

STAFF REPORT

SUBJECT: Bikesharing Program

MEETING DATE: June 17, 2010

AGENDA ITEM: 6J

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Receive report on efforts to implement a bikesharing program in the City of Santa Barbara.

STAFF CONTACT: Kent Epperson

SUMMARY:

Bikeshare programs are comprised of a fleet of bicycles distributed throughout the community made available for use for free or for a small hourly fee. Bikesharing first originated in Europe several years ago but is now in operation in cities such as Chicago, New York City, Portland, Washington DC, Denver and Minneapolis. At the April 2010 SBCAG Board Meeting, Supervisor Wolf inquired about plans for a bikesharing program in Santa Barbara. On May 19, 2010, in response to this inquiry, the City of Santa Barbara Transportation Department held an information meeting to discuss previous and future considerations for launching a bikesharing program in Santa Barbara. There is no funding in place to implement bikesharing in Santa Barbara, however Gravity Cycle, a Bikeshare Consultant, has volunteered to research some creative funding options that may make bikesharing more feasible in Santa Barbara.

DISCUSSION:

City staff has been working on a bikesharing project on and off since 2001, with presentations made to introduce the concept at both the Transportation and Circulation Committee and the Downtown Parking Committee.

At the time of initial project development, staff was unable to find a successful model that did not suffer from excessive maintenance costs, poor aesthetics, and theft. Since then, technological and mechanical advances in communal bike programs have allowed their implementation in many large cities, including Chicago, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., Paris, and Lyons. The success of these programs has been attributed to the large number of bicycles available, the advanced reservation and accountability software, and the technological improvements related to the bicycles and accompanying bicycle racks.

Member Agencies

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In 2001 a green-bike project was included in the Downtown Parking Program in the amount of \$25,000. Further research proved that this budget would only cover a pilot program for bikestation members. A small budget remains for this pilot, but experience of other cities' shows that such a small project would not yield community benefits in the same way a full scale bike-sharing program would. In the meantime, the Public Works Department implemented a bicycle fleet for City Staff. Since then the bicycle fleet has grown to twelve bicycles that supplement the motor vehicle fleet available for city and personal business.

Because of the success of the City fleet in substituting motor vehicle trips with bicycle trips, expansion of this communal bike program remains a component of future Bikestation membership benefits. However, before pursuing the integration of a fleet bicycle program into the Bikestation operations, which is membership based, staff has determined a need to conduct a Needs Assessment for a larger program, to be made available to the public. The city has also considered a bike-sharing program in it's Capital Improvement Program several times, but it has not been highly prioritized.

In both 2007 and 2008, City staff applied for funding (\$100,000) to conduct a needs assessment for a bike-sharing program. The grant application was not successful. This application was made based on the program's consistency with the City of Santa Barbara Circulation Element.

On May 19, 2010, in response to Supervisor Janet Wolf's inquiry about bikesharing in Santa Barbara, the City of Santa Barbara Transportation Department held an information meeting to discuss considerations for launching a bikesharing program in Santa Barbara. As part of the discussions at the meeting, Gravity Cycles, a bikeshare consultant, was invited to share their experience planning and implementing bikeshare programs around the country. Gravity Cycles is interested in providing bikeshare program management services in Santa Barbara, through a cooperative effort of local nonprofit organizations, the public sector and private businesses. Gravity Cycles described a variety of financial strategies used to fund bikeshare programs in North America, including generating revenue from advertising on the bikeshare kiosks, membership fees, public-private partnerships and grants. Gravity cycles plans to continue to do market research for the area, and anticipates submitting a request for information to city staff in the next month or so.

COMMITTEE REVIEW: None