

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DOWNTOWN LONG BEACH SEPARATED BIKEWAYS SET TO OPEN APRIL 23 WITH COMMUNITY CELEBRATION

LONG BEACH, Calif. (April 20, 2011) –The first separated bikeways in Southern California are set to open for public riding on Saturday, April 23.

Two miles of separated bike lanes are now in place in downtown Long Beach on Broadway (heading east) and 3rd Street (heading west), between Alamitos Avenue and Golden Avenue. Bicycles traveling on the two one-way downtown thoroughfares are separated from vehicle traffic by a painted median island and an asphalt curb adjacent to on-street parking. Additional greenery accenting the two bikeways has been planted in pots designed by Long Beach artist Trace Fukuhara.

The City of Long Beach is encouraging motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians to be aware of new traffic signals, turn lanes and other features along the two thoroughfares. Most intersections along Broadway and 3rd Street will have new Bike Signals and protected left-turn signals for vehicles. Bicyclists must obey the new bike signals where present, and may continue through these intersections as long as they have a green bike signal; a red bike signal means “stop.”

The City of Long Beach will have a grand opening ceremony on The Promenade between the separated bikeways on Broadway and 3rd Street from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Opening ceremonies and the official first ride will take place at Noon. Bicyclists of all ages and abilities are invited to participate in the ride and the festivities, which will include a scavenger hunt, a bike safety rodeo for kids, bike decorating, bike tune-ups and a limited screening of Michael Baugh’s film, “Riding Bikes with the Dutch.”

The separated bikeway project is funded by local transportation funds, no general funds are used.

A Healthy, Active Long Beach

Separated bikeways are designed to help cyclists and vehicles share the road more safely. The downtown Long Beach bikeways were installed to encourage people from all parts of the city and beyond to ride bicycles from place to place downtown, to create a more livable community for those who live downtown, and to encourage and promote shopping at local businesses by reducing vehicle speeds.

The Long Beach separated bikeways are part of the city’s commitment to create a more livable, healthy, and active community. This goal requires an investment in infrastructure that encourages people to walk and ride a bike. With the City Council’s vision to become the most bicycle friendly city in America, an investment in this type of bikeway is important to the health and vitality of the community.

“Long Beach continues to demonstrate a cost-effective strategy to improve mobility and the overall quality of life in our city,” Mayor Bob Foster said. “We have taken a leadership role in Southern California in showcasing how well-designed and coordinated bicycle projects create multiple benefits for a city. As a bicyclist myself, I look forward to seeing our residents and visitors on these new bike paths.”

“Separated bicycle lanes provide an important additional level of safety to prevent collisions and provide a level of comfort for bicyclists in urban settings,” said Vice Mayor Suja Lowenthal. “I strongly encourage Long Beach residents, commuters and tourists to explore a safe and healthy bicycle ride along these separated bicycle lanes. These lanes, along with existing and planned transportation improvements

throughout the city, provide new ways to enjoy downtown businesses and our many distinctive neighborhoods.”

“This bicycle project is attractive and will significantly increase safety for cyclists, motorists and even pedestrians,” said Councilmember Robert Garcia. “While these new physical features are in place, drivers and cyclists also have the responsibility to continue obeying all traffic laws. The more ways we can improve safe travel in our city, the more we can promote an atmosphere of pleasant shopping and dining experiences, close-knit neighborhoods, and a sense of community.”

A Positive Impact for Business

Many businesses in the downtown Long Beach area are eager for bike lanes to open both to help alleviate sidewalk congestion and to attract customers who might not wish to drive and park downtown.

“With our new downtown location now open, Berlin by Portfolio Coffeehouse gets daily comments from customers who finally feel comfortable enough to ride their bike to downtown thanks to the new bikeways,” said Kerstin Kansteiner, owner, Portfolio Coffeehouse, 420 E. 4th Street (<http://berlin-coffeehouse.com/>). “We actually have customers who currently do not own a bike who are going out to buy a bicycle to ride to our coffee house because the bike lanes make them feel safe and protected.”

“The bike lines will have a positive impact in the downtown area because it will help reduce parking problems, encourage a money-saving means of transportation and help inspire a healthier community environment,” said Lisa Hernandez, owner, Long Beach Depot For Creative ReUse, 320 Elm Ave. (www.thelongbeachdepot.org). “With so many pedestrians, wheelchair users and others sharing limited sidewalk space, having motorists and cyclists safely sharing the road just makes sense.”

For some of the more than 43,000 people employed by downtown Long Beach businesses, the separated lanes will make biking to work a practical option.

“I’m a recreational bicyclist, and the new bike lanes are perfect for my work commute. With the time change this month and the separated bike-only lines open, I’m planning to bicycle to work daily,” said Kelli Pezzelle, a grant writer for LINC Housing who commutes 3 miles round trip. “We already have more people in our office who have begun biking to work this past year, and I think the bikeways might encourage more trips downtown for more social activities.”

An Engaged Bicycling Community

Long Beach has been recognized as a Bicycle Friendly Community by the League of American Bicyclists. California State University Long Beach was recently awarded Gold-Level status as a Bicycle Friendly Business and Silver-Level status as a Bicycle Friendly University by the same organization.

Since 2009, the city through its Bike Long Beach public works program, has added 70 miles of bike lanes, bike boulevards, sharrows and separated bikeways in an effort to get people of all skill levels out of their cars and back onto their bicycles. Adding new bike facilities encourages more people to ride their bikes. One year after the green sharrow lane was added on 2nd Street in Belmont Shore, bicycle ridership was up 100% with no increase in vehicle-bicycle confrontations .

“Long Beach is in the vanguard of U.S. cities that are promoting cycling to better manage congestion, air quality, and health. They are building a city with the kind of high quality of life that will attract new business and families to the area,” said Andy Clarke, president, League of American Bicyclists “As the

population of every city and region continues to grow in this country, those who thrive will be the ones offering real transportation choices, great streets and public spaces: Long Beach is doing that right now and the dividends in the future will be huge. Long Beach is on a great path to increase bike use, improve overall traffic safety, and create the kind of city that will thrive in the 21st century because of its quality of life.”

The separated bikeways are a pilot program and part of the City’s plans to provide throughways for Long Beach residents and visitors of all ages and skill levels to ride safely throughout the city. The separated bikeways were approved as a 12-month demonstration project by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the California Traffic Control Devices Committee (CTCDC). The project allows the City to test the safety and efficiency of this new design.

Here are the key safety tips that drivers, bicyclists and pedestrians should know about using the new separated bikeways.

For bicyclists:

- Always travel in the same direction as car traffic – 3rd Street and Broadway are one-way streets, and the bikeways are also one-way.
- Cyclists in the bikeway must always obey the bike signals. They operate the same as a regular signal: A green bike signal means “go,” and a red bike signal means “stop.”
- Be aware and alert for people in cars that may cross the separated bikeways to enter or exit driveways and alleys.
- Making a right turn is safe and easy. Depending on your comfort level you may:
 1. *Operate as a vehicular cyclist.* Exit where there is a break in the protective median prior to your right turn. When safe, merge right and turn at the intersection from the right lane. Bicyclists are NOT permitted to cross through the painted medians.
 2. *Operate as a pedestrian.* Stop in the bike lane at the intersection. Dismount and walk your bike in the crosswalk as a pedestrian.

For drivers:

- Be aware and alert for bicyclists and pedestrians when crossing the separated bikeways to enter or exit driveways and alleys, or when merging to turn left. Driveways, alleys and left turns at uncontrolled intersections will be marked by *green paint* to alert people on bikes and in cars that they must share the road safely.
- Almost every intersection has a protected left-turn signal to separate drivers making a left turn from bicyclists who are going straight. Always obey the left-turn signals – turn only when the arrow is green.

###