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City Employees Club of Los Angeles Vol. 10 • No. 7 • July 2011



Pedal Power!

 Summer in the City

Michelle Mowery, Sr. Bike Coordinator, is leading the way toward 1,600 miles of new bike-way in the City. Go for a ride this summer!



SEE PAGE 6



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Michelle Mowery, Sr. Bicycle Coordinator, rides the L.A. River Bike Path with the Club's Angel Gomez (left) and John Hawkins (center).

Alive! photo by Tom Hawkins

TRANSPORTATION

With its recently approved bicycle plan, the City has begun preparing for more than 1,600 miles of interconnected bikeways.



Pedal

Photos by Tom Hawkins, Club Photographer, and courtesy Transportation

The "neighborhood" part of the network will include popular streets like the Fourth Street Bicycle Boulevard, or a bike-friendly street. Signage will encourage motorists to share the road with bicyclists safely.



On March 2, the City Council reached a milestone for bicyclists in Los Angeles – it passed Planning's massive 2010 Bicycle Plan, which plans a long-term goal of creating 1,680 miles of interconnected bikeways and calls to build more than 200 miles of new bicycle routes every five years.

The bike path along the Los Angeles River gets a lot of attention – as it does in these pages – but much of the plan concentrates on building bike lanes in busy streets and bike-and-car-sharing roadways. The City's biggest streets – Figueroa Street, Wilshire Boulevard and Santa Monica Boulevard – could get bike lanes in the future. And there are other parts of the plan, too, including bike racks and bike commuter stations with lockers and showers.

This all depends on funding, of course, and City commitment. The City has set aside 10 percent of its Proposition R funds to go for pedestrian and bicycle efforts.

"It won't be easy," says Michelle Mowery, Sr. Bicycle Coordinator, Transportation, and an avid bicyclist. "If we could start with a clean slate, it would be easier. But L.A. is already built out. We have to retrofit."

City engineers and transportation consultants started working on the plan three years ago. One of the new plan's central features is a freeway-like system of upgraded streets called the "backbone" network. Other networks are called the "neighborhood," where bikes and cars are more likely to share the traffic lane, helped by bicycle signage; and "green," which will travel along on bicycle rights-of-way in sometimes scenic passages.

The plan intends to shift Los Angeles from an auto-centric City to a City with a multi-modal transportation system.

Enjoy Your Summer – on a Bike

More City Employees are commuting to work on a bike (see sidebar on Steve Sawyer). But the City's bikeways also offer much for the recreational biker.

Michelle Mowrey suggests several different places to ride for recreation. See page 8.



- Consider a family bike jaunt through Griffith Park:

www.thelariver.com/guide/biking/griffith-park-bike-loop/

- Or Hansen Dam:

www.thelariver.com/guide/biking/hansen-dam-bike-paths/

Both are Rec and Parks facilities.

Urban Biking: In addition, Rec and Parks offers several improved bike trails, including on the Westside, along the Venice shore, in the San Fernando Valley, in the West Valley, and in the Harbor. Download maps here: www.ci.la.ca.us/rap/info/biking.htm



Michelle Mowery, Sr. Bicycle Coordinator, Transportation (center), leads the Club's Angel Gomez (left) and John Hawkins (right) along the L.A. River Bike Path.

ALIVE! FEATURE

Summer in the City

Power!



Pocket parks along the L.A. River Bike Path make perfect places to sit a spell during bike journeys. Sitting in this pocket park, which was developed through community efforts, are (from left) Michelle Mowery, Sr. Bicycle Coordinator, Transportation; John Hawkins, Club CEO; and Angel Gomez, the Club's Director of Sales.



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10,000 Miles a Year... on a Bike!



Steve Sawyer, Storekeeper at the General Services Yard in the Valley with 22 years of City service, sold his last car in "1970 or '71" and hasn't owned one since. "I was living in San Francisco at the time, and a car can be a liability. But there was a Muni (bus) strike, so I bought a bike."

He gets to most everywhere he's going by bike now. He rides approximately 10,000 miles a year.

The weekend after his interview with *Alive!*, he was leaving with a group to bicycle to San Diego and back. "It will take us about 10 hours each way," he says.

And why does it say "Team Krispy Kreme" on his helmet? "Oh, I used to bring a box of donuts to work every week, but the doctor says I can have only one a week now," he laughs.

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Tour LaBonge

It's no wonder that Tom LaBonge, Councilman and Club Member, was a big proponent of the passing of the comprehensive bike plan: He's a bicyclist himself.

On Wednesdays during the summer months, Tom LaBonge leads what he calls Tour LaBonge. He puts together a community ride in his sixth council district.

Rides are from 5:30 to 8 p.m. Police provide traffic control. Upcoming rides are:

- July 6: Fourth Street
- July 13: Toluca Lake and North Hollywood
- July 20: Los Angeles River/Griffith Park
- July 27: Hollywood

All riders must be at least 12 years old, wear safety helmets and sign a waiver. For more information, call (213) 485-3337.

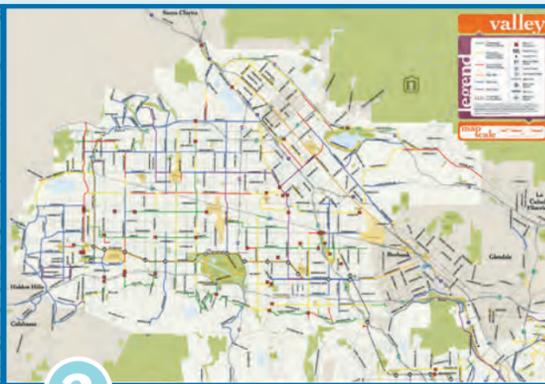


LADOT
BIKE
PROGRAM

Summer in the City



1 To download this map go to www.bicyclela.org/pdf/BikeMapWestsideCC.pdf



2 To download this map go to www.bicyclela.org/pdf/BikeMapValley.pdf



3 To download this map go to www.bicyclela.org/pdf/BikeMapHarbor.pdf



Above: A bike lane along Reseda Avenue.
Right: A bike lane along Woodman Avenue.
Below right: A concept for a bike-friendly roundabout along Fourth Street.



Three Rides for Your Summer in the City

Michelle Mowrey, Sr. Bicycle Coordinator, and the staff of *Alive!* recommend three gentle rides for the casual bicyclist. You can also refer to the maps in this section (and downloadable at www.bicyclela.org) to plan other trips.

1 The Los Angeles River

"I'm really partial to the L.A. River," Michelle says. There's a really pretty section with green patches on the river bikeway starting near Fletcher Street and going in either direction.

2 The Valley Orange Line

Urban bicycle lanes were built as part of the Metro's Orange bus line straight across the San Fernando Valley.

3 Harbor Area

"There are quite a few bicycle facilities in the Harbor area," Michelle says. "We probably have more bike lanes in a very small area in the Harbor than anywhere else." She recommends riding along Paseo Del Mar for its visual beauty and bike accommodation.

'Give Me 3' Public Awareness Campaign



Bicycle Operations introduced a public awareness campaign titled "Give Me 3," meaning that motorists should stay at least three feet away from bicyclists when sharing the same road. Standing with the sign are (from left) Nate Baird, Bicycle Coordinator; Michelle Mowery, Sr. Bicycle Coordinator; and Cullen McCormick, graduate student and intern.

Lit by the Sun... at Night



A great part of the L.A. River bike path is that large portions of it are illuminated by solar lighting, courtesy Public Works/Street Lighting. The lights use new solar and LED technology that meet the environmental expectations of the community as well as maintain the safety of bicyclists. These solar panels are to be installed over several miles.
Well done, Street Services!

THE ALIVE! INTERVIEW

Out of Cars, and Onto Bikes

On June 15, Club CEO John Hawkins, Club Member Services Director Angel Gomez and *Alive!* editor John Burnes interviewed Michelle Mowery, Sr. Bicycle Coordinator, Transportation, about the recently passed bike plan, good places to ride in the City, and her first bike. The interview took place in a Transportation conference room in the CalTrans building downtown.



Alive!: Thanks for talking to us today, Michelle. Your official title with transportation is...

MICHELLE MOWERY: It's Senior Project Coordinator, Bicycle Program, Bicycle Outreach and Planning. But I'm known as the Sr. Bike Coordinator.

How did you get to be Sr. Bicycle Coordinator?

MICHELLE: I was a contractor for 10 years. The City put out an RFP for a Bicycle Coordinator. They needed somebody with the expertise to come in and do this sort of stuff. The field has grown exponentially since I started, but at that time nobody really knew much about bikes and how to integrate them into transportation. I'm now in my 17th year for the City.

Were you involved in biking?

MICHELLE: I've always been on bikes; I used to race. There was a period when I actually raced bikes.

Great. Let's get to the big picture here. In your own words, describe to us the bicycle plan.

MICHELLE: It's a huge document. It took us several years to put together and we went through several iterations to get to where we are. Essentially, the plan is to transform the City in 30 years into a true network for bicycling and change the mode split.

When we think about how people trav-

el, we talk about divisions of how people move themselves. Currently, just less than one percent of people are biking for transportation. I think mass transit is something like three percent, but we have this huge amount of people living in the City. And then there's this very small percentage that is walking. But for Los Angeles, we've got a huge amount of people who get around only in cars. We want to change the mode split to something more equitable. This plan essentially puts the City's goal at five percent of all trips on bike. Five percent of all trips will be made by bicycle, with three percent of those being commuters. It's totally doable.

Basically the goal is to get people out of their cars, quite honestly.

What's the impetus that's making the City develop these plans in a big way?

MICHELLE: Well, first I should mention that City Planning is the lead on these documents. Planning is always the lead, but we certainly have a fair amount of input in the document.

So a number of things have happened to drive the bike plan. We have a younger Los Angeles, who really want to be able to ride their bikes for transportation and they're not happy that this community is full of cars, built for cars and designed for cars. We've got a young, fit community that wants to ride.

We also have a very green community that really sees that cars are damaging and that we should be more considerate of our air quality and the issues with global warming. And then we've got all these issues about fitness and childhood obesity that are coming to a head. And then, on top of this, it's

tougher and tougher to get anywhere in LA by car. We're getting to the point where the bike is pretty efficient, in comparison.

And I don't want to leave out the City Council and the mayor. I'll tell you, the mayor breaking his elbow, didn't hurt any, either! [Last year, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa, while riding his bike, was hit by a car and broke his elbow. No charges were filed. -Ed.]

What about safety? Is the bike plan also being done, not just to get people out of their cars onto bikes, but for the safety of bicyclists?

MICHELLE: Well we're doing all of that, yes.

A Big Challenge

What's the biggest challenge in building bikeways in Los Angeles?

MICHELLE: We're built out. We built a city for cars; we put all our eggs in the car basket, and we left no room to build other stuff. We've got people who want to be able to get on bikes. Folks like me are trying to accommodate them by building facilities for them. To put a bicycle lane on a City street, and this is just a standard bicycle lane, we need ten feet of right-of-way, five feet each side, and that's the minimum-minimum. A lot of people would like to see more; a lot of people would like to see some very progressive design from Europe.

— continues, page 10



'People always tell me that people aren't riding. Why should we build facilities for people who aren't riding? I say, "They're not riding because there's no place to ride." Until you build that network, how are you going to get them out there? And that's what we're working on.' — Michelle Mowery



John Hawkins, Club CEO, with Michelle Mowery, Sr. Bicycle Coordinator, Transportation.

The incredible shrinking bike!

Michelle Mowery, Sr. Bicycle Coordinator, uses a folding bike for her daily commute. At the *Alive!* photo shoot, she demonstrated its ability to be folded and stored in a vehicle cargo area. The bike is a Tikit model built by Bike Friday in Oregon.



THE ALIVE! INTERVIEW, continued from page 9

In the new plan, which calls for 1,680 miles of new and existing bikeways, about 800 miles of that are bike lanes. Maybe 700 miles will call for changing something. We're going to have to remove a car lane; we're going to have to remove on-street parking. We've done almost all we can do to shrink the lanes down to the minimum to get the bike lanes in on the side, so we're running out of options. At this point, it's about room and competition for space. It's hard.

You don't have a clean slate to be able to design it from square one.

MICHELLE: No. That's what Orange County was able to do. They've got a lot more bike lanes than we do because they were newer. If you look at Irvine, the planned community, they planned bikes from the very beginning.

Wilbur Avenue

Speaking of that challenge of not having enough room for traffic, bikes and pedestrians, last year you had a publicized problem on Wilbur Avenue in the Valley.

MICHELLE: Well the final resolution is happening now. Wilbur's a little different case and wasn't driven specifically by the bicycle issue. The community saw bicycles as driving the project. Wilbur Avenue had a speed problem.

So along Wilbur we created a "road diet," a term that's used in bicycle planning. Essentially you take one of the travel lanes away. The problem on Wilbur is that it had a high speed; the traffic was going through it at relatively high speeds. There have been five fatalities over the last five years, so the idea was let's slow this down a little bit. It was really driven by the speed factor and the desire to slow it down. It was on the bicycle plan, though, so bicycle lanes went in as a part of the project.

There was more on that agenda than just putting a bike lane in.

MICHELLE: All kinds of things, yes. It was really a safety project that included bike lanes.

Model City

How does your plan compare with other cities around the world? Is there a city in the world that you look at and say, "Wow, we'd like to achieve what they did."

MICHELLE: There are a lot of questions in there. Our plan's really progressive; this will bring us into the new millennium for real. This plan says, we've got to make change, and we've got to remove something to do it. It

doesn't specifically call out what will go where, how we will remove travel lanes or what we'll do. We'll deal with each project as we get there.

The plan is three things; it's a big policy document; it's a technical design book; and it's this map. Essentially what we're going to do is a "green" network of bicycle paths. Then there is the Citywide network, which includes the big arterial streets; those are primarily bicycle lanes. And then there is the neighborhood network, which is bicycle routes and bicycle-friendly streets.

If we had our plan on the ground today, I guarantee you we'd have ten percent of people riding bikes for transportation, because we'd give them a way to get there. People always tell me that people aren't riding. Why should we build facilities for people who aren't riding? I say, "They're not riding because there's no place to ride." Until you build that network, how are you going to get them out there? And that's what we're working on.

Are we in the forefront in any way?

MICHELLE: I'll be honest, we're behind. I'm going to Copenhagen next week, and they're the



Michelle Mowery, Sr. Bicycle Coordinator, Transportation, explains aspects of the Dept. of Planning's 2010 Bicycle Plan to Club CEO John Hawkins (at left) and the Club's Director of Sales, Angel Gomez.

Angel Gomez, the Club's Director of Sales, also writes the "Be Alive!" column in each issue. He was excited about finding out more information about the City's bike paths.



The Catalysts

Who's really driving this, so to speak?

MICHELLE: The piece that I really left out when we talked about why we're changing this is the Council and the mayor.

A Different Experience

What do you love about biking in the City? What makes you excited about it?

MICHELLE: The stuff that happens on a bike doesn't happen in a car, and a lot of people don't understand that unless they're out there doing this. As I commuted today, a woman's walking to the bus, we say good morning to each other. That doesn't happen in your car. Sometimes, when I ride all the way in [from her home in Long Beach] - this is going to sound goofy, but I count cats in people's porches, because they all look at me as I go by.

The other thing is, the L.A. River Trail has a lot more wildlife than you would imagine. The River Trail in the last few years is really changing. I've seen coyotes in the last few years, which we never saw years ago. I saw a snake for the first time last year. I saw a turtle for the first time last year. It's cool stuff.

You're more in contact with the world than isolated in your little steel box. I know people wear headphones on their bikes. I'm not a big component of this. My ears are another set of eyes in the back of my head. I get to spend time in my head thinking about stuff. Usually on the way to work, I'm thinking about a lot about the things we need to do at work. But on the way home, I usually ride hard, just for fun.

Memories and Dreams

Do you remember your first bike?

MICHELLE: It was a purple Schwinn Stingray, with lots of chrome. It was a great bike.

Mine was a red Schwinn Stingray.

MICHELLE: We all had those. Weren't they the greatest bikes? And they weighed a ton. They were indestructible.

That bike was absolutely indestructible, and I would still have it today if it weren't stolen.

MICHELLE: They're big collector items. Somebody tried to steal mine, and I saw them do it, two guys. My dad's this big, six-foot-four giant, and he ran them down. We had a Volkswagen Bug, and my dad was chasing this kid around and around.

What is your dream for bikeways in LA?

MICHELLE: We put this plan in the ground. My dream is that this 1,680-mile plan happens. That's what I've been here to do. It will transform this City in a huge, huge way.

My staff are the meat of helping me move things forward, because we just don't have enough staff right now. They're working hard.

Thank you very much for your time.

MICHELLE: You're welcome. ■

Well, your challenges are bigger, too.

MICHELLE: Yes, we're much bigger and that's part of it.

The Bikeways Engineers



Abbass Vajne, Associate Transportation Engineer III.

Above: These are the folks who design the City's bikeways. From left: Kang Hu, Sr. Transportation Engineer; Paul Meshkin, Transportation Engineer; Tim Fremaux, Associate Transportation Engineer III; Tina Backstrom, Associate Transportation Engineer II; Paul Konkirati, Associate Transportation Engineer II; Steve Guar, Associate Transportation Engineer II; and Carlos Rodriguez, Associate Transportation Engineer II.



Bicycle Engineers, from left: Paul Meshkin, Transportation Engineer, and Paul Konkirati, Associate Transportation Engineer II.

Summer in the City



LADOT BIKE PROGRAM



Michelle Mowery, Sr. Bicycle Coordinator, and John Hawkins, Club CEO, on the L.A. River Bike Path.



John Hawkins, Club CEO, gets ready to ride.



Michelle Mowery, Sr. Bicycle Coordinator, explains a wall with a community art project to John Hawkins, Club CEO (left) and Angel Gomez, Club Director of Sales (center).



Michelle Mowery, Sr. Bicycle Coordinator, stores her commuter bicycle in City lockers in the garage of the CalTrans building, home of the Transportation offices.



Bike racks along the new Orange Line Bike Path.

“If we had our plan on the ground today, we’d have ten percent of people riding bikes for transportation.”
— Michelle Mowery

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The Baum Bicycle Bridge

The Baum Bicycle Bridge, opened in 2002, is a bicycle-only bridge along the L.A. River near Interstate 5 and Griffith Park.



Special Achievement on the River Bike Path

Michael Hoffner, Club Member, completed his first “century” bike ride in early June.



“I completed my first century bicycle ride last at the LA River Ride. It was a bicycle ride from Griffith Park to Long Beach and back, and it covered more than 90 miles. It was also my first event since a motorcycle accident forced me to stop running more than a year and a half ago. It feels good to be back and active again and almost able to do the things I did before.”
Congratulations, Michael!