



SACRAMENTO AREA
BICYCLE ADVOCATES

The

Squeaky Wheel

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Summer 2011

Collision Provides “Teachable Moment” for Bicycle Safety

SABA Executive Director Tricia Hedahl calmly recalled the details of her collision with a white minivan whose driver turned left in front of her as she pedaled eastbound on H Street at 27th toward the California State University, Sacramento (CSUS), campus the afternoon of June 16.

“I was in the middle of the intersection and this westbound car kept coming at me,” she said. “I tried to swerve out of the way, but she ran into me with her bumper. It happened so fast. She was accelerating when she hit me. The driver told police she didn’t see me.”

During the confusion after the collision, Tricia was touched by the kindness of bicyclists and motorists who stopped to help. Residents wrapped her in blankets and iced her leg until the ambulance arrived to transport her to the UCD Med Center. “I have no idea who they were, but they made me feel so warm-hearted,” she said.

The impact fractured the plateau of Tricia’s left tibia, an injury that required surgery and will keep her wheelchair-bound for about three months. The collision is a setback, but she expressed determination to turn a sour incident into lemonade.

Tricia is anxious to get back on her bike and turn a cyclist’s worst fear into a teachable moment. “There is safety in numbers,” she emphasized. “The more cyclists we have on the road, the more visible we will be. Bicycle advocacy is so important. We need better infrastructure and more education of all users of the road to reduce crashes.”

Tricia is more determined than ever to “fix” the Carlson Corridor, which SABA has identified as its No. 1 priority. The

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Penny Gray Takes Helm of Caltrans Bike Program

By Lea Brooks



Penny Gray, Caltrans' new bicycle chief

CMAQ, TE, BTA, RSTP, FSTIP, STIP, CFTIP ... Counties, cities and other local jurisdictions seeking funding to make their communities safer for bicycling must first decipher the alphabet soup of state and federal funding sources.

Penny Gray, who was named bicycle program manager of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) in December, understands how the complexity of transportation funding can overwhelm local officials determining if their projects are eligible.

“There is a lot of interest in making communities more bicycle-friendly,” Penny said. “It’s really important for me to work with local agencies regarding funding opportunities for bicycle projects. I feel fortunate that my previous experience at Caltrans allows me to either directly answer their questions or refer them to the appropriate subject matter expert. It’s a great feeling when you make a difference.”

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Parkway’s Future in Flux

By Lea Brooks

The dismantling of the Sacramento County Department of Regional Parks by the Board of Supervisors desperately trying to balance a massive budget deficit will dramatically change how the American River Parkway (ARP) between Discovery Park and Hazel Avenue, including the bike trail, is managed.

The full consequences of the board’s decision in June were not fully understood at deadline as duties previously performed by Regional Parks’ staff are being transferred to other county departments and possibly nonprofit organizations.

Convolutd Communication

What we do know is that SABA’s ability to communicate with the county regarding parkway management, including safety and maintenance issues and administration of Measure A, will be more convoluted as the result of drastic reductions in Regional Parks’ budget. Measure A is the half-cent sales tax in Sacramento County for transportation projects that has included \$1 million annually for bicycle transportation in the parkway since 2009.

Park Director Resigns

Regional Parks Director Janet Baker resigned, effective July 1, after expressing her displeasure with the county’s handling of her department’s budget. Longtime Deputy Director Jill Ritzman’s position was eliminated as were several administrative positions whose duties included special events planning and reservations. The Park Planning Unit comprised of landscape architects and a grants administrator was also axed. This unit applied for grants and managed the projects, in addition to overseeing

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SABA Mission

SABA represents bicyclists.

Our aim is more and safer trips by bike.

SABA Vision

Bicycling for everyday transportation is common because it is safe, convenient and desirable.

SABA's Folsom Chapter, the Folsom Area Bicycle Advocates (FABA), meets at 7 p.m. on the third Thursday of the month. For more information, call Chapter Chair Charles McCann at (916) 501-3855 or you may e-mail FABA at faba_info@sacbike.org.

The Squeaky Wheel

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Penny, a bicycle enthusiast who lives in Elk Grove, has worked for the state 37 years, including 15 for Caltrans in the Rail, Local Assistance and Programming divisions. "Most of my assignments have allowed me to work closely with metropolitan planning organizations, regional transportation planning agencies and local entities as well as Caltrans staff on issues pertinent to our bicycle program, including requirements for use of federal and state funds."

Penny replaced Ken McGuire, who retired after working more than 38 years for Caltrans and six months before she assumed the position. "Ken left a set of impossible-to-fill shoes," she said. "He was in this position for a very long time and seemed to know everyone and everything. I'm sorry we had no overlap or passing of the torch."

Acronyms

For the record, the acronyms on page 1 represent the Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Program, Transportation Enhancements, Bicycle Transportation Account, Regional Surface Transportation Program, Federal Statewide Transportation Improvement Program, State Transportation Improvement Program and Federal Transportation Improvement Program

The demand for funding outstrips the need. For example, requests for Bicycle Transportation Account dollars in the 2011-12 funding cycle exceeded \$42 million, far more than the \$7.2 million available annually.

"This demonstrates the tremendous need for bicycle commute and safety projects," Penny underscored.

Safety is her primary focus, specifically the Strategic Highway Safety Plan that the federal government required each state to adopt to qualify for Safe Routes to Schools and other funding. The goal of the plan is to reduce fatalities on public roadways by making them safer for all users, including bicyclists and pedestrians. Penny praised Ken for his leadership in developing a "Challenge Area" in the Safety Plan for improving bicycling safety. Measures include reducing drunken and distracted driving, improving intersection and interchange safety and enhancing work zone safety.

Challenge Area

"California is so fortunate to have a Challenge Area completely devoted to improving bicycle safety," Penny said. "I feel very strongly that we can't let this opportunity slip away."

Penny spends a lot of time preparing for and attending meetings, including the California Bicycle Advisory Committee she staffs. The committee provides guidance to Caltrans on bicycle issues. She also works closely with the Active Transportation and Livable Communities Group and Complete Streets Task Force.

"While it sometimes seems like meetings and task forces take you away from the 'real' work, I tend to view them as an opportunity to ensure that bicycling needs and requirements are represented and heard," she explained. "This position is a wonderful opportunity to demonstrate the importance of nonmotorized transportation, to strive to reduce bicycling fatalities and injuries by increasing safety-related projects, to bring about innovative solutions, and ensure this sector of the population is not neglected and receives its fair share of funding

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and consideration, especially in implementing the Complete Streets Directive.”

The landmark directive views all transportation improvements as opportunities to improve safety, access and mobility for all travelers in California and recognizes bicycle, pedestrian and transit modes as integral elements of the transportation system.

Specific Goals

Penny’s goals include “maximizing our involvement in increasing bicycle safety in the Strategic Highway Safety Plan in conjunction with Complete Streets as a springboard and justification for additional resources for data collection, training, and education of staff and other agencies.”

There are two areas of concern that Penny has on her radar screen: the rescinding of federal Transportation Enhancements funds in California because bicycle and pedestrian projects that received allotments were not built on time and California’s decline in rating as a bicycle-friendly state by the League of American Bicyclists. The league conducts an evaluation and subsequent ranking to determine if states promote cycling through legislation, policies and programs, create new places to ride, educate motorists and cyclists, and encourage people to bike for transportation and recreation. Unfortunately, California has been slipping, from a seven in 2008 to 20 in 2010.

“What can this office do to help acquire funding or improve delivery of bicycle/pedestrian projects?” she asked. “How can we work together to improve the league rating? I realize these things cannot be accomplished overnight, but feel these areas are vital and look forward to working with SABA and other advocates to achieve these goals.”

Tandem Riders

Outside of work, Penny and her husband, Jim, have been riding their Commotion tandem recreationally for more than 15 years. They enjoy riding centuries and other organized rides. “Bicycling has always been a part of our family activities,” she said. “As is the case with a lot of families, we introduced our son, Chris, now 33, to bicycling via a child seat on the back of dad’s bike. Both my husband and Chris raced BMX for many years. While I don’t profess to be a strong cyclist, I do love it and hope to continue to be an advocate for cycling for many, many more years.”⊗

Teachable Moment, from page 1

corridor, Carlson at H and J streets and J Street at Elvas, is a hub for bicyclists connecting to four heavily biked areas: the CSUS campus, the American River Parkway bike trail and the Riverpark and East Sacramento neighborhoods. Two bicyclists have been killed in collisions with motorists in front of the campus this past year.

Tricia is more determined than ever to make Sacramento more bicycle-friendly by engaging the SABA membership in our top priority – “fixing” the Carlson Corridor. Send Tricia (saba@sacbike.org) your best wishes for a speedy recovery and your ideas on transforming the Carlson Corridor to a safe, convenient and pleasant place to cycle.⊗

Two Bike Projects Recognized

The city of Sacramento’s R Street bicycle and pedestrian bridge and the North Natomas Transportation Management Association, including its mobile bike service station, were recently honored as 2011 Clean Air Champions by Breathe California of Sacramento-Emigrant Trails.

The R Street bridge and Association received the Smart Growth and Citizen Group awards, respectively, during Breathe California’s annual Clean Air Luncheon May 20 at California State University, Sacramento.

The bridge is a converted rail overpass that provides bicyclists and pedestrians safe and car-free access over Interstate 5 between the Sacramento River Trail and the increasingly redeveloped R Street area. Funding for this project included a \$432,899 state Bicycle Transportation Account grant. Previously owned by the California Department of Parks and Recreation, the bridge was transferred to the city after years of negotiations.

The customized, pedal-powered bike repair shop plays a key role in encouraging Natomas residents to travel by bicycle.⊗



Top: The prize-winning mobile bike service station. Photo by Mellissa Meng. Bottom: The R Street bridge in August 2009 just before it was striped and officially opened for traffic. SABA file photo

Member Profile

Brian Acord

By Teresa Giffen

On a recent Sunday in June, nearly 350 cyclists gathered in Roseville to ride in support of Matt Wietrick, an avid local cyclist who was struck by a car and seriously injured in early February. To help offset medical expenses, participants donated what they could afford. Impressively, this sum totaled about \$12,500.



Brian Acord. Photo by Krysta Rogers

Working diligently behind the scenes to coordinate this event was Brian Acord, Matt's friend and fellow cyclist. Over the course of 11 weeks, he worked with other lead volunteers to plan, publicize and gather sponsorship for the ride.

"We put this thing together to raise money, but we also wanted to show Matt that we care about him," Brian said. "It's a big deal for someone who's been injured to feel morally supported."

Brian speaks from experience. In 2005, a run-in with a motorist in Humboldt County sent him to the hospital and kept him from riding for six months. "It was nowhere near as bad as what Matt's going through, but it made me understand how important support from the cycling community can be."

When Brian moved to Sacramento in 2007, he was eager to meet up with fellow cyclists and joined SABA immediately. He is also an active member of Cycle Folsom, a 200-member group that recently pledged — and surpassed — 35,355 miles in the May is Bike Month Challenge, earning it third place among other bike teams and clubs. More than 1,000 of those miles belonged to Brian.

Brian also recently added racing to his collection of bike

activities, riding for Folsom Bike's road cycling team. He has placed in the top 10 or 15 in all seven races he's entered since January.

A resident of Rancho Cordova, Brian commutes by bike two or three days per week to the Department of Fish and Game where he works as a wildlife biologist, a career path inspired by his enthusiastic interest in birds and bird watching. "When I'm not riding or working, I'm birding," he said, noting that the American River Parkway is a fine venue for aspiring bird watchers.

And as you can probably imagine, birding isn't the only reason the American River Parkway is attractive to Brian. "My partner Krysta and I specifically bought a house close to the American River Parkway because we bike commute. She also runs in the park, and we go on birding walks in River Bend Park."

While Brian said that his primary reason for cycling is staying fit — he logs about 150 miles per week — he also credited its environmental benefits. "Cycling is a great form of transportation that has less of an impact on our natural environment. As a wildlife biologist, this is important to me."⊗

Big Decision On Regional Parks Coming Up

By Lea Brooks

On July 19, the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors is scheduled to respond to the Grassroots Working Group's recommendation to allow voters the opportunity to decide if they support a new independent park district that would take over the regional parks system, including the American River Parkway, and a dedicated new funding source.

After a year of study, the Grassroots Working Group presented its recommendations to the board May 24 and requested a quick response because state legislation must be enacted this year to enable a vote on the November 2012 ballot. Organized by the Save the American River Association, the group of volunteers developed its recommendations to rescue the American River Parkway and other regional park facilities from further deterioration from lack of funding for operations and maintenance. SABA is participating in this group.

A public opinion survey of 600 likely November 2012 voters conducted earlier this year on behalf of the group found that 62 percent found regional parks are extremely or very important and 73 percent support funding for regional parks. Those surveyed preferred an independent district and an increase in the sales tax. The group has recommended a 0.1 percent increase in the sales tax, or 1 penny for every \$10 of taxable sales.

Without a stable, long-term source of funding, we can expect the parkway between Discovery Park and Hazel Avenue, including the bike trail, and other regional park facilities to continue to deteriorate. The group fears that the county will divest its responsibility to nonprofits, cities and local park districts, resulting in a fragmented parks and open space system with no connectivity.

More information on the Grassroots effort is posted at www.sarariverwatch.org/grassroots.html. ⊗



Rancho Cordova Bridge Opening. On May 18, the city of Rancho Cordova celebrated the grand opening of the extension of International Drive to Sunrise Boulevard over the Folsom South Canal Trail. Dignitaries included U.S. Rep. Dan Lundgren of Gold River, Sacramento County Supervisor Don Nottoli and SABA Executive Director Tricia Hedahl as well as one very cute young cyclist. Top photo by Troy Holt/City of Rancho Cordova



SABA table at the May 28 Rominger West Winery fund-raiser in Davis for the Norcal AIDS ride. Photo by Sue Teranishi

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Regional Parks' share of Measure A.

County Department of Transportation (DOT) staff confirmed that discussions are under way for them to assume at least some responsibility for Measure A bike trail projects. DOT staffs the City-County Bicycle Advisory Committee (SacBAC), which worked with Regional Parks over the past year to develop a ranking system for Measure A projects to ensure the funds are spent appropriately.

Only Bright Spot

The only bright spot in this murky situation is that the already decimated ranger force will not be further slashed. A proposal to cut two more ranger positions and a park maintenance worker was rejected. Instead, these positions will be retained and funded with Habitat Restoration Program funds as recommended by the Recreation and Park Commission. These funds are traditionally earmarked for land purchases.

In mid-June there were 14 ranger positions, including one ranger manager, two ranger supervisors and 11 patrol rangers to cover the parkway seven days a week. Regional Parks is currently without a chief ranger. Steve Flannery retired in March and his successor is on medical leave. Ranger supervisors John Havicon and Randy Lewis are doing their best to keep the ship afloat.

In contrast, the Grassroots Working Group's recent Final Report of the Public Safety and Resource Protection Task Force concluded that 25 rangers are needed for minimum protection. This group, a committee of volunteers organized by the Save the American River Association, is working on a long-term, stable source of funding for Regional Parks. See related story on page 4.

Questions about the implications of budget cuts on Regional Parks submitted by SABA to the Board of Supervisors were answered by Rob Leonard, administrator of the county's Municipal Services Agency that includes Regional Parks. Excerpts from his response follow:

"We are now in the process of recruiting a new ranger manager. When filled, it is planned for this position to be actively engaged in field activities. We are also in the process of examining the roles of the ranger assistants to determine if they can be used in a way to allow the rangers to focus more time on priority needs. Over the past several months we have augmented the rangers with Department of Human Assistance welfare fraud investigators. This action has allowed rangers to focus on other needs of the ARP.

"Staff changes and reductions will result in changes in some individuals who have interacted with stakeholder groups in the past. I assure you that there will continue to be interaction and exchange."

SABA is deeply concerned over the loss of Regional Parks' institutional memory and our ability to communicate with county staff about the parkway. It's unclear to whom violations of the ARP Plan should be reported, who will review the complaints and determine appropriate action. As functions previously handled by Regional Parks are spread to other departments and possibly outside contractors, how will we and other advocacy groups track what's going on and ensure the county is transparent in how public funds are being spent?⊗

Sacramento County Continues To Deliberate General Plan Update

By Jordan Lang

The Sacramento County Board of Supervisors is holding hearings on a new growth-management approach proposed by county staff in March. The next hearing for the General Plan Update is scheduled for July 20 at 2:30 p.m. To be approved under this proposed approach, the master plan must demonstrate that it will meet minimum standards as a “complete community” in which residents can meet their daily needs using any mode of transportation: walking, biking, mass transit and vehicles.

Since 2004, Sacramento County has been working to update its General Plan. The effort focused for many years on how much urban growth to allow and where and when it should happen. But over the last several years, the housing-industry collapse and the ensuing economic recession have forced that focus to change. Since 2004, new laws to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to emphasize better regional planning have also contributed to the change.

The changes in the development environment are causing a shift from focusing on the quantity of development to the quality of our urban and suburban growth.

Since March, county staff and the Board of Supervisors have focused more on how growth is planned and how it is built. This new focus will better meet the needs of residents, now and in the future, and better address new state and federal requirements and advances in regional planning and development practices.

Staff’s proposed criteria for master plan approval include several features of great importance to bicycle riders: a prominent pedestrian-bicycle network; interconnected streets with block lengths of 400 feet or less; few cul-de-sacs; 90 percent of all housing units within one mile of schools, stores, jobs and other key destinations; and 75 percent of units within a half-mile of transit service.

Bicyclists should support this new approach to growth management in Sacramento County. ☸



The Rex Ride on June 12 attracted SABA members and other American River Parkway supporters to raise \$48,000 for projects that vitalize and preserve the parkway. Steve and Peggy Rex, shown in top photo, founded the annual event in 2004 to help soften the effects of severe budget reductions. In bottom photo, from left, Skip Amerine, John Whelan and Doug Grandy enjoy the fund-raiser at William Pond Park.



The Amgen Tour of California thrilled bicycle enthusiasts in Folsom on May 17, left, and downtown Sacramento on May 16. Photo by AJ Tendick

Openings on SacBAC

SABA members are encouraged to apply for two county openings on the Sacramento City-County Bicycle Advisory Committee (SacBAC). The application and more details are available at <http://www.sccob.saccounty.net/pages/boards.html>.

Longtime SABA member David Lively was recently appointed to a county opening. David was an original member of SacBAC when it was created in 1996 and decided to return after six years. David, a longtime bicycle commuter and former Caltrans traffic operations manager, said he wanted to rejoin the committee to work for better bicyclist education, enforcement and more bike lanes.

SacBAC advises the Board of Supervisors and Sacramento City Council on implementation of the Bikeway Master Plan and other bicycle issues. The committee is comprised of six county and six city representatives. It meets from 6 to 8 p.m. on the second Tuesday of the month at the County Department of Transportation, 906 G St., Suite 510. ☺

SABA Rocks During May is Bike Month

On May 19, SABA volunteers parked numerous bikes at a very well attended BikeFest on the west steps of the State Capitol, upper photo. Larry Robinson and Jan Bee welcomed bicyclists to the SABA Energizer Station at Carlson and J streets in Sacramento during the morning commute. ☺



July SABA Volunteer Opportunities

Help Park Bicycles

July 8-

Friday Night Concert in the Park, 4:30 to 9:30 p.m., Cesar Chavez Plaza, 10th and J, Sacramento.

July 14-

Thursday Volunteer Night, Help stuff envelopes and prep for mailing, between 5 and 8 p.m. Help for an hour or two or three...whatever fits your schedule. SABA office, 909 12th St., Suite 116. We will have snacks.

July 15-

Friday Night Concert in the Park, 4:30 to 9:30 p.m., Cesar Chavez Plaza, 10th and J, Sacramento.

July 22-

Friday Night Concert in the Park, 4:30 to 9:30 p.m., Cesar Chaves Plaza, 10th and J, Sacramento.

July 29 -

Friday Night Concert in the Park, 4:30 to 9:30 p.m., Cesar Chavez Plaza, 10th and J, Sacramento. Please RSVP to SABA Volunteer Coordinator Larry Robinson at volunteersaba@gmail.com. ☺

Sacramento Area Bicycle Advocates Membership Application

Please fill in, include your check payable to "SABA," and mail to:

SABA

**909 12th Street, Suite 116
Sacramento, CA 95814**

I want to be a part of an organization that is doing things for cyclists and the community.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone (home): (____) _____ - _____

Phone (work): (____) _____ - _____

E-mail address: _____

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Regional Parks in Turmoil;
Collision a "teachable moment"
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Eastern Avenue Update County Confirms Motorist Safety Top Priority

By Lea Brooks

The December 2010 *Squeaky Wheel* featured an article by former SABA Executive Director Walt Seifert about how Sacramento County last summer eliminated the bike lane on the west side of Eastern Avenue between Arden Way and Fair Oaks Boulevard, made sections of the bike lane on the other side substandard by reducing them to three feet in width and added insult to injury by rerouting bicyclists to a frontage road for another stretch.

Why? So the county could stripe a two-way, left-turn lane as part of a project that was described by staff to the City-County Bicycle Advisory Committee (SacBAC) after the fact as a routine overlay project. As Walt said in his article, "To give the extra space to motorists, it tooketh away from bicyclists."

The county took this action even though Eastern Avenue is in the Bikeway Master Plan. County staff did not notify SacBAC, which advises the City Council and Board of Supervisors on implementation of the plan and other bicycle issues.

In January, county Department of Transportation (SacDOT) Director Mike Penrose responded to SABA Executive Director Tricia Hedahl's letter criticizing the federal stimulus overlay project. "SacDOT had received several requests from the area

residents over the years to install a two-way, left-turn lane in this section of Eastern Avenue to enhance the safety of traffic accessing the roadway to/from the numerous residential streets," he wrote. "Also, the remainder of Eastern Avenue (north of Arden Way) already has a two-way, left-turn lane and residents desired to have similar striping in this segment. SacDOT took the opportunity with this paving project to have this striping change accomplished without having to grind and scar the pavement surface."

SacBAC sent a critical letter about the project to the Board of Supervisors in February. In a response received by SacBAC in May, Penrose apologized for not reviewing the project with SacBAC prior to changing the bike lanes and noted that new language was added to the Bikeway Master Plan: "Consult with SacBAC on any project that eliminates or reduces bikeways or facilities prior to project implementation."

Penrose continued: "I assure you the work done on Eastern Avenue was not a routine overlay project. The merits of adding the two-way, left-turn lane to reduce preventable accidents were carefully weighed against preserving a Class II bike lane when the frontage road provides an alternate route that meets the needs of most bicyclists. Eastern Avenue remains open to bicyclists with a short detour onto the frontage road for a half of a mile between Puente Way and Arden Way."

The county will continue to monitor all bicycle accidents along Eastern Avenue and propose appropriate measures as needed, he added. ☼