

# CHAPTER 3

## Part I: Community Input

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### The Bicycle System Today

In order to evaluate the success of bicycling in the city, the physical facilities must be considered in combination with the community's perceptions of existing obstacles and impediments to travel by bicycle. The findings in this chapter were used to develop goals and policies (in Chapter 4) that will increase the use of bicycles as a mode of transportation.

#### The Bicycle Workshop

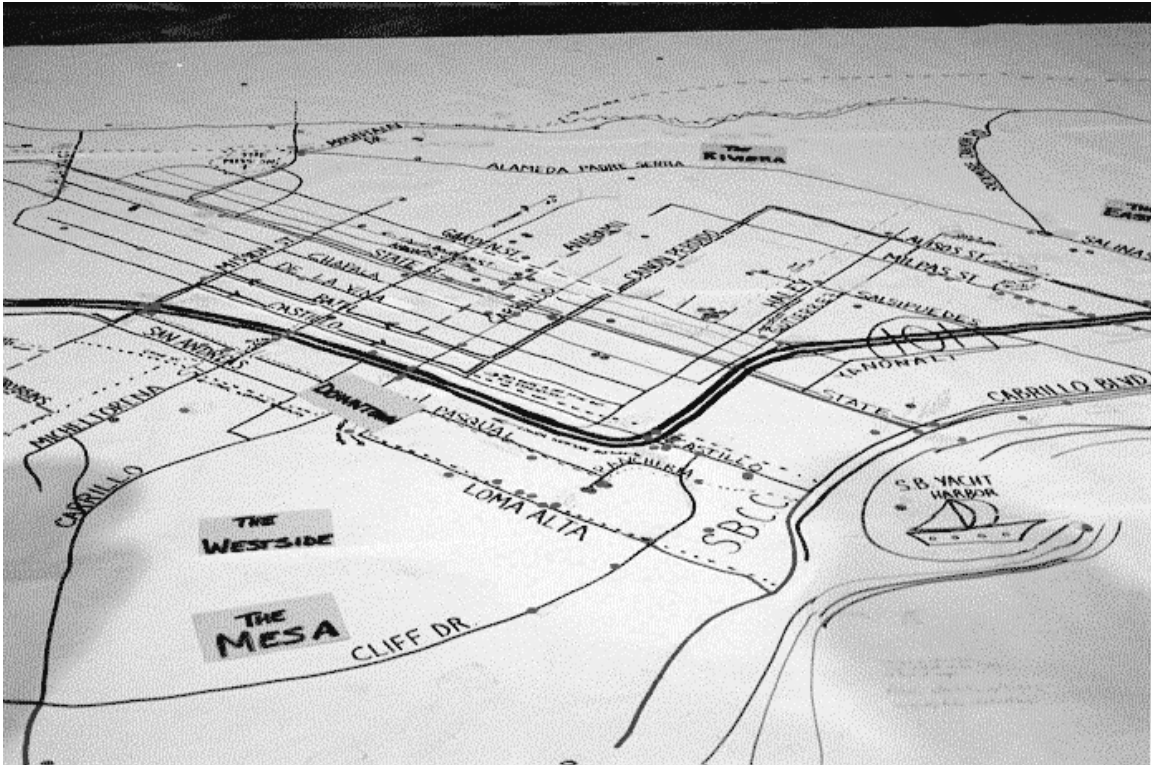
Community input for the update of the Bicycle Master Plan was initiated with a bicycle workshop in May 1996. The City and County of Santa Barbara conducted the workshop for the purpose of determining the needs and desires of people currently using the bicycle for travel. Fifty-five community members participated in this one-day workshop. Most of the participants were men, and the most common age-group was "between 36 and 45." The group was committed to bicycling as a viable form of transportation. Sixty-four percent of them considered themselves to be advanced riders and thirty-three percent considered themselves intermediate riders. These participants provided important information about preferences for bicycle routes and sign design and identified signage needs as well as safety concerns.

#### Questionnaire

Through a simple questionnaire, the participants explained that their most important selection criteria for choosing bike routes are automobile volume, bicycle lane availability, and directness of route. When asked to suggest improvements that would make their destinations more bicycle accessible, these riders requested safety improvements at particular locations, facility expansion, and a sign program to minimize conflicts between bicyclists and other travelers.

#### "Show Us Where"

A large-scale map of the South Coast from west Goleta to Summerland was created for the floor of the meeting room. The map measured 20 by 60 feet. Workshop participants were encouraged to walk on the map and locate their home and work site with colored dot stickers to illustrate typical origins and destinations. Then they used colored markers to note existing barriers on the street network that discourage or make it difficult to bike between home and work. Participants also identified places that were desirable to bicycle, but currently difficult to access. Staff used the map to investigate areas needing improvement in the field and to develop specific solutions for the Bicycle Master Plan.



## The South Coast Signage Plan

The workshop included input on developing the South Coast Bicycle Signage Plan. Draft bike routes for the signage plan were illustrated on the map for comment. The five major routes run east/west with north/south feeder routes. The routes were named so riders could identify destinations or locations by the route signs. The five major routes are the Coastal Route, the Crosstown Route, the State Street Route, the North Goleta Route, and the Foothill Route.

Feedback on the signage plan was extremely positive. The workshop participants even voted on the sign design theme, which is an upright rectangular shape with a mission revival feature at the top. The signs, which are similar in size to those used to direct automobiles, give the bicycle more prominence on the road. Not just for bicycles, the signs communicate the presence of cyclists to motorists, as well as showing the way to popular destinations. Workshop attendants pointed out that, in addition to directing cyclists, the signs would educate all road users in the community. The signage program was being installed at the time this document was under final review.

## Circulation Element Update Process

Initially, the Bicycle Master Plan development was undertaken at the same time as the updating of the Circulation Element. Because of the challenge of reaching consensus in the Circulation Element update process, however, the Bicycle Master Plan was put on hold. Bicycling continued to be a topic of continued discussion within the Circulation Element update process.

A 22-member consensus group, composed of a wide range of neighborhood and business representatives, was formed to guide the Circulation Element update process. Each person in the consensus group represented a group of people in the community. As such, the process took

many years and represented an extensive effort to involve the community in the transportation planning of its City. Many views on what direction the City should take to improve transportation were represented. The comprehensive goal and vision statement that the group developed reads,

"While sustaining or increasing economic vitality and quality of life, Santa Barbara should be a city in which alternative forms of transportation and mobility are so available and so attractive that use of an automobile is a choice, not a necessity. To meet this challenge, the City is rethinking its transportation goals and land use policies, and focusing its resources on development of balanced mobility solutions."

This vision statement and accompanying goals have set the context for the City's transportation future. The fourth goal of the Circulation Element, to "Increase Bicycling as a Transportation Mode," is addressed in Chapter 4 of the Element. This chapter directs that the Bicycle Master Plan be updated. The City Council approved the Circulation Element in October 1997, enabling the research and development of the Bicycle Master Plan to continue.

## Community Survey

In the fall of 1997, 65 leaders of community groups and schools were contacted and invited to complete surveys that allowed them the opportunity to communicate their opinions about the bikeway system. Bicycle rental and retail shops were also invited to participate. In total, 40 responded. This series of surveys was proposed in order to expand the information gathering process beyond the circle of those currently using bicycles for travel.

The survey uncovered barriers to increased bicycle usage in the community. For example, survey participants were asked, "What are the three biggest obstacles discouraging bicycle commuting in your area?" The responses to this question are shown in Table 3-1. Clearly, many in the Santa Barbara community are discouraged from riding because of a perception that traffic conditions on our streets are unsafe for bicyclists.

**Table 3-1**

**Number of survey respondents  
indicating that an obstacle discourages commuting**

Obstacle	Number of responses
Dangerous traffic conditions	24
Not enough bike lanes on street	15
It's not convenient	13
Too far to ride	12
Not enough off-street bikeways	11
Hills	8
Insecure parking facilities	6
Dangerous freeway crossings	5
Lack of changing and locker facilities	5

Total Number of respondents = 40

Survey respondents were asked to indicate what bicycle improvements should be important to the City of Santa Barbara in the future. The construction of more bike lanes was the item that respondents selected most often. Table 3-2 shows what school and community group representatives selected as improvements that should be important to the City of Santa Barbara.

**Table 3-2**

**Important Bicycle Improvements**

Number of people choosing strategy	
32	More bike lanes
30	Improved maintenance of existing system
30	Secure parking facilities
29	More bike paths off street
29	Integration of bicycle needs into plan reviews at City
28	Intermodal linkages
28	A crosstown route downtown
27	Better access crossing freeway
27	A bicycle coordinator to oversee implementation and maintenance of the bike system
26	Driver education
25	More law enforcement of the bicycle
16	Public locker and changing facilities near popular destinations
	Total Number of respondents = 40

In all, we found that most of the people who responded to the survey believe that the bicycle can become a reasonable alternative to the automobile for travel within the City. There are some people in the community that do not support the increased use of bicycles, but they represent a small proportion of our respondents.

The most profound obstacle to increased ridership that can be addressed at this time is the perception that traffic conditions in the City are dangerous for bicycle travel. Specifically, people have safety concerns about automobiles and road quality. Other factors that are discouraging bicycle use, such as lack of storage space on bicycles, fear of theft, inconvenience and tight schedules are secondary concerns. Finally, at this time, people don't see bicycling as necessarily important to reducing traffic congestion, but they do see other benefits of riding, such as getting exercise and improving the environment.

A review of existing conditions and policies is conducted in the next section in order to provide background on the current environment for bicycle travel. Field inventories and roadway surveys provide supplemental data to support the findings of the community input.