

CITY OF SANTA BARBARA WATERFRONT DEPARTMENT

MEMORANDUM

Date: February 18, 2021

To: Harbor Commission

From: Robert J. Dayton, Transportation Planning and Parking Manager, Public Works

Subject: **Bicycle Share Pilot Program**

RECOMMENDATION:

That Harbor Commission receive a presentation by Public Works staff on City Council's Bicycle Share Pilot Program, its history, and how it is currently being rolled out to the public.

DISCUSSION:

The General Plan directs the implementation of a bike share program, which has also been requested by the Transportation and Circulation Committee as well as the general public at large. City staff has delayed the implementation of bike share for various reasons, including the high costs of programs, the untenable aesthetics, and the general question of program viability in Santa Barbara. In recent years, bike share programs have been eclipsed by less safe electric scooter share programs.

In May 2019, City Council established an ordinance to regulate shared mobility, primarily to prevent rouge launches of electric scooters. The Shared Mobility Ordinance includes parameters for a bike share program. Council directed staff to move forward with development of a Bicycle Share Pilot Program, and to allow a permitted operator to provide self-service rental bikes in the City of Santa Barbara for a maximum of three years.

In December 2019, BCycle was selected and issued a permit for operation in the City of Santa Barbara. BCycle was selected for specific reasons. The primary reason was that BCycle provides a docking system as opposed to the latest "dockless" bike share programs. Dockless bike share programs mean that bikes are left anywhere in the city. While this is good for ridership destination preference, it often leaves piles of bikes in disarray, scattered across the city. Staff did not believe this appropriate for Santa Barbara. BCycle's docking system is also the least noticeable docking system on the market. It's only 30 inches high and looks like other bike racks that might be found in the public right of way. The BCycle system is also all electric. The electric bike is rapidly becoming a popular alternative to vehicle use because more types of people can travel further and up and down elevation variations with less effort. Having an electric, pedal-assist bike share means that more people will use it, and offers a higher probability of success. Finally, BCycle is owned by one of Santa Barbara's residents who also owns Trek Bicycles. The

local owner's commitment to Santa Barbara is that the program will be run well and have the quality the City expects. For these reasons and others, Council approved of the selection of BCycle to try out bike share in Santa Barbara.

We say "try out" bike share because this is a pilot program. We do not know if it will be successful, but have chosen what we feel is the best operator for success.

Staff presented the Bicycle Share Pilot Program to the Planning Commission on November 19, 2020, and were issued a programmatic Coastal Development Permit (CDP) to install bike share docks within the Coastal Zone. This is limited to the roadway right-of-way and other City properties. This decision was appealed on November 30, 2020. On February 2, 2021, City Council denied the appeal, and provided further support for the Program and additional direction regarding the implementation of bike share docks in the Coastal Zone and throughout the City. We understand that Council's decision is being appealed to the California Coastal Commission.

What is Bike Share?

Bike Share is a point-to-point service that is meant to compete with the car and reduce traffic congestion for those that prefer to drive. Bikes are spread throughout the City and people use the bikes to get from one location to the other. People only pay for the one-way trip (as opposed to paying until the bike is returned to the original location). Bike Share is ideal for trips that are a little too long to walk. Bike Share also reduces parking demand, freeing up parking for those to drive. The public is encouraged to get a membership costing \$150 per year for unlimited 30 minute rides. Although a much smaller percentage of use, tourists also use bike share and pay \$7 for 30 minutes (\$14 per hour) so as not to compete with private bike rental companies, which provide the majority of tourist-based bike ridership.

The bike share system, when complete, will involve the installation of around 500 docks that serve a fleet of around 250 pedal-assist e-bikes. BCycle's proprietary e-bikes are governed to a maximum assist of 17 mph, and as pedal-assist bikes, do require user effort to reach this speed. Users must be 18 years old to sign up for a membership, and though riders 18 and over are not required to wear helmets in California, BCycle encourages safer riding by offering helmet incentives to their members. BCycle's technological platform and equipment design are field tested and proven, and robust enough to withstand years of public use in many extreme climates. They have proven success in Madison, Wisconsin, with a similar e-bike bike share.

Bike Share in the Coastal Zone

About one third of all bike docks are planned in the Coastal Zone. Santa Barbara residents use the Waterfront frequently as a destination for both employment as well as recreation. A large portion of the community also lives in the Coastal Zone. BCycle anticipates heavy use of bike share in the Waterfront. It also anticipates the Harbor as a desired bike share

destination. Public Works agrees that the Harbor has long been a place to encourage as a destination in the Waterfront. We have been working with Waterfront staff on two locations in the Harbor and are open to placing docks where desired. However, we are also interested in hearing Harbor Commission's views on the matter.

Prepared by: Samuel Furtner, Associate Transportation Planner, Public Works