A Letter from Carolynn Johnson, our new Executive Director

Dear COAST Members,

I’m so excited to join COAST as the new Executive Director. I’ve been so impressed with the enthusiasm and ambition for sustainable mobility across the city and delighted to be working with you all to organize and align our efforts and continue all your great work.

I moved here with my family last summer from New York City where I’ve worked at international environmental non-profits for the past twelve years, including the past three years at an organization called the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy. Through that position I’ve been able to work with sustainable mobility professionals from around the world to deliver high-quality mobility projects that help transform rapidly growing cities in Brazil, China, Indonesia, Mexico, and Tanzania into livable, equitable, and sustainable places. In addition, I’ve held positions at some amazing organizations like the Rainforest Alliance (you may recognize their green frog certification on coffees, chocolates, and teas), New York City’s Office of Sustainability, and the United Nations. All of these experiences have given me incredible exposure to world-class operations and projects and I’m excited to bring that experience and those ideas here to Santa Barbara.

As I start this journey, I hope to hear from all of you. What do you see for Santa Barbara’s future on sustainable mobility? What barriers and challenges do you have in your commute or getting around the city by walking, biking or bus? How can we improve regional access in sustainable ways and keep spreading the energy and passion from Santa Barbara across the region? Let’s work together on these important and challenging questions.

Cheers!
Carolynn

A Milestone for the Eastside

By Ana Rico and Eva Inbar

Ribbon cutting at the new Montecito Street Bridge in the Eastside! This bridge was so narrow that people had to sprint across in the traffic lane to avoid being hit by buses and trucks. Now it has a bike lane and a sidewalk. We thank the City of Santa Barbara for rebuilding it.

Please visit our blog for photos from our campaign for a new bridge five years ago.
Help us Reimagine State Street!

COAST is busy campaigning for a people-centered State Street! On April 4th, we hosted a successful “Reimagine State Street” event at the Impact Hub as part of the First Thursday celebration.

We wanted to gather feedback on a future State Street pedestrian mall and talk to people about COAST and State Street in general. We put up three large Post-It sheets with the heading “Do You Favor A Pedestrian Mall on State Street?” and drew 3 vertical columns: Yes, No, and Maybe. We also provided markers and smaller Post-Its for comments. The Yes column filled up, so we put up an additional large sheet on the other side of the whiteboard, which also filled up. There was not a single No.

Major themes were desires for musicians and other street performers and artists, street vendors, more benches and places to relax, outdoor dining, activities for kids, and more color, street art and murals. People also commented on opportunities for mixed-use buildings and affordable housing, and suggested more experimental street closures to motor vehicles. We estimate about 75 people attended; you can see their comments at bit.ly/2VU9HVU We also displayed photos and a continuous slide show of pedestrian malls from other cities; we got many “I’ve been there and it’s great!” comments on those malls.

On April 19th—21st, COAST cosponsored the City’s Experiment Weekend on State Street. This novel event started on a Friday night with a light and music show in the State Street underpass. On Saturday, two blocks of State Street were opened to people having fun while being closed to auto traffic. People loved it and business in adjacent stores and restaurants was up by 15%. On Sunday, the weekend concluded with a pop-up showcase. What a great event! We should do this more often.

On May 9th, COAST members helped with the Downtown Innovation Workshop at the Carrillo Recreation Center. The hall was packed with community members ready to discuss issues and ideas on revitalizing State Street. COAST members Joanna Kaufmann and Robert Else facilitated the Transportation and Mobility table. The overall event was a great success, as evidenced by the high spirits and applause for a pedestrian mall concept at the end. Watch for a summary to be published soon by the City.

We thank Assistant City Administrator Nina Johnson for her initiative in organizing these events and working with us. Please visit our blog for a longer version of this article and more photos.

The Joy of Bicycling

By Kim Stanley

We teach a lot of theory in the classroom: how to stay safe while walking and biking, the connection of cars to climate change, how walking and biking are beneficial for physical and mental health, and how walking and biking create community. But another more subtle, arguably more potent strategy for changing the world is turning kids on to the joy of those activities.

I was teaching bike education to Franklin School fourth graders the other day. All these kids came running out from the school at top speed to gather around the bikes; they were so excited for bike ed in P.E.! The kids got ready to ride by completing “toe to head” and their “ABC handlebar quick check.”

We divide the students into two groups. One group heads over to a skills-based course that teaches riders how to start, stop, scan, signal and turn. The other course is the “mobile” course. This looks like follow-the-leader all around the blacktop. On this course, we RIDE. We pick up a little speed, we see how slow we can go, we see how tight we can make a turn, we see if we can give each other high fives. This is the potent stuff-- kids having fun on bikes!
Four years is a long time to wait for a reply! That was the case for active COAST members and New Town Goleta Safety [NTGS] co-chairs, Steve George and Judi Shor. After observing school kids, mall employees, and shoppers all precariously walking alongside cars and trucks through the ‘sidewalk-free’ south section of the Fairview Shopping Center, they duly notified the management requesting a swift and responsible resolution. Imagine their surprise at having every mailed letter, e-mail, and phone call go unanswered over the following four years. Indeed, as the Fairview Center management representative communicated to the office of the Goleta City Manager, “The shopping center management does not respond to suggestions for improvements as a rule.” And further advised “…they do not believe they have an obligation to respond, and therefore do not engage”.

Other chronically unsafe mall conditions were brought to the attention of the Center management including a breach at the west corner of the 76 Station creating a reckless vehicular shortcut into the Center, and the exposed pedestrian-only plaza at the Fairview Theatre that is regularly mistaken as a roadway. NTGS continued to address these casualty-prone areas at their constituent meetings, COAST Advocacy Committee meetings, and with officials of the Goleta City Department of Public Works, City Council, and Design Review Board. Working with the invaluable support and experienced input of COAST’s Eva Inbar, a Fairview Center Pedestrian Safety Rally was ultimately organized for the at-risk public to step up through impactful community action.

On May 10th the public came together to communicate to the Center management and owners their long-standing concern for pedestrian, bicyclist, motorist and shopper safety --and support of its merchants. Rally participants lined the public sidewalks on Fairview and Calle Real (around the Shopping Center) to highlight the multiple safety issues that threaten not only shoppers but the onsite businesses. Rally members included two of the three seniors that recently tripped and fell on the uneven mall sidewalks. All three women sustained serious injuries. Rally support was widespread. Many of the Center businesses simultaneously voiced their frustration over the neglected safety issues endangering their customers with their gratitude for the Rally. The Cajun Kitchen presented the participants with a case of bottled water. Several City leaders, including Mayor Pro Tem Kyle Richards, came by to learn and observe. The Opinions Editor of The SB Independent interviewed Mr. Prochelo of the Fairview Center management, Goleta City officials, and the Rally participants for an article published on May 16th in support of the mall safety initiatives. Passing vehicles showed their support verbally, by honking, and via thumbs-up. It is very true that “It takes a village”. Indeed, NTGS was supported by many local organizations including the Coalition for Sustainable Transportation (COAST), The Goodland Coalition, the Center for Successful Aging (CSA), and Live Oak Unitarian Church.

After countless meetings with community members, advocacy and environmental organizations, Goleta City officials, and 4 years of documented appeals to the Fairview Center management, the time for decisive action, not words, has come to a head. The unabated Shopping Center safety issues have now been widely publicized to the greater community through the success of the Rally and the accompanying media attention. With the imminent addition of the Dollar Tree Store next to Sprouts, the Miners ACE Hardware moving into the vacated Orchard’s location, and the many new area housing developments, Fairview mall traffic will continue to increase. This makes resolving these public safety issues even more critical and time-sensitive.

We are now turning toward our City leadership to help mitigate more Center ‘accidents waiting to happen.’ We are calling upon our elected officials and City leaders to send a clear message to the L.A. management of the Shopping Center that their constituents no longer be unduly put in harm’s way. We are hopeful that strong advocacy by the City will go a long way toward securing these consequential results. Who can accept another inevitable Fairview Center accident, or worse? We’re out of options, excuses . . . and time. The long NTGS road to safety continues.

To learn how you can help, visit NTGS at facebook.com/newtowngoletasafety/ or E-mail: NTGS805@yahoo.com.

Please visit our blog for more rally photos.
You are invited to our Annual Solstice Party

When: June 22nd, 11:30 am to 2 pm
Where: Pacific Premier Bank, 1035 State Street.

We will be watching the parade with front row seats. Lunch and drinks will be served. Watch your e-mail for more news!

Walking Wednesdays 2019

By Barry Remis

We’ve covered a lot of ground already and there’s a lot more to explore, so keep those comfy shoes ready! Here’s where we’ll be going for the rest of the season, every 4th Wednesday:

June 26th – “Community Resilience in Montecito,” with SB Bucket Brigade co-founder and Executive Director Abe Powell.


August 28th – Sansum Clinic’s Gerri French is back with a health-minded walk focusing on healthy and sustainable Downtown restaurants.

September 25th – Our season wraps up with a look at affordable housing options with S.B. Housing Authority’s Rob Fredericks.

Check our website and your inbox for updates and details, and come join us!

We thank our Individual Supporters

We thank these people who joined COAST or renewed their support during the past three months: Neil and Suzanne Ablitt, Fred and Roxana Anson, Sue Fridley, Timothy Harding, Barbara Lindemann, Terri Jo Ortega, Gene Urban, Vijaya Jammalamadaka, Teri Jory, Jason Chapman, Frank Schmidt, Patricia Reilly Stark, Brian Fahnstock, Eva Inbar, Joanna Kaufman, Tony Depaco, Martha Siegel, Brook Eiler, Janice and Rob Thomson.

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