICYCLE MASTER PLAN**

The project created a bike plan for seven cities in the South Bay that was adopted in November 2011. The plan is believed to be the only example of California cities working together to plan an inter-jurisdictional bike network.

## **THE BICYCLE-FRIENDLY BUSINESS DISTRICT PROJECT**

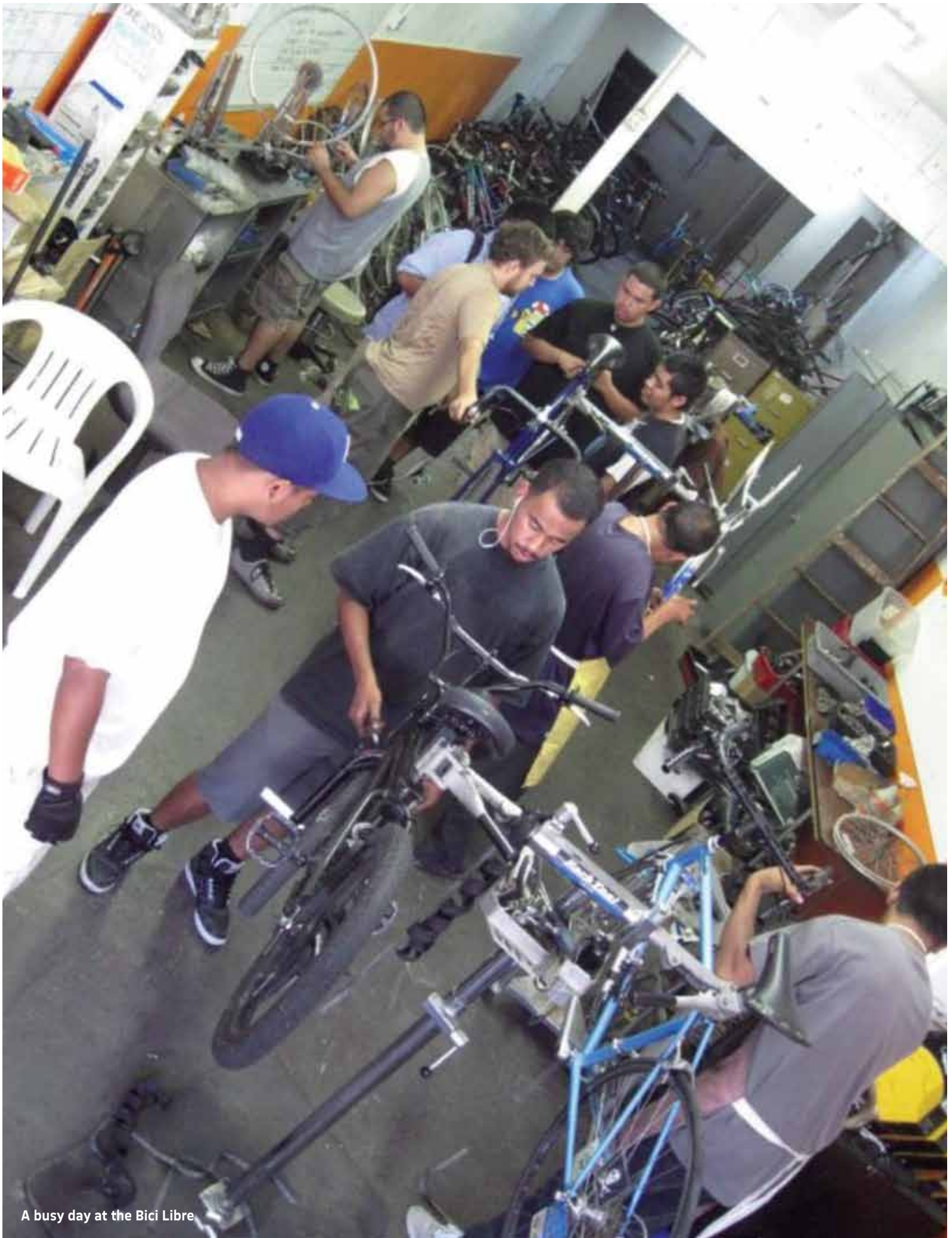
The project experimented with various innovative methods to help business leaders become educated on how bicycling helps their district.

## **CICLAVIA**

CicLAvia opens ten miles of Los Angeles streets to pedestrians and cyclists for a day. Based on the example of the ciclovías begun in Bogotá, Colombia in the 1970s, CicLAvia attracted 100,000 participants per event in Los Angeles. CicLAvias show reluctant cyclists how easy and enjoyable bicycling can be, and bring Angelenos of all ethnicities and backgrounds together.

## **ENGAGING KEY STAKEHOLDERS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY BIKE SUMMIT**

This special one-day summit resulted in key strategies to make communities more bike-friendly.



A busy day at the Bici Libre





THE COUNTY CYCLING COLLABORATIVE, PART 1:

# CREATING A BIKE COOPERATIVE

Bobby Gadda



# CREATING A BIKE COOPERATIVE

**Bobby Gadda & Jonny Green**

- 10 **Bicycle co-ops are a fun, cost-effective way to encourage bicycling in a community. As educational workshop spaces that focus on bicycle repair, bicycle co-ops are staffed by volunteers who teach people how to fix their own bikes. Co-ops may offer open workshop hours or more formalized classes that teach bike repair and maintenance. The structure is a very cost-effective way to encourage people to ride bicycles. Often simple bike repair problems, such as flat tires and poorly adjusted brakes, stop people from riding bikes. With a small amount of instruction, people can learn to fix these simple problems themselves and gain the health and economic benefits of an active biking lifestyle.**

Bicycle co-ops are a very effective way to get a community on bikes. Beyond just getting bikes repaired, the co-ops create a community of cyclists who can support each other, organize rides, and be bike advocates in the community. Co-ops provide a positive place for youth to spend time. Youth can learn teamwork, teaching, customer service, shop management skills, and more. Youth can also fulfill community service requirements at these shops.

Bike co-ops have existed in the U.S. in various forms for many years, but in Los Angeles began with the Bicycle Kitchen six years ago. The Bicycle Kitchen started in an actual kitchen of an apartment at the Los Angeles Eco-Village, where bike messengers and other bike enthusiasts started fixing bikes with friends one night a week. As more people found out about the workshop, it became a social space for the burgeoning bike scene in L.A. The co-op eventually outgrew its space and moved to a retail storefront location a few blocks away. It is entirely supported by donations from “clients” who come in to learn how to fix bikes.

Since the success of the Bicycle Kitchen, many other bike co-ops have begun in L.A. County. The Bikerowave serves the Westside, the Bike Oven is in northeast L.A., the Valley Bikery provides education in Van Nuys and The HUB is in Long Beach.

The resources required for a bike co-op are fairly simple. First and foremost is space. Rent is by far the largest expense for most bike co-ops, and the biggest hurdle to existence. Most co-ops start in someone’s garage or in a donated space. Some start as “mobile” co-ops without their own space, and simply set up in a friendly location like a farmer’s market or outside a cafe. Once co-ops have built clientele, they have an income stream and can save to move into a rented space. This is how most bike co-ops have operated. The Bike Kitchen has existed long enough that its members are looking to buy their own property, and have begun raising the necessary funds. In addition to an appropriate space, bicycle co-ops that plan to distribute bicycles to the community will need sources for donated bikes.

The newest bike co-op in Los Angeles is Bici Libre, a shop that grew out of the L.A. County Department of Public Health’s Choose Health L.A. grant Bike Wrangler program. It is an example of how to “kick-start” a bike co-op with grant funds. This model could be followed by cities or other governmental organizations that want to encourage biking in their communities. The goal of this chapter is to show one example of a grant-funded co-op and the lessons learned from that experience. The chapter also discusses general considerations in establishing a bike co-op. For co-ops that will distribute bikes to the community, the chapter recommends organizational strategies and ways to “wrangle” usable bikes.



***Since the success of the Bicycle Kitchen, many other bike co-ops have begun in L.A. County.***



A volunteer repairs a bike at the Bici Libre.

## THE BIKE WRANGLER PROGRAM AND BICI LIBRE

The Bike Wrangler program brought together bike-related organizations throughout L.A. County to collect abandoned bikes, refurbish them and distribute them to communities in need. The Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition (LACBC), Cyclists Inciting Change thru Live Exchange (CICLE), and several bike co-ops in the county participated. LACBC hired a part-time “bike wrangler” whose primary job was to contact institutions, including schools, Metro, and police departments, and organize pickups of abandoned bikes. The bike wrangler also was in charge of setting up a workshop space to store and repair these abandoned bikes. CICLE organized workshops in high-need communities where the bikes were distributed for free or very low cost.

The workshop was located in a storefront space on 6th Street, in the Pico-Union neighborhood of Los Angeles. The neighborhood fits the grant’s definition of a “high need” area (in terms of obesity and poverty levels). From the beginning, it was clear that the workshop space had the potential to develop into a bike co-op. Both of the

*High school students from neighborhood schools, day laborers from the nearby Home Depot, and other people from the neighborhood found out about the project and came to spend time and help fix bikes.*

LACBC staff members on the project are volunteers with the Bicycle Kitchen and therefore had experience in how bike co-ops are run. These staff members ordered and set up the bike stands and tools in the shop, and also organized work parties with volunteers to help clean and build out the space. Soon, several volunteers were helping fix bikes on a regular basis. High school students from neighborhood schools, day laborers from the nearby Home Depot, and other people from the neighborhood found out about the project and came to spend time and help fix bikes.

The LACBC staff members organized meetings for the volunteers to take part in shaping the organization and structure of the space. The name “Bici Libre” was chosen, reflecting the language spoken in the community and the ethos of “freeing” bikes from disrepair and abandonment. Including volunteers in all of these decisions allowed them to feel ownership over the space and become more committed to it.

Bici Libre now features regular open hours staffed by volunteers who teach people to fix their own bikes. It receives donations from clients using the shop, which help pay for tools and bike parts. It is well on its way to being self-sustaining, and the group is now considering a move to the more bike-friendly 7th Street two blocks away.

## ESTABLISHING BIKE CO-OPS IN OTHER PARTS OF L.A. COUNTY

Bici Libre shows that it is possible to “kick start” the beginning of a bike co-op. With a small amount of resources in terms of space and money, it is possible to avoid an incubation period of several years in getting a co-op started. With a part-time coordinator and free space, a functioning bike co-op can be started in just one year. However, there are some additional considerations to keep in mind when starting a similar bike co-op project. The two most important considerations are the location of the shop and finding or hiring coordinators to get the project started.

## SELECTING A LOCATION

Good locations are near transit hubs, so that people can easily access the co-op. It is also useful, but not necessary, to be on a busy commercial corridor, so that there is foot traffic past the co-op. An out-of-the-way location can be workable, but more may be needed in programming the space, such as offering formal classes and organizing events with local schools. It is necessary to have some way to let the local community know where the co-op is and what it offers.

## BIKE CO-OPS IN L.A.:

**Bicycle Kitchen**  
[bicyclekitchen.com](http://bicyclekitchen.com)

**Bikerowave**  
[bikerowave.org](http://bikerowave.org)

**Bike Oven**  
[bikeoven.com](http://bikeoven.com)

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## THE BIKE COLLECTIVE NETWORK:

[bikecollectives.org](http://bikecollectives.org)

The website is one of the organizing centers of bike co-ops across the country. The Wiki features information about starting new co-ops, including examples of volunteer guides and advice on how to build out shops. The Think Tank list is an active email list for questions about bike co-ops.

***With a part-time coordinator and free space, a functioning bike co-op can be started in just one year.***

The street in front of the space must be safe for biking. An important part of a bike co-op is test riding the bikes that are being repaired. Therefore, a very fast multi-lane road isn't a good choice. A wide sidewalk is also useful to allow for low-speed testing of repaired bikes and teaching people how to ride bikes. This is a lesson learned from Bici Libre, as the current street is very busy and has no accommodations for cyclists.

Another aspect of selecting a location is whether other businesses are nearby. It is helpful to be in an area where food is available. Keeping volunteers at a co-op is a challenge in an exclusively industrial area; when the volunteers are hungry, they have to leave. For a community of volunteers to coalesce around a space, having other social opportunities nearby, such as coffee shops, restaurants, and bars, is very helpful.

The space itself can be quite small. The minimum, for just one bike stand, tools, and supplies, is about 400 square feet. (This is the size of the Valley Bikery.) The Bicycle Kitchen is in a space of approximately 1000 square feet, with three bike stands (each holds two bikes). Most of the bikes and wheels are stored by being hung from the ceiling with hooks. The size of the space limits only how many bikes can be stored on-site, which may be a good thing: the number of bikes on-site can quickly grow out of control with donated bikes.

## FINDING A SHOP COORDINATOR

Having a coordinator or coordinators to help start the shop is also important. These people may already exist in the community at cycling clubs or groups that teach bike repair, or within bicycle groups looking for a space. It may be possible to coordinate with them to operate a space.

If such groups do not already exist in the area, it may be necessary to hire a coordinator or two. Some important start-up tasks are ordering and organizing tools, recruiting and organizing volunteers, and organizing work parties to build out the shop. It is best if these coordinators live in the community that the co-op serves. Having had experience with another bike co-op and community organizing are good qualifications for the role.

## BIKE ADVOCACY GROUPS in L.A.:

Los Angeles County  
Bicycle Coalition  
*la-bike.org*

CICLE  
*cicle.org*



## BIKE WRANGLING

When starting a co-op, obtaining (or “wrangling”) donated bicycles in large numbers may not be a priority. Space may be limited, and making donated bikes available to the public for a suggested donation may not be part of the plan for the co-op. Co-op organizers should assess their need for donated bicycles and match their efforts to the need. But for co-ops that would like the option of making bikes available to the community, below are some helpful hints.



*Many institutions collect abandoned bicycles as an ancillary part of their operations.*

### Tax-Exempt Status

First and foremost, it is a very good idea to be a tax-exempt organization or to be associated with one. Donations to tax-exempt organizations are deductible for individuals and business entities. This means that bikes, bike parts, and money donated to the organization may be “written off” against the donor’s taxes. In addition, being tax-exempt provides donors with greater assurance that their donations will be used for public good as opposed to private gain. This can be very important to a co-op’s donors. Finally, certain institutions can only donate bikes to tax-exempt organizations. Universities and governmental agencies are generally not allowed to donate materials to organizations that are not tax-exempt.

If organizing a co-op as a tax-exempt entity and applying for recognition as such with the IRS isn’t an option (it does take time and money), another option is to find a tax-exempt entity that is willing to sponsor the co-op (or act as its “umbrella”). This means that the entity will accept donations on the co-op’s behalf. With respect to bicycles and bicycle parts, this will mean that the co-op can provide its donors with the sponsor’s name and tax identification number as the destination for donations. With respect to cash donations, generally a sponsor will request a percentage (usually 5 to 6 percent) of the donation to cover its administrative costs.

### Where Are the Bikes?

The bikes are everywhere. Most households have a bike that is sitting around, unused, in a garage or basement. However, since collecting these bikes takes much more effort and resources than obtaining a number of bicycles from a single institution, it may be worthwhile to focus first on institutions.

Many institutions collect abandoned bicycles as an ancillary part of their operations. Colleges and universities are often left with large numbers of bicycles after their student populations have left for the summer. Major universities, like the University of Southern California,

can collect up to 500 bikes per academic year. Generally, it is either the parking/transportation or public safety/security department that deals with these abandoned bicycles. Public transportation authorities are also a source for abandoned bicycles (L.A. Metro handles about 70 bicycles a month in its lost and found department). These bicycles are left on trains or buses, or are found locked on public transit property (e.g., train stations).

Police departments and other law enforcement agencies often come across abandoned, lost, or stolen bikes. Normally, these bicycles are sold at auction to benefit the budget of that particular agency or police department. A co-op may be able to convince a department to direct some of its bikes to the co-op, particularly if the co-op offers programs for youth (for example, a specific program directed at keeping young kids off the streets after school). The Los Angeles Police Department is allowed to donate property to programs whose charter documents state that they are combatting juvenile delinquency.

Property management groups can be a source of bikes. A property manager that manages large apartment buildings or complexes will collect bicycles abandoned by tenants when they leave. These bikes tend to accumulate in the complex's parking structure and are generally a nuisance for the property manager. Companies with large campuses or office complexes may also collect a good deal of abandoned bicycles from their employees. The large movie studios in Los Angeles are a good source of bikes.

Bike shops often collect used bikes from their customers. Some folks simply leave their old bikes at the shop when they buy a new one. A co-op could arrange with a bike shop to provide its customers with some kind of discount or coupon for their used-bike donation; then the bike shop could donate the collected bicycles to the co-op (and receive the tax deduction). The bike shop benefits from the good will associated with the co-op and from any extra business created by the donation. The City of Boston ran a very successful program called "Roll-It-Forward" which operated on a basis similar to this.

Collecting bicycles from individual donors can take as much time as collecting bicycles from institutions. The obvious difference is that an individual provides one or two bikes, but an institution may provide 10 to 20 bikes. However, having donors bring bikes to the co-op is ideal. The Bicycle Kitchen in L.A. receives almost all of its donated bikes and parts at the workshop from unsolicited donors. Establishing the co-op in the community and on the web (through a website, ads on Craigslist, etc.) will facilitate these kinds of donations.

Bike drives are another possibility for collecting bikes from individuals. These can be organized with bike shops (as one-off events), other



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Bike Wrangler Bobby Gadda picks up a load of abandoned bikes from California State University, Long Beach.

retail stores (REI runs several bike drives for the workshops in L.A.), large corporations, and community organizations. A group called the Working Bikes Cooperative in Chicago has been successfully collecting bikes in this manner for years. They have an on-line library of useful bike drive documents (solicitation materials, activity checklists, etc.).

## How to Get the Bikes

To get the bikes, co-ops have to start early and be persistent. The relationships being established will take time. The institutions have to go through their own, sometimes arduous, approval processes and regulatory requirements. For example, it took Bici Libre almost a year to develop a system of valuation for the abandoned bikes with the University of California, Los Angeles so that the university could donate bikes. Administrators will be asked to do something that is not necessarily within their normal range of activities or capacities. People will sometimes need to be convinced that donating bikes is a good idea. Hitting the phones early and often, developing a solicitation letter that can be easily customized for each institution, and keeping a record of contacts at the various institutions are good ideas. It pays to be persistent. A single contact may take months to develop. People may not respond to an email or a single phone call, but they usually respond to a phone call a month.

***A co-op may be able to convince a police department to direct some of its bikes to the co-op, particularly if the co-op offers programs for youth.***





A volunteer teaches others how to adjust brakes at the Bici Libre.



*With good and thoughtful effort, co-ops can establish relationships that will supply them with used bikes for a very long time to come.*

## Mixed Quality in Bikes

Eighty-five percent of bicycles are “department” or “toy-store” bikes. These bikes are of lower quality manufacture (i.e., the components are made of plastic, the metal parts are poorly milled, etc.) and are bought new at department stores (WalMart, Target, etc.) or toy stores. The remaining 15 percent of all bicycles are those found in bike stores. Generally, these bikes are of better quality manufacture and are more easily maintained and repaired. The bicycles a co-op receives will reflect this mix, and co-ops should be prepared to deal with poor quality bikes.

Some bikes will be in poor condition: they may have been exposed to the elements for a long time and will have suffered commensurably. They may have rust from rain and dew, and deterioration of rubber and plastic exposed to sunlight. In some instances, it will be worthwhile to take a bike and strip it for parts. In other cases, it’s better to walk away from what used to be a bike. Co-ops can avoid receiving bikes in unusable condition by having clear communication with potential donors and letting donors know that the donation of certain bikes can actually be a net liability to the program (in terms of the resources, time, space, and energy required to deal with an unusable bike).

With good and thoughtful effort, co-ops can establish relationships that will supply them with used bikes for a very long time to come. The success of a co-op’s enquiries and work will probably encourage other groups to follow in the co-op’s footsteps, and to compete for donated bikes.





## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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**Jonny Green** was the County Cycling Collaborative's first "Bike Wrangler."

## PARTNERS

*The HUB Long Beach*

*Valley Bikery*

*Bicycle Kitchen*

*Bikerowave*

*Bike Oven*

*Bici Digna*

*Bici Libre*



Bike maintenance workshop



THE COUNTY CYCLING COLLABORATIVE, PART 2:  
ENCOURAGEMENT & SKILL BUILDING WITH

**GROUP  
RIDES AND  
BIKE  
WORKSHOPS**

Dan Dabek

# ENCOURAGEMENT AND SKILL BUILDING WITH GROUP RIDES AND WORKSHOPS

22 **Dan Debek**

In an effort to improve public health, the Los Angeles-area bicycle maintenance cooperatives, the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition, and Cyclists Inciting Change thru LIVE Exchange (CICLE) partnered to form the County Cycling Collaborative (CCC) in late 2009. The CCC provided programming to increase physical activity through bicycle use by providing free bicycles, bicycle education workshops, and bicycle encouragement events in L.A. County.

The CCC's goal was to expand bicycling to areas of the county with limited bicycle use. CICLE coordinated free workshops and community rides throughout the county. Neighborhoods were selected with the L.A. County Department of Public Health to provide bicycle programming to low-income communities with high rates of obesity.



Bike ride in Azusa

## PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

Through the CCC, CICLE and the Los Angeles-area bicycle co-ops conducted more than 60 workshops on bicycle maintenance and safe bicycling skills. These workshops were conducted over an 18-month period between October 2010 and March 2012. CICLE also conducted group rides to encourage physical activity and create a safe environment for community members to learn how to bicycle in live road conditions. Nineteen rides were completed averaging 40 participants each ride. Free refurbished bikes were distributed to workshop communities by the CCC's bicycle wrangler.

The CCC created shifts in transportation choices by direct action. Through its duration, roughly 1,500 members of the community were provided bicycle education and a structured environment for physical activity. The investment in the CCC program has resulted in a bicycle maintenance cooperative in downtown L.A. that provides free and low-cost bicycles to the community. It has also established self-sustaining bicycle programs in South L.A. and the East San Gabriel Valley. Before the CCC program, these areas did not have community programming to encourage bicycle adoption.

Bicycle infrastructure is a long-term solution to increasing bicycle use. It took the City of Copenhagen three decades to build the infrastructure that now supports 37 percent of the population using bicycles for transportation. In communities that do not already have an active population, it is often difficult to create the political will for infrastructure changes. The CCC program took the first steps to creating active transportation networks through interactive workshops and community rides. Shifts in the communities' perceptions of their transportation choices were created, and the encouraged public can now advocate for future infrastructure changes. For example, in Azusa program participants are working with the city's mayor and transportation department to promote bicycling.

## testimonial:

"We are still dusting off bicycles and learning how pros ride. I finally got to go on the ride and after 20 years, I remembered how much fun bike rides can be. Although my muscles were a little sore the next morning, I'm excited about our next ride."

- Maria P., a participant of the Azusa rides and workshops

*Shifts in the communities' perceptions of their transportation choices were created, and the encouraged public can now advocate for future infrastructure changes.*

# LESSONS LEARNED THROUGH THE CCC

## Site Coordination

The initial strategy was to coordinate bicycle safety and maintenance workshops at Metro stations throughout L.A. County. Metro public transportation stations are a good location for bicycle education workshops because they provide the opportunity for multimodal transportation training.

Although Metro officials expressed interest in hosting the workshops (bicycle education is part of the agency's adopted bicycle plan), gaining access to Metro property was not achieved because of CCC program time constraints. To conduct a workshop on Metro property, permission must be gained through the real estate office. Metro also requires liability insurance and for all workshop personnel to undergo rail safety training. Given the CCC's time constraints, workshop space needed to be in a location with fewer requirements for approval.

## Outreach in Low-Income Neighborhoods

Community outreach can be a challenge when coordinating workshops in neighborhoods with no previous bicycle culture. A solution can be found by partnering with local neighborhood organizations. Examples of neighborhood partners include land trusts, churches, youth services organizations, community services nonprofits, and recreation departments. Community partners can be given a stake in the program by receiving trained bicycle ride leaders and free bicycles.

## Community Partner Selection

Community partners can be selected by creating a database of area organizations. Organizations should be ranked by their level of activity in the community. Contact active organizations to see if they have a program coordinator or equivalent position. Once the initial connection is made, a program summary should be sent to the organization and a meeting requested. The meeting with the organization can be used to gauge the organization's interest in participation and to discuss the goals of the program. If a community organization expresses interest in participating and seems committed, a contract of responsibilities should be drafted.

The community organizations CICLE worked with were asked to conduct outreach for workshops and rides through their networks. They were also asked to provide a location for the workshops and

### tip:

Metro is supportive of bicycle education and a partnership could be successful with enough lead time to meet the liability requirements.

### tip:

Successful neighborhood partners have the following traits:

1. An interest in and commitment to bicycle transportation
2. A staff member who can serve as a point of contact for organizing bicycle programming
3. A record of activity in the community and a current outreach network
4. A willingness to be a stakeholder in the outcome of the program





nominate local candidates to be trained as bicycle ride leaders. CICLE committed to providing instructors, training, insurance, tools, help with marketing, and liability waivers.

## Creating Self-Sustaining Bicycling Communities

Since the CCC was contracted for 18 months, it was important to create a program that was self-sustaining. By developing a lasting bicycle community, the investment in the CCC program will continue beyond the Department of Public Health contract.

Community acceptance was necessary to break into areas without a bicycle culture. This was achieved by hiring and training local community members as bicycle ride leaders through the Ride Leader Training Program. Developed for the CCC, the program developed leadership, community organization, and bicycle street-safety skills. Through the program, institutional knowledge on bicycle safety was passed on to new communities in L.A. County. Partner community organizations were asked to nominate active and visible members of the community to be paid and trained by CICLE. Preference was given to individuals with strong ties to the neighborhood and an interest in bicycle transportation and community outreach.

CICLE instructors trained and supervised ride leaders in training. Development and training continued throughout the length of the CCC program. Ride leaders were required to attend all training sessions, ride practice, and community rides. As independent contractors of CICLE, they were required to follow state and federal law while providing services for the organization. They were compensated at \$16 to \$20 per hour. Trainees made a commitment of five weekend hours per month.

## Implementing Similar Projects in Additional L.A. County Cities

The following planning and implementation steps are provided to help more cities and communities establish projects like the CCC:

- Find community organizations for locations and participant outreach
- Create a schedule of bicycle workshops and rides
- Create an outreach plan that includes flyers, print ads, email, and social media
- Hire and train community ride leaders
- Plan themes for community rides (e.g., historic city tour, industrial tour, garden tour)

### tip:

Hiring local community members to help in bicycle encouragement activities will make a program more accepted and trusted.

### testimonial:

Bicycling is also a great way to build community and to encourage healthy habits.

**Dyane P. in South L.A. promoted healthy eating at one of our workshops:**

*"Thanks for the bike workshop! People really enjoyed it and we were able to get three people to sign up for our produce bag delivery program."*

**Partner community organizations were asked to nominate active and visible members of the community.**



Bike maintenance workshop

- ⊙ *Plan engagement incentives: music on group rides, tool giveaways during workshops, bicycle raffles*
- ⊙ *Promote a schedule and incentives*
- ⊙ *Provide outreach for workshops and rides*
- ⊙ *Evaluate participant experiences and strengthen curriculum and outreach plans as needed*

### **Resources necessary to pursue such a project include the following:**

- ⊙ *Funding for safety and maintenance workshops (\$200 to \$300 per workshop)*
- ⊙ *Liability waivers*
- ⊙ *Liability insurance*
- ⊙ *Equipment, including first aid kits, bicycle tubes, bicycle tire pump, tire levers, patch kits, hex wrenches (4, 5, 6 and 8 mm), and adjustable box wrenches*
- ⊙ *Funds for outreach materials (e.g., flyers and newspaper ads)*

### **A workshop curriculum that has the following instructional methods:**

- ⊙ *Lecture*
- ⊙ *Demonstration*
- ⊙ *Hands-on practice*

## **more info:**

**League of American Bicyclists**  
[bikeleague.org](http://bikeleague.org)

**Local bicycle coalitions**  
 (Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition, San Francisco Bicycle Coalition, San Diego Bicycle Coalition)

**CICLE**  
[cicle.org](http://cicle.org)

**Local bicycle maintenance cooperatives**

**The Alliance for Biking and Walking**  
[peoplepoweredmovement.org](http://peoplepoweredmovement.org)

**Safe Routes to School**  
[saferoutesinfo.org](http://saferoutesinfo.org)

**Rails to Trails**  
[railstotrails.org](http://railstotrails.org)

**Forester's Effective Cycling**  
[johnforester.com](http://johnforester.com)

**League Certified Instructor training (LCI) from the League of American Bicyclists**  
[bikeleague.org](http://bikeleague.org)

## The following key personnel are necessary to make a project like the CCC a success:

- *Workshop and ride coordinators: personnel to coordinate locations for workshops, plan rides, and provide outreach to participants*
- *Bilingual instructors/ride leaders*
- *Bicycle safety instructors (instructors should have a thorough understanding of the bicycle safety principles outlined by the League of American Bicyclists and Forester's Effective Cycling)*
- *Maintenance workshop instructors (instructors should have bicycle shop or volunteer co-op experience)*
- *Ride leaders*
- *Community partner liaisons*



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Dan Dabek** is the Executive Director of CICLE (Cyclists Inciting Change thru LIVE Exchange). CICLE is a nonprofit organization based in Los Angeles working to promote the bicycle as a viable, healthy, and sustainable transportation choice.

## PARTNERS

CICLE

Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition

Bike Kitchen

Bike Oven

Bikerowave

Valley Bikery

The HUB Long Beach

Bici Digna



## WORKS CITED:

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# COMMUNITY BICYCLE MASTER PLANNING:

THE SOUTH BAY BICYCLE MASTER PLAN

Marissa Christiansen

# COMMUNITY BICYCLE MASTER PLANNING: THE SOUTH BAY BICYCLE MASTER PLAN

30 **Marissa Christiansen**

The South Bay Bicycle Master Plan is a comprehensive and interconnected policy and infrastructure document that provides a unified vision for a bike-friendly South Bay. The plan is believed to be the first multi-jurisdictional bike plan in the United States, and encompasses seven South Bay cities: El Segundo, Gardena, Hermosa Beach, Lawndale, Manhattan Beach, Redondo Beach, and Torrance. In an unprecedented sweep, all seven city councils adopted the plan in November 2011. Two of the councils shortened the 20-year implementation time frame to 10-12 years.

The plan came about through the South Bay Bicycle Initiative, the brainchild of a fledgling group of bike advocates and volunteers at the South Bay Bicycle Coalition. They partnered with the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition to apply for an L.A. County Department of Public Health grant to fund creation of the plan.

South Bay residents speak on behalf of the South Bay Bicycle Master Plan.



The plan includes all elements necessary for compliance with Caltrans' Bicycle Transportation Account, a \$7 million fund open to cities whose bike plans meet certain criteria. This was an important factor in getting support and enthusiasm from the seven partnering cities. The basic pitch was: "Let us help make your city more bike-friendly at no cost to you; we have a grant to fund staff and consultants, and the end result will open your city to funding you're not currently receiving." In short, how could any of the cities say no?

***The true benchmark of a successful plan is not plan adoption but implementation.***

While the goal of the South Bay Initiative was realized with the adoption of the plan in all seven cities, the true benchmark of a successful plan is not plan adoption, but implementation. **The next steps toward implementation are as follows:**

- 1 Identify priority projects**
- 2 Wrap those projects into each city's capital improvements program**
- 3 Design and engineer each facility**
- 4 Apply for grant funding to build the facilities**
- 5 Construct the facilities**

The voice of the advocacy community will be essential in making sure implementation occurs. Like other policy documents, the bike plan is non-binding: each city is not held to perpetual implementation. In addition, the plan identifies top priority projects, but the projects must be continually absorbed into each city's capital improvements program to occur.



# REASONS FOR SUCCESS: COLLABORATION, CONSULTANT TEAM AND POLICIES

The success of the South Bay Bicycle Master Plan was the result of a well-executed collaborative effort, expert consultants and the perfect confluence of bike-related trends and policies in the surrounding region. Various high-profile bike infrastructure and policy improvements recently completed in the cities of Los Angeles, Long Beach, Santa Monica, and Hermosa Beach brought about a unique focus on bicycle planning that had never before existed. That focus, combined with an advocacy-led initiative to coordinate the seven different cities, the expertise of Alta Planning + Design (one of the country's top bike planning consultants), and the promise that the resulting document would create new grant funding eligibility for each of the cities, was a recipe for success.

Having a renowned and experienced consultant was a key component in navigating the tedious, and at times tumultuous, political waters of bike planning.

## IMPORTANT LESSONS LEARNED

The process was not without controversy, both from the public, including fellow bike advocates, and the cities themselves. Successfully navigating this process and ultimately coming to consensus was dependent on the following four key components:

### 1 Providing ample opportunity for public input.

*The coalitions hosted two open workshops in each of the seven cities for a total of 14 workshops. In addition, each city required that its applicable commissions review the plan before finalizing it and sending it to the city council. These commission hearings were open to the public. This did not prevent some community members from alleging they did not have an opportunity to review the plan, but it did allow the initiative partners, and ultimately each city council, to adequately defend the validity of the public process.*

### 2 Involving elected officials early and often.

*The South Bay Bicycle Coalition approached the councilmembers in each city who were known for their involvement in sustainability issues or who had already been identified as bike advocates. The coalition presented the idea of the seven-city bike plan to them and they were asked to sign a supportive letter*



**Community involvement played a large part in the successful passage of the bike plan.**



for the grant application. They were later asked to adopt a resolution dedicating staff time to the initiative, as well as appointing one council member to the initiative's blue ribbon advisory committee. This committee met on a regular basis to review plan progress and provide political insight into the process. This was important because it kept key decision makers involved and enthusiastic, which ultimately led to widespread support from the cities' council members before plan adoption was even on the agenda.

**3 Involving city staff early and often.** This proved to be as important as involving elected officials. The elected officials and the public were ultimately supportive of the initiative because of its universally collaborative nature. Every month, a working group made up of the initiative director, the consultants, and one staff liaison from each of the seven partnering cities met to review plan progress, discuss challenges, collect data, and make necessary amendments. This working group provided two primary benefits: 1) the consultants and initiative director were able to use city staff expertise and 2) city staff members could work directly with the consultant, thereby providing the consultant insight in the process and ultimately resulting in their support of the plan.

**4 Using a renowned expert.** As previously stated, this process was not without controversy. As important as the previous three components were to the success of the process, possibly more so was the use of a well-respected expert who had completed high-profile and successful work in the surrounding region. Without such expertise, the 14 public workshops and the input from the committee and the staff working group may not have resulted in a document based on industry standards and documented precedents. Using Alta Planning + Design allowed the initiative partners a valid defense to any opposition encountered.

Another important lesson learned concerns expected timelines. Eighteen months passed from the time the RENEW grant was awarded to the adoption of the plan, and the consultant was contracted for a total of 13 months. The incredibly tight timeline on a very tight budget allowed for only a couple iterations of the plan. This had both positive and negative outcomes. On the negative side, both the cities and the coalitions had to make concessions on policy language and proposed infrastructure simply because there was not enough time to come to a full consensus. On the positive side, the tight timeline ensured that negotiations on these concessions were not needlessly prolonged. The tight timeline also ensured that people remained engaged and that the subject remained relevant.



**The elected officials and the public were ultimately supportive of the initiative because of its universally collaborative nature.**

# REPLICATING THE MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL APPROACH

The following suggestions are provided for cities, bike activists, and community members interested in pursuing a multi-jurisdictional plan for their region.

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- 1 Allow ample time.** Find out how long it takes one of the partnering cities to produce and adopt a similar document. Then add six months to that to ensure opportunity to coordinate with multiple jurisdictions.
- 2 Identify the basic goals for the plan up front.** Decide how stringent the policies should be, how many miles would ideally be added to the existing bike network, and whether the document should include design guidelines.
- 3 Know what a bike plan costs** and expect to spend 50 to 100 percent more on a multi-jurisdictional plan. If one of the previously defined goals on the plan is a fully vetted network with an accurate parking impact analysis and design guidelines, a larger consulting fee will be required.
- 4 Be sure that the staff members and elected officials** in each city know what is involved in creating a bike plan. This is particularly important in selecting policy language, which draws significant political attention.
- 5 Have one staff liaison from each city** specifically assigned to coordinate with the effort.
- 6 Have one elected official** who can serve on a version of the blue ribbon advisory committee.
- 7 Plan for at least two community meetings in each city.** These meetings will likely need to be about six months apart from one another.
- 8 Choose your battles.** All involved stakeholders, including the parties leading the initiative, will have to make concessions. Have a general idea of what the initiative leaders' priorities are and what the items to concede on might be. For the controversial items that are necessary for a good plan, be sure to amass political and community support early on and keep the stakeholders engaged.

*For the controversial items that are necessary to a good plan, be sure to amass political and community support early on and keep the stakeholders engaged.*





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

*Marissa Christiansen works for the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition as the initiative director for the South Bay Bicycle Master Plan.*

## PARTNERS

*Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition*

*South Bay Bicycle Coalition*

## THE CITIES OF

*El Segundo*

*Gardena*

*Hermosa Beach*

*Lawndale*

*Manhattan Beach*

*Redondo Beach*

*Torrance*

## more info:

**The South Bay Bicycle Coalition**  
*southbaybicyclecoalition.org*

**The Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition**  
*la-bike.org*





# CREATING BIKE- FRIENDLY BUSINESS DISTRICTS

April Economides

# CREATING BIKE-FRIENDLY BUSINESS DISTRICTS

## April Economides

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The City of Long Beach created the Bike-Friendly Business District (BFBD) pilot program to increase bicycle trips in four business districts – Bixby Knolls, Retro Row, Cambodia Town and the East Village Arts District – and, as a result, increase sales and customers for these neighborhoods.

While infrastructure, such as bike lanes, and safety education are two essential components for a business district to be bike-friendly, they were not part of this pilot program since they are being carried out through other grants. The BFBD program focused on programming and promotion.

Diana Gershuny talks to a business owner.



## testimonial:

"I see parts of the city on my bike that I would never even notice if I was just driving. And I love it. So it's not only great exercise, it's a way for me personally to get closer to the city."

– Bob Foster,  
Long Beach Mayor  
(from L.A. County Bike Summit  
keynote speech)

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## BENEFITS OF BFBDS

**Bicycling helps business districts become more economically vibrant for a number of reasons, most notably the following:**

- 🚲 **The strong bike local/buy local connection.** *A driver may go straight across or out of town to shop and dine and end up missing the offerings in his or her own neighborhood. Bicycling introduces those shops, restaurants, and cafes within a few miles of our homes and workplaces. Bicyclists are also more likely than drivers to notice businesses they pass because they are moving slower and are more closely connected to the street.*
- 🚲 **Businesses on bike lanes report more “feet on the street”** *and increased sales. A study of Bloor Street in Toronto showed that bicyclists and pedestrians spent more money in the area than drivers. The study concluded that bicycle facilities would increase commercial activity on the street (Clean Air Partnership 2009). Two-thirds of merchants along San Francisco’s Valencia Street say the new bike lanes created there have a positive economic impact on their businesses. Two-thirds support more traffic calming measures on the street and all of the merchants say they’d be supportive depending on the project (Drennen 2003).*
- 🚲 **More “feet on the street” makes a district safer** *and friendlier, thereby attracting more people and potential customers.*



***Bicycling introduces those shops, restaurants, and cafes within a few miles of our homes and workplaces.***

**Bicycling is taxpayer-friendly.** *Bike parking is less expensive to build and maintain than car parking. It is more efficient and affordable to taxpayers. It is also cheaper for customers since it's free.*

**Bicycle tourism is increasingly popular.** *Using the bicycle as a mode of transport for vacations is increasing, both for weekend getaways and multi-state road trips. These cyclists spend money at hotels, restaurants, shops, and businesses. Business districts that welcome them are seeing increased sales. For example, out-of-state bicycling tourists traveling to Wisconsin generate \$532 million a year in economic activity (University of Wisconsin 2010). A similar study from Oregon is expected to come out by 2012. The creation of bike-only hotels, hostels, and campsites is increasing to attract riders and spur economic development (Adventure Cycling).*

## THE LONG BEACH BFBD APPROACH: TEAMWORK AND EXPERIMENTATION

The managing consultant, Green Octopus Consulting, engaged the business districts to help design the program. This team approach helped create a sense of ownership and thus ensure a higher chance of success. A leadership team of 8 to 10 business stakeholders per district met monthly for the first six months, then on an as-needed basis. The consultant outlined the program objectives and the economic case for bicycling, and business owners shared their thoughts and concerns about bicycles and the strengths and challenges in their districts. Each group then set about designing a program to address its needs and challenges.

One merchant wished the program would buy his district regular bikes so his employees could more easily get across the district to buy lunch. This is how the merchant bike share started. Another business owner complained about bicyclists riding on the sidewalk, so "Walk Your Bike" sidewalk stencils were painted. Throughout the program, the consultant monitored what was working and what wasn't, and, in consultation with the leadership groups, adjusted the program as necessary. For example, two big bike fairs per district were originally planned. However, after seeing that the first one's only major success was the free bike tune-ups, the groups decided to simply hold monthly tune-ups. The tune-ups were the right amount of work for the districts and consultant to handle, and they made a meaningful impact on the community.

## testimonial:

"The BFBD bike has been extremely helpful to my office for when we need to run down the street for an errand or check out an issue. We can put our cameras or even graffiti remover in our basket and zip over to where we need to go. Plus, it encourages business owners and residents to get out and ride, too. We get lots of fun looks when we ride around on the cargo bike. We experimented with grocery deliveries at Trader Joe's and want to expand this program even more in 2012."

– Blair Cohn,  
Bixby Knolls Business Improvement  
Association Executive Director

***A leadership team  
of 8 to 10 business  
stakeholders per  
district met  
monthly for the first  
six months.***



The pilot program was managed as an ever-changing experiment through which as much was tested as possible, given the available labor and budget. The process was flexible to accommodate impromptu ideas. These ended up being some of the biggest successes of the program.

## PROGRAM COMPONENTS

### Stakeholder Engagement

Taking a “meet them where they’re at” approach, the consultant sought to build a strong foundation of merchant support before designing the program. Most business owners had reservations about bikes at the outset and were unaware of the economic benefits bikes could bring their district. Some outright disliked bikes. Most didn’t ride them. Now, the naysayers are supporters or enthusiasts. Some who hadn’t ridden in decades have become the most frequent users.

More than 40 merchants and business association leaders participated in the leadership meetings, and several hundred other merchants and business leaders were reached through meeting minutes, in-person outreach, and exposure to marketing pieces. Hundreds of merchants, business leaders, and the general public beyond the BFBD boundaries were educated through media articles and marketing pieces.

### Merchant Bike Share

Bikes were purchased for each district’s merchants and employees to use and share in place of cars. Each district received one cargo bike, two or four commuter bikes, a trailer (for two districts), baskets or saddlebags, helmets, and front and rear lights. Each leadership group chose its own bike models and colors, and everything was purchased through local bike shops. Bikestation was hired to provide liability coverage.

Each bike was adopted by a business that takes it in at night and locks it to a bike rack during the day. Any business owner or employee may check it out through an easy and informal system. Each district branded its bikes with its own unique logo, and the bikes double as moving marketing pieces and show off each district’s unique identity.

**tip:**

**Reject a top-down approach and instead create a program through merchant ideas.**



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**tip:**

**Start with a few commuter bikes to test out, experimenting with baskets and saddlebags to see what’s most useful. Then determine if a trailer or cargo bike is needed so that nothing is purchased that won’t be regularly used.**



Restaurant owner with a bike from the merchant bike share program

## Bike Tune-Ups

Free bike repairs were offered at monthly events – some inside bike shops and others at outside festivals – to remove a simple and key barrier to getting people on bikes: tuning up their bikes so they're rideable. More than 195 bikes were repaired for free at 19 clinics during this program. Those held inside bike shops brought the shops more than 45 new customers (combined) and more than \$2,000 in combined sales, because, while waiting, the customers realized they needed a helmet or bike lights.

This was an easy and affordable way to help the community, increase bicycling, promote local bike shops and festivals, and build bike offerings into a district's existing structure affordably and easily.

## Bike Racks and Corrals

This program educated business owners that the City of Long Beach provides a free bike rack to any business that requests one and that the liability associated with the racks lies with the city, not the business. The city also offers bike corrals. Through this program, more than 50 new racks were installed and two corrals are in process.

## Bike Valets

Bicyclists, just like drivers, like to park as close as possible to their destinations. Bike valets offer safe, manned parking at the entrance to an event or store. Valets make bicyclists feel welcomed and put bicyclists' minds at ease that their dearly loved bikes won't get stolen (be it the entire bike, the front tire, the seat, or the lights). Advertising

## testimonial:

"I love the Arts District bike. It's so useful for my business and me. I can make fast and easy deliveries, take it to the bank, and use it to run business and personal errands. When business is slow, I take it for a cruise along the beach."

– Proum Ry,  
Wa Wa Restaurant owner



## tip:

Partner with bike shops to do tune-ups for free since they receive publicity, new customers, and sales in return.

## tip:

Since some business districts prefer a uniform style of bike racks, talk with the business association about bike racks first before going to individual businesses.

a free bike valet signals that an event will be bike-friendly, which helps attract bicyclists. It's also a friendly reminder for people to bike instead of drive.

During the program, more than 235 bikes were valet parked at 16 events. The biggest valet success was at the East Village Arts District's "Taste of Downtown" event where, on one night, 55 bikes were valet parked, setting a record in the district.

## "Walk Your Bike" Sidewalk Stencils

To reduce bike-pedestrian accidents and help educate bicyclists that it's illegal to ride on the sidewalk in business districts in Long Beach, the program piloted "Walk Your Bike" sidewalk stencils in two districts. Some business owners have wanted these stencils for years, and the program gave those businesses a stronger voice with the city.

## Bike Saturdays Discount Program

The BFBD program created the city's first bicycle discount program, whereby customers who ride their bikes receive a discount or promotion. The program created is called "Bike Saturdays" and more than 145 businesses participate. Each business determines its own discount and offers it every Saturday. Businesses that offer a discount daily are highlighted in program promotions, which include websites, social media, print ads, postcards, media publicity, and window decals. There is no membership or fee required for businesses or bicyclists.

## Community Rides

Community bike rides are a great way to get people who live in each district on bikes by offering a safe group setting. This attracts people to the districts who haven't yet been there and allows them to experience the fun of bicycling. The BFBD program held approximately four Saturday morning family rides in Bixby Knolls called "Bixby Rollers" (which will continue again in the summer months), a ride from the Retro Row BFBD to the annual Cambodian cultural festival in the Cambodia Town BFBD, a holiday ride with national bicycle advocate Mia Birk from the East Village BFBD to the Retro Row BFBD, and a Cambodia Town community ride media event with the band Dengue Fever.

## Pedicab Cross-Promotion

In late 2011, the Long Beach Pedaler Society launched a pedicab and courier service in several of the city's business districts. This offers valuable services to businesses, residents, and tourists, and promotes the notion that there are more sustainable and unique ways to navigate Long Beach than in a car.

**tip:**

**Build your own bike valet racks to save money.**

**tip:**

**Roll out a public safety education campaign and media outreach campaign right after sidewalk stencils are laid to ensure their effectiveness.**

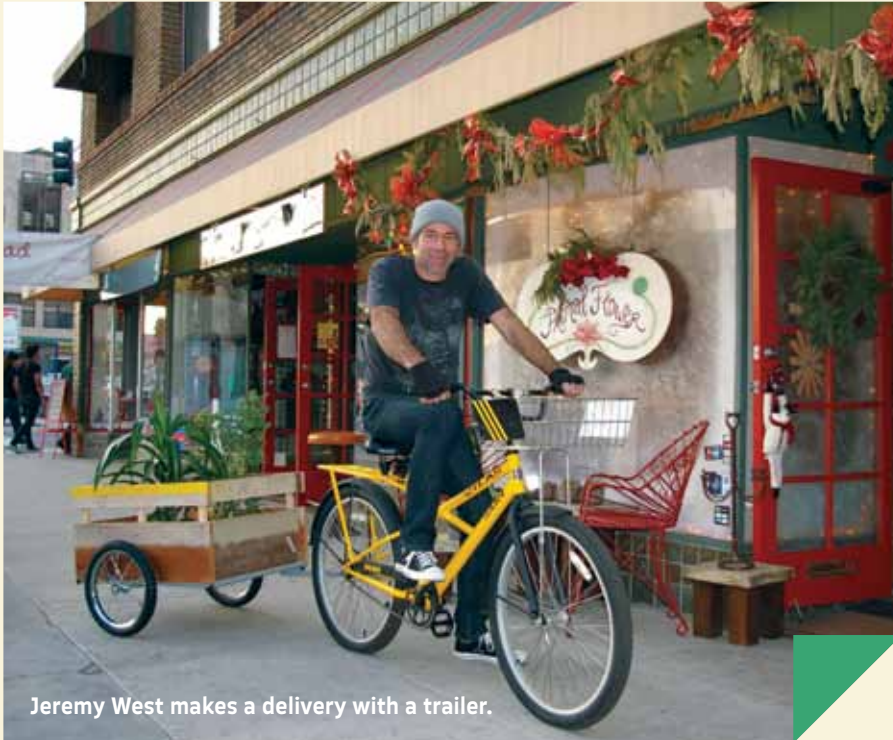


**tip:**

**Encourage each business participant to promote the discount program through its own marketing channels to ensure success.**

**tip:**

**Attracting people who aren't avid bicyclists to community rides in cooler months is difficult. Some people are easily deterred by chilly weather or light rain. Host "Bundle Up Rides" and "Rain Rides" to help change people's perceptions and habits.**



Jeremy West makes a delivery with a trailer.

## Bike Portraits

The program partnered with Long Beach bicyclist and photographer Shereef Moustafa to offer free portraits of Long Beach residents and their bikes. It was a fun, community-bonding art project that built enthusiasm and pride in bicycling in Long Beach.

## Promotion and Publicity

All of the program components were promoted via some or all of the following: print advertising; media outreach; city and business association websites; flyers, posters, and postcards; social media; videos; and bicycle conference presentations. Flyers distributed to homes and businesses within a one-mile radius of an event were particularly successful: people would come to the bike clinics with flyers in hand. A large amount of media coverage was landed about the program, Bike Saturdays, the districts, and bicycling in Long Beach because of this strategy.

### tip:

Encourage each district to design its own bike trailers, district bike logo, and other creative components.

### tip:

Free bike portraits are a fun and creative way to build community (and bike) pride.



### tip:

Print flyers and other materials at businesses within your own city, so as to walk your “Shop Local” talk.

# PROGRAM SUSTAINABILITY

The pilot program, which ended mid-March 2012, was designed to be as sustainable as possible so that each district was left with tangible and intangible assets. These include the following:

- *A merchant base more educated about bicycling and the economic benefits bicyclists bring to businesses, districts, and the city as a whole*
- *Bikes, cargo bikes, trailers, helmets, baskets, saddlebags, and bike lights, along with liability insurance coverage through March 2013*
- *Merchants and other business associations now offering customer deliveries and conducting other business via bike instead of car*
- *A grocery delivery program model*
- *Free bike tune-ups at district bike shops, at their discretion*
- *Bike valet racks and corrals*
- *Bike racks, tickets, signs, and laminated how-to brochures*
- *“Walk Your Bike” stencils in one of the districts, with the city now planning to complete them in other districts*
- *The Bike Saturdays program – window decal and promotion on city website, social media channels, and each business’s marketing channels*
- *A relationship with the Long Beach Pedaler Society and the Long Beach Bike Portrait photographer to continue those partnerships to promote their district cost-free*
- *More awareness about the national annual Small Business Saturday event so they can promote this every year*
- *More public and media awareness and attention to bicycling and the four districts*
- *A bike page on their business association’s website*
- *Video about the program*
- *This toolkit*





## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**April Economides** *created and managed the Bike-Friendly Business District program for the City of Long Beach and is the principal of Green Octopus Consulting.*

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## PARTNERS

*Fourth Street Business Association*

*Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association*

*East Village Association*

*Cambodia Town*

*City of Long Beach*

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Clay Wood with a bike from the merchant bike share program



New Hampshire Avenue during the October 9, 2011 CicLAvia / PHOTO: Gary Leonard





# CREATING OPEN STREETS EVENTS: CICLAVIA

Joe Linton, Aaron Paley, and Paul Tullis

# CREATING OPEN STREETS EVENTS: CICLAVIA

**Joe Linton, Aaron Paley, and Paul Tullis**

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Numerous qualities contribute to making a community bicycle-friendly. While often the focus is on the critically important bikeway infrastructure, programs and ephemeral events also play an important role. Open street events, known broadly as *ciclovías* and in Los Angeles as *CicLAvias*, are a relatively low-cost celebratory way to encourage bicycling as well as other non-vehicular street usage.

*Ciclovías* started in Bogotá, Colombia in 1974 as a response to the congestion and pollution of city streets and the desire to change the cultural framework of public space. Now these open streets events happen throughout Latin America and the United States. In cities large and small, from Guadalajara to San Francisco and from Tucson to Oakland, *ciclovías* are helping people to see their streets and their cities in new ways.



*By enabling Angelenos to experience a parallel city that exists right in front of them – one without cars – CicLAVias promote the establishment of safe, vibrant public spaces, viable transportation alternatives, and active lifestyles.*

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Ciclovías temporarily close selected streets to car traffic, which opens the streets for bicycling, walking and other public uses. Without automobiles, streets become safe for people to walk, skate, play, and ride a bike. Ciclovías are free events, appealing to all ages, and are enormously accessible to the entire range of a city’s inhabitants. A ciclovía is not a race; there is no starting point and no finish line. Participants can begin where they want and engage as little or as much as they see fit. In a ciclovía, the street is literally temporarily transformed into a public park.

## ESTABLISHING CICLAVIA IN LOS ANGELES

CicLAVia, a non-profit community group, produces CicLAVias: free public events that unlock Los Angeles’ potential by temporarily closing city streets to cars and opening them for the use and enjoyment of the public.

Twice a year in central L.A., with the crucial support and partnership of the mayor’s office, city council, department of transportation, and police and fire departments, CicLAVia closes a route several miles long to vehicular traffic and opens it to foot and bicycle traffic. Participants can enter at any point and take part however they like. By enabling Angelenos to experience a parallel city that exists right in front of them – one without cars – CicLAVias promote the establishment of safe, vibrant public spaces, viable transportation alternatives, and active lifestyles.

CicLAVia demonstrated proof-of-concept with its very first event, in October 2010, which was more successful than even its founders had imagined. The event made converts out of people who were at

first skeptics. All kinds of Angelenos – families and friends, fathers and daughters, seniors and skateboarders – walked, jogged, biked, roller skated, pushed strollers, and generally hung out in the streets together. People got to know one another and their city in a way not possible when the urban landscape is clogged with polluting vehicles.

From East L.A., through downtown to East Hollywood, and on three occasions, a total of more than 300,000 participants from all demographic groups and throughout Southern California have experienced a glimpse into the city’s future – a vision of what L.A. could be without the constant traffic that endangers our health; seals us off from much of the city’s unique and world-class architecture, public space and independent businesses; prevents the random encounters that are a hallmark of city life; and costs our community countless billions in maintenance costs, health care, and wasted time.

CicLAvia is currently working to increase the frequency of its events, roll them out across the city and county, and expand their appeal to new participants from across all walks of life.

## HISTORY

CicLAvias’ roots are in the civic action and popular movements of the 1960s. Jaime Ortiz, a Colombian studying in the United States, was inspired by the change brought about by demonstrations he witnessed and participated in. After returning to his native Bogotá and studying urban planning, in 1976 Ortiz helped launch “ciclovía” (a word coined in Spanish that translates as “bicycle path”). Ciclovía events now happen every Sunday and holiday in Bogotá and the idea of occasionally closing streets to cars has since spread to Argentina, Australia, Canada, Belgium, and elsewhere, including at least 20 cities in the U.S.

A diverse group of activists joined together to bring ciclovías to L.A. They sought and gained the crucial early support of Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, who has been a leader in transitioning L.A. to cleaner air through adoption of renewable energy and public transportation. Newly named CicLAvia, the group raised seed money from the California Endowment, a private health foundation, and other private foundations. The organizing committee was a providential mix of talents including a graphic designer, transportation engineer, publisher, urban planner, and television news producer, as well as several bicycle advocates.

Logistics and working with a myriad of government agencies and other regional transportation stakeholders followed, as did questions (“Wait, you want to do what? Where?”) and fundraising. Everyone



Jaime Ortiz at Bogotá’s ciclovía

***CicLAvias’ roots are in the civic action and popular movements of the 1960s. Jaime Ortiz, a Colombian studying in the United States, was inspired by the change brought about by demonstrations he witnessed and participated in.***



Ciclovía in Bogotá

saw the potential, but few could conceive how it could be done. On October 10, 2010, CicLAvia did it anyway: from Melrose to Interstate 5, portions of major streets became thoroughfares for the use of everyone except drivers. The *Los Angeles Times* reported the following day that people “talked with a sense of surprise that the city felt smaller and more manageable,” and that “they had expected the journey from East Hollywood to Boyle Heights would take far longer and be far more arduous than it was.”

Since the first event was so successful, CicLAvia needed to expand the route. If more people came next time, the original route would be far too crowded. Stretching into new neighborhoods and reaching new citizens, CicLAvia’s second and third events during 2011 showed the events aren’t just for cyclists. CicLAvia Walks, guided tours of historic neighborhoods along the route, began in October 2011. CicLAvia’s organizers plan to produce parallel events in the San Fernando Valley and West L.A. in 2012 and 2013, and are exploring additional opportunities from Pasadena to Long Beach. Soon everyone in Southern California will know when it’s a CicLAvia day.

***Ciclovía events  
now happen every  
Sunday and holiday  
in Bogotá.***



**manual  
for Via  
recreativa:**

**Spanish:**  
[cicloviarecreativa.uniandes.edu.co/index.html](http://cicloviarecreativa.uniandes.edu.co/index.html)

**English:**  
[cicloviarecreativa.uniandes.edu.co/english/index.html](http://cicloviarecreativa.uniandes.edu.co/english/index.html)

# THE BENEFITS OF CICLAVIAS

As the city and participants alike connect and transform, CicLAvias grow larger than just the events themselves. They are making Los Angeles streets safe for people to walk, skate, play, and ride a bike. CicLAvias show the benefits of healthier living and cleaner air, and have a good time doing it.

CicLAvias are not about car-bashing or being anti-establishment. They are a new and exciting L.A. event, connecting people across geographic, economic, racial, and language barriers by showing them the city they share and the inhabitants they live beside in a way not possible when people are locked in the confines of their cars. It promotes civic pride and active lifestyles, builds community, encourages appreciation for public space (in the most park-poor big city in the country), and enables the discovery of new features in the neighborhoods we live in but normally pass by too quickly to enjoy or even notice.

CicLAvias are making sustainable change by creating something with a tangible, visible effect on the second-largest city in the United States. By demonstrating that an urban environment accessible to bipedal and bi-pedal folks is not only desirable, but attainable – in the birthplace of urban sprawl and car culture – CicLAvias are changing the face of Los Angeles.

All kinds of people participate in CicLAvias, although, unlike many other on-street bikeway facilities, the events attract many less experienced riders. These include many people who don't ride often and who don't even identify themselves as cyclists. CicLAvias act as a sort of gateway activity, showing reluctant cyclists how easy and enjoyable bicycling can be. Often these riders go on to decide to cycle more often, whether for errands, commuting, or recreation.

Though CicLAvias have rapidly become one of most popular bicycling events in California, they are more than just bicycling. The four primary goals for CicLAvias are listed below.

## **1 Promote environmentally-friendly transportation choices, including bicycling, walking, and transit**

*While the majority of participants to date have been cyclists, there are also plenty of pedestrians, skaters, and people in wheelchairs. Locating the route appropriately and partnering with transit agencies, primarily Metro and Metrolink, encourages participants to arrive at CicLAvias by train or bus. Often participants report that, although they grew up in L.A., it was the first time they tried riding Metro*

***CicLAvias act as a sort of gateway activity, showing reluctant cyclists how easy and enjoyable bicycling can be. Often these riders go on to decide to cycle more often, whether for errands, commuting, or recreation.***



October 9, 2011 CicLAvia  
PHOTO: Gary Leonard

*Rail. Often one barrier to greener transportation modes (biking, walking, a bus or a train) is merely lack of experience. Open streets events allow beginners a fun, low-stress way to try out new modes, and to see how easy and convenient they are.*

## **2 Improve public health**

*By promoting healthy physical activity, especially bicycling and walking, CicLAvias improve the health of participants. With a festive atmosphere, smiling participants don't perceive a CicLAvia as an obligatory workout, but as a fun way to spend time. In some ways, CicLAvias trick participants into healthy activity – and show them that it's easier than it may seem.*

## **3 Support local businesses**

*CicLAvias attract participants from throughout the region, including many riders from neighboring counties, and even some from Northern California and Arizona. As riders and pedestrians take breaks and stop to eat, and sometimes to shop, they patronize local businesses. People from throughout the region are exposed to new restaurants and shops that they might not have known before. During past CicLAvias most restaurants were very busy and some reported running out of popular items.*

## **4 Support community pride through the use of public space**

*While fostering community is one of the least tangible or quantifiable benefits of bike-friendly cities, it is actually the most important. CicLAvias are about transportation, health, and business, but are most powerful in bringing all kinds of people together in an egalitarian public space. Streets constitute the vast majority of public space in Southern California neighborhoods. When streets are given over nearly exclusively to cars, the space becomes unsafe, anti-social, loud, and often hostile. When cities reign in car predominance, people come together in the streets. During CicLAvias, all kinds of Angelenos come together, all at the same level. They look each other in the eyes, smile, and interact. Seeing the city, including its diverse inhabitants, helps create a sense of connection, community, and civic pride.*



Mojito Manning at the first  
CicLAvia on 10/10/10  
PHOTO: Gary Leonard

***With a festive atmosphere, smiling participants don't perceive a CicLAvia as an obligatory workout, but as a fun way to spend time.***

A family at the first CicLAvia on 10/10/10 / PHOTO: Gary Leonard



*CicLAvias act as a sort of gateway activity, showing reluctant cyclists how easy and enjoyable bicycling can be. Often these riders go on to decide to cycle more often, whether for errands, commuting, or recreation.*

## CICLAVIA: RESOURCES AND LOGISTICS

Compared to permanent car or bike infrastructure, ciclovías require relatively few resources. The events take advantage of the existing roadway, so there's no construction and no environmental reviews.

To establish ciclovías, resources are needed for event planning, production, promotion, and many other logistical matters. CicLAvias are a joint project of the city and CicLAvia the nonprofit, with each entity responsible for about half of the overall resources needed. The city has provided city services, predominantly law enforcement and traffic planning. The nonprofit has provided outreach, marketing, production, staffing, and volunteers. The nonprofit raises money from foundations, sponsors, individual donors, and merchandise (predominantly t-shirt) sales.

Many variables play a role in determining the overall resources needed, but a very rough resource estimate for a one-day CicLAvia is \$10,000 to \$25,000 per mile of street opened to the public.

At the time of this writing, CicLAvias take place twice per year, with 2012 events planned for April 15th and October 14th. The nonprofit is planning to double its capacity each year until it is able to produce a car-free event each month (12 per year). CicLAvia is working with the City of Los Angeles and with other municipalities to explore possibilities for expansion, including additional mileage extending from the central route, new routes elsewhere in the entire metropolitan region, and more frequent CicLAvias taking place throughout the year.

Choose Health LA! (an initiative made possible by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the Los Angeles County



Department of Public Health) helped sponsor the October 2011 CicLAvia event which took place entirely within the City of Los Angeles. While some funds were funneled directly toward the production of the event, other monies were set aside for a technical assistance plan in which designated cities throughout Los Angeles County would learn how to create their own car-free event.

CicLAvia and Community Arts Resources administered the technical assistance in five cities: Huntington Park, Lynwood Pomona, San Fernando, and South Gate. The technical assistance consisted of three meetings in each city. The first meeting was with select city staff, the second was with stakeholders in the community, and the third was a presentation to the respective city council or subcommittee to highlight the groundwork accomplished.

The technical assistance allowed respective cities to come together as a community and begin the process of producing a car-free event. Some cities culled widespread community support and already had host committees paving the way for the next step of route selection and fundraising. Others needed support from CicLAvia and Community Arts Resources in order to launch the local host committee. CicLAvia looks forward to rolling out new routes throughout the county as a result of this process. We intend for these additional CicLAvias to fulfill the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health's goal to promote physical activity to improve the health and well-being of participants.

## LESSONS LEARNED IN IMPLEMENTING CICLAVIAS

Participation has grown to the point where, at some places and times, CicLAvia events resemble a bike traffic jam (though unlike car congestion, there are no exhaust fumes, and slow moving participants are smiling and talking with each other). Demand for more events and for new routes has resulted in broad community participation in planning. CicLAvias are becoming a tradition that Angelenos look forward to.

Though they are more than just bike events, CicLAvias have been the most popular bicycle events in Los Angeles history. It is also important to note that CicLAvia events have, overnight, become the nation's largest bicycle event. CicLAvias have inspired hundreds of thousands of Angelenos to participate and to see the city in a new way, and inspired numerous user-generated videos, photos and blog articles.

### recommended videos of CicLAVias:

[y2u.be/VEM3thiJMmU](http://y2u.be/VEM3thiJMmU)

[streetfilms.org/ciclavia-2011-los-angelenos-take-back-the-streets](http://streetfilms.org/ciclavia-2011-los-angelenos-take-back-the-streets)



***Demand for more events and for new routes has resulted in broad community participation in planning. CicLAvias are becoming a tradition that Angelenos look forward to.***



Crowds at the first CicLAvia / PHOTO: Gary Leonard

## COMMENTARY ABOUT CICLAVIAS

### **LA Weekly:** Five Influential Architectural Shifts of 2011

“CicLAvia, the public events that shut down streets for traffic of the two-wheeled kind. The bicycle is giving everyone a new appreciation of the city as a collection of architectural artifacts, and that’s worth 10 new great buildings.”

### **Downtown News:** Best of Downtown 2011

“Best Reason to Leave the Car at Home: ...by mid-morning Downtown is a giant urban park teeming with thousands of people enthralled by the simple pleasure of navigating our city any way except in a car.”

### **Westside Urban Forum:** 2011 Prize for Open Space

**Los Angeles Times:** 2010 in Review: Christopher Hawthorne on Architecture: “Borrowing a model from Latin American cities, organizers managed to win city approval to close down nearly eight miles of L.A. streets for most of a Sunday in October. The turnout of at least 100,000 exceeded everyone’s expectations, offering another sign of a growing constituency in Los Angeles for changes to cityscape benefiting cyclists and pedestrians.”

## MORE INFO:

### Email list for **ciclovía organizers**

[groups.google.com/group/ciclovía-organizers](https://groups.google.com/group/ciclovía-organizers)

### **Bogotá Ciclovía Guide**

Spanish:

[cicloviarecreativa.uniandes.edu.co/index.html](http://cicloviarecreativa.uniandes.edu.co/index.html)

English:

[cicloviarecreativa.uniandes.edu.co/english/index.html](http://cicloviarecreativa.uniandes.edu.co/english/index.html)



# CREATING OPEN STREETS EVENTS IN NEW CITIES

Ciclovías now take place in at least 16 countries. In the United States, more than a dozen cities, from large to small, host ciclovías. The model is replicable and scalable to suit nearly any community. In Los Angeles, the initial CicLAvia took just over two years to go from idea to event. New route extensions have been planned and undertaken in just under a year.

CicLAvias demonstrate the success of an open streets event model for Southern California and other cities that are assumed to be car-oriented. Though there is significant interest in expanding and transplanting CicLAvias, the event organizers expect that roughly a year will be required to plan and implement each new route planned. With great support and resources, new routes can happen more quickly. Difficult and/or ambitious versions could take longer.

Below are a series of steps to plan and implement a new ciclovía event. These are listed in the rough order recommended by CicLAvia, though there is a great deal of overlap.

## 1 Organize a host committee:

While it is possible for a city or group to host a ciclovía more-or-less independently, most successful open streets events have been made possible through public-private partnerships. This can begin with a diverse public stakeholder group dedicated to making a ciclovía happen. The host committee should include elected officials, municipal staff, community leaders, business representatives, members of cycling organizations, and others. But if representatives from all these sectors aren't available, start with a group of committed volunteers.

## 2 Fundraise:

Though ciclovías aren't expensive, it is very important to line up at least some funding sources early on. For CicLAvia events, this included hosting smaller-scale fundraising events and securing initial foundation grant support. Additional possible funding sources may include grants (for example, from governmental sources such as congestion mitigation, transportation demand management, public health departments, or from local foundations), sponsorships, donations, sales, and the like.



All photos above taken by Gary Leonard at various CicLAvias in 2010 and 2011

1. Lawn chairs over the 110 freeway
2. Eagle Rock Yacht Club dodgeball game
3. On the 4th Street Bridge
4. Pedestrians and a dog on Spring Street
5. On 7th Street

### 3 Select a route:

One of the most popular steps in making ciclovías happen is selecting the route. It's important to work openly, with meaningful input from businesses, residents, and city agencies. Planning a few possible routes and narrowing down choices based on support or resistance is helpful. While the event can work in various settings, CicLAvia staff recommend the following criteria. These are not absolute rules; the final route selection is a balancing of various advantages and disadvantages.

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#### **CicLAvia used the following overall criteria to select the initial route:**

- *Population-dense neighborhoods*
- *Park-poor neighborhoods*
- *Connections to transit, especially rail stations*

#### **Generally CicLAvia prefers routes that include the following:**

- *Walkable commercial/retail streets, especially with restaurants, particularly "Main Street" style "zero-lot line" commercial streets*
- *Interesting landmarks, including historic buildings, public art, and bridges*
- *Connections to "hubs" (sometimes called rest stops), including parks and plazas*

#### **Generally CicLAvia avoids routes that include the following:**

- *Hills (difficult for beginner cyclists to ascend, dangerous for beginners to descend)*
- *Freeway on/off ramps (these can be closed temporarily if necessary)*
- *Railroad tracks in the street*
- *Excessive blocking of driveways, especially residential, but also businesses and churches (some driveways will be blocked, but the fewer the better)*
- *Excessive negative impacts to transit (generally some bus lines will need to be re-routed, but the fewer the better)*



Skateboarder on Spring Street  
PHOTO: Gary Leonard



***Planning a few possible routes and narrowing down choices based on support or resistance is helpful.***

## 4. Determine event logistics:

Once the route and date have been set, a number of logistical arrangements are needed. For Los Angeles, this included a series of monthly meetings with city departments, Metro, and event producers. Critical logistics include the following:

- *Street closures*
- *Traffic detours, including transit bus detours*
- *Freeway ramp closures*
- *Safety (police, fire, medical staffing)*
- *Insurance*
- *Community messaging*

## 5. Notice, marketing, and outreach

Prior to closing the street, CicLAvia volunteers and staff members go door to door along the entire route notifying all residents and businesses. Initially notification begins about two months in advance and concludes 30 days before the event. The entire route is re-notified the week of the event. Marketing to event participants occurs through a full-scale marketing plan, including press events, a website, social media, and more.

## 6. Host the event effectively

Event day activities are too detailed to fully enumerate here. They include the following:

- *Street closure activity*
- *Staffing hubs*
- *Opening ceremonies*
- *Coordinating volunteers*
- *Troubleshooting incidents*
- *Event ending, with re-opening streets*

**more info:**

**CicLAvia Website**

*ciclavia.org*





## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**62** **Joe Linton** is an urban environmental activist and one of the organizers of CicLAvia. He has worked for Friends of the L.A. River, Livable Places, CICLE, and other nonprofits. Linton was one of the co-founders of the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition. Linton has lived car-free in Los Angeles for 20 years.

**Aaron Paley** is the president and co-founder of Community Arts Resources (CARs), Los Angeles' leading community and cultural festival producer.

**Paul Tullis** has written on environment, health, and policy issues for Businessweek, Sierra, Fast Company, Scientific American, Men's Journal, Bon Appetit, NPR's "Morning Edition," "Marketplace," and more than 50 other print, broadcast, and digital media outlets.

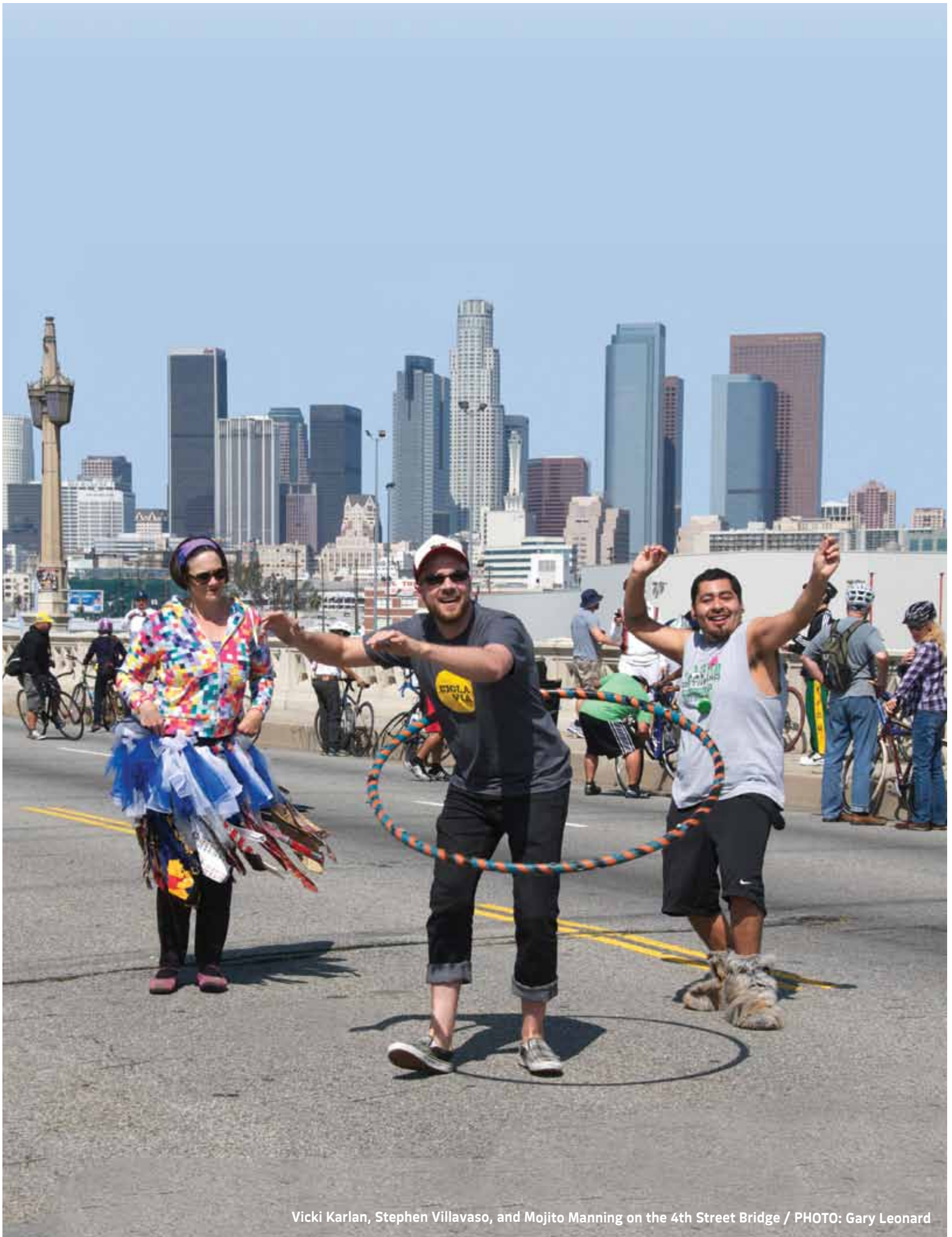
## PARTNERS

*CicLAvia (a non-profit organization)*

*Community Arts Resources*

*City of Los Angeles*

*RENEW provided funding for the October 9, 2011 CicLAvia which was earmarked to extend the route to South Los Angeles. RENEW funding also provided technical assistance to several small cities to explore the possibility of holding an open streets event in the future.*



Vicki Karlan, Stephen Villavaso, and Mojito Manning on the 4th Street Bridge / PHOTO: Gary Leonard



L.A. County Bike Summit bike tour of Long Beach / PHOTO: Brian Minami





# CREATING A BIKE- FRIENDLY L.A. COUNTY SUMMIT

Alexis Lantz and Dan Rosenfeld



# ENGAGING KEY STAKEHOLDERS: LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE LOS ANGELES COUNTY BIKE SUMMIT

**Alexis Lantz and Dan Rosenfeld**

The very idea of a bicycle-friendly Los Angeles County may seem strange to some, given the region's car-focused reputation. But many cities, organizations, and advocates have been promoting and supporting bicycling as a key strategy to help address the county's economic, environmental, and public health challenges.





Long Beach bike racks / PHOTO: Brian Minami

The L.A. County Department of Public Health, in partnership with the L.A. County Bicycle Coalition (LACBC), organized a special one-day summit to highlight the work of communities in the county. The summit included elected leaders, city managers, and staff from the 88 cities that make up the county.

The summit provided information, tools, and inspiration to empower city leaders and staff to make their cities bicycle-friendly. During the summit, presenters and participants discussed what bike-friendliness means, why it is important, and how the cities of Los Angeles County can work to create it.



***The summit provided information, tools, and inspiration to empower city leaders and staff.***

### **Bike-friendly policies and infrastructure already implemented in Los Angeles County include the following:**




-  *The first protected bicycle lanes or cycle tracks in the county (Long Beach)*
-  *The largest bicycle parking, retail, and bike rental facility in the county and bicycle safety skills training course (Santa Monica)*
-  *The first Bicyclist Anti-Harassment ordinance, which is intended to keep cyclists safe (Los Angeles)*



PHOTO: Brian Minami

## WHAT WAS LEARNED FROM THE SUMMIT?

### Here are some steps to help activists make their communities bike-friendly:

- *Build awareness and understanding among local leaders and citizens.*
- *Work on providing information and education within your own city hall.*
- *Recognize that neighboring cities have influence. Cities that understand the benefits of becoming bike-friendly can influence other cities.*
- *Community groups, local businesses, and engaged citizens are central to creating a bike-friendly community.*
- *Both residents and businesses must push their city leaders for better infrastructure, policies, and programs.*
- *Educate elected leaders on the importance of bicycling beyond just recreation. Creating roadways that provide safe and easy opportunities for biking and walking can also serve to address the obesity epidemic.*

## VIDEO OF SUMMIT KEYNOTE TALKS IS AVAILABLE BY PRESENTER:

The summit's program, including slide presentations, is available here:

**Andy Clarke,**  
President, League of American Bicyclists  
[y2u.be/PP0rZ16v-vY](http://y2u.be/PP0rZ16v-vY)

**Dr. James Sallis, Director,**  
Active Living Research Program  
[y2u.be/FN\\_eUWcZUGE](http://y2u.be/FN_eUWcZUGE)

**Dr. Suja Lowenthal, Vice Mayor,**  
City of Long Beach  
[y2u.be/T49YZe2hFK8](http://y2u.be/T49YZe2hFK8)

## TIP:

### Start a bicycle coalition in your region:

The LACBC fosters local advocacy chapters through its Regional Partnership Program to empower citizens around L.A. County who want a bicycle-friendly community. LACBC regional partner chapters are working in the Antelope Valley, Beverly Hills, Culver City, Glendale, Montebello, Santa Monica, the South Bay, West Hollywood, and the West San Gabriel Valley. For information on starting a group, visit LACBC's Regional Partnership Program:

[la-bike.org/node/41/create-local-chapter](http://la-bike.org/node/41/create-local-chapter)



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Alexis Lantz** is Planning and Policy Director for LACBC.

**Dan Rosenfeld** is the policy analyst for the Choose Health LA bicycle projects.

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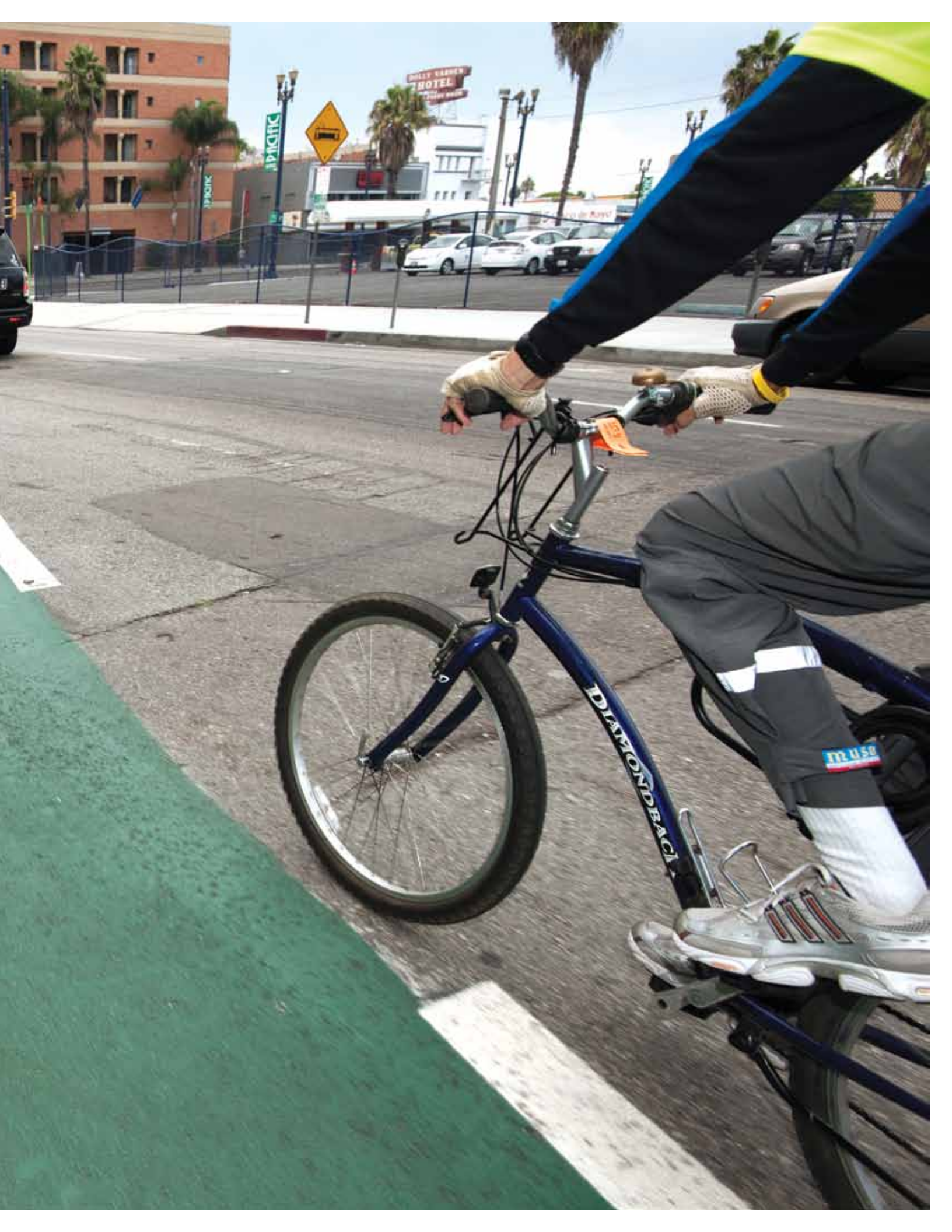
## PARTNERS

*Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition*

*South Bay Bicycle Coalition*



LA County Bike Summit bike tour of Long Beach  
PHOTO: Brian Minami





**CHOOSE  
HEALTH LA!**

*Choose Health LA is made possible by funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health.*