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Q: What was the impetus for the City of Lancaster to develop a new bicycle and pedestrian plan?

A: I guess I would start by saying that this has been an interest of the city staff for quite awhile. We certainly looked at it from a recreational and quality of life point of view, but I would say sadly that the real impetus to doing this was a report, and it confirmed things that we sort of knew but had not had a lot of confirmation on, and that's just quite frankly the sorry state of health in the Antelope Valley generally, Lancaster in particular.

It is pretty clear to us that a lot of that has to do with the physical way that we have laid out things. Not that we set out intentionally to do that. As a society, nobody really sat down and said, "Let's figure out the most unhealthy way we can possibly design our living arrangements," but a series of individual decisions, a lot of things based, I think, on maximizing convenience and thinking about things in only one way have resulted in that.

One of things that really stuck with me when we were discussing this was a person who said, "Well, we seem to always make it easy to do the unhealthy thing and hard to do the healthy thing." I think what we are looking at is -- Let's see if there is a way to kind of change the culture, change the overall approach, change the way we think about things, and let's make it a little more equitable, so that you can do the healthy thing, and not have to put your life in danger or your safety to do that. I hate to say that it is our sorry state of health that spurred that alone, but sometimes it takes that kind of crisis to make progress.

So, I would say that that's probably the driving force behind a lot of it, but I will tell you that from our perspective, we think that the livability of the city, particularly how it competes in the future -- and cities are going to compete in the future for where do people want to live, particularly in an age when there's going to be a certain segment of worker that doesn't have to be a certain place. They are connected electronically or they do the kinds of things that don't require them to physically be at a spot. They can have their choice of all kinds of places. What are they going to pick? We think that cities that consciously make the choice to go towards a livability style -- cities that have made that choice in the past are now reaping the benefits of it -- places like Eugene, Oregon or Portland, that recognized that there are different ways to do it and that you can create a different and better quality of life.

Since we have started down this road, what is amazing to me is the organizations that really want this, even if they didn't know they wanted it. I just read an article about a week ago that the American Association of Retired Persons is now very concerned about how do we get walkability in our communities, because they are starting to

see that not everybody wants to drive. People want to be able to age in place in their communities and they are beginning to see that we haven't necessarily made that possible.

I think back now several years ago. I would have people call me. They say, "I want to move my mother here, but you know what? You don't have any place she can live where she can walk to a grocery store." Or she says, "I don't really consider her safe in her existing neighborhood, but the grocery store is a block away and she knows how to get there and all of that." They are really worried about bringing older parents into this place because they'd be stuck at home all day, no way for them to effectively get around.

I think as the baby boomer population in particular ages -- it's not that nobody thought about this, because people did think about it -- it is just that it didn't seem to be at the forefront of what was important at the time. Now, I will admit it. We are faced with a huge task, not only here, but a lot of places. How do you retrofit some of this? I don't think we are going to be able to effectively retrofit everything, but we have got to make a start somewhere and we think that this is the point that we are going to make that start somewhere. We think that this is the point that we're going to make that start.

Q: The City of Long Beach is using innovative ways of changing their streets and bicycle treatments. What will the City of Lancaster be doing? Will you be using road diets, making some streets bike boulevards, cycle tracks? What kinds of things are the City of Lancaster looking into?

A: The answer to that is we are probably going to consider all of those. We already have and have put in applications for funding to do road diets. We have got some places identified, the council has authorized us to go look at that. So, certainly, that is going to be one of the techniques that we are going to look at. We are looking into the whole colored bike lane issue. We are looking into the concept of are there places, whether it's in new development or trying to retrofit where the bike boulevard approach can be used. As you see on Lancaster Boulevard, we have already gone to the sharrow idea. I was gratified to see people riding their bikes earlier today and actually the cars being able to handle it, so it is possible.

One of the things that I think is beginning to sort of change here and I have to say a lot of it is due to what we've done on Lancaster Boulevard -- I heard for many years, "Well, you can't do that here. You can't do that here because it is not Santa Barbara. You can't do it here because it's not San Diego." It's not this, it's not that. I think what we are beginning to see is that it doesn't really matter that it's not San Diego or it's no Ventura. I mean certainly those places have some great advantages.

When you give people the physical opportunity to do things, they'll do them. You know, I talked with Maria Elena Grado at the Lemon Leaf, and she told me, "I'm getting new customers and you won't believe how I am getting them. People are literally driving to downtown to walk their dogs up and down the sidewalk. And they stop and they look in

my restaurant and they can't stop because they have their dog, but then they are back on Saturday. They didn't know we were here. They didn't know these things were going on."

I think that people in this valley really want a different kind of environment and opportunity to be healthy, an environment where they can be active, but we haven't physically given them many of those choices. We're going to start trying to do that.

Q: Are some of those local businesses, especially the ones on the BLVD and in some other locations, considering bike parking?

A: I haven't specifically heard whether they are doing that. I do know that as a city we are looking at how to incorporate that into our overall management plan for parking, quite frankly, downtown. So, we are going to address that, but I haven't heard of any individual businesses at this point doing that.

Q: I know that for cyclists in the valley, some of the things that keep us from riding or make us uncomfortable about the streets and the roads are the high speed limits and the attitudes of some of the motorists in that regard.

A: Like using the bike lane as another lane? I have seen that, too.

Q: One of the things I had a question about was how will the City of Lancaster work to educate motorists and cyclists about the changes that the city is making? I'll give you an example. Down in Los Angeles, in the Valley, they decided to put in a road diet on a street called Wilbur.

A: Oh, I heard about this.

Q: And they didn't give much notice to anybody before they did it and when they did it, they said, we're putting in a road diet, now we have room for bike lanes. Well, that's what the commuters got upset about. The neighborhoods were fine with it, but the commuters raised a big stink about it. So, that brings up the question of educating the public about why the city is doing something and what it can mean for the citizens of Lancaster.

A: Correct. Well, we have talked about this and we have looked at how do we -- and I think particularly in terms of -- we have a nice kind of experimental place downtown, because obviously that's got a different sort of traffic pattern, a different approach. We've had a lot of people -- I wouldn't say a lot, but we had a number of people who have complained about things, including one who told me that, she says, "I just don't drive the boulevard anymore. I take all the side streets." And I said, "Well, that's not necessarily such a bad thing." It's one of the things we looked at, but I do think that there is going to be, at some point, a situation where the neighborhood loved what we did, and we start dealing maybe with some fallout from people who are upset that they can't drive at 55 miles an hour down a four-lane road anymore.

Number one, you need to have a council that is ready to stand firm on that and understands. That's step one, because they will be able to withstand the complaints if they understand what the long-term goal is. I ran across an interesting little video that was posted on a website from someplace in Ohio, and it was simply a video that was about 9 minutes long. It was an instructional video on how to drive through roundabouts. We need to do something like that.

One of the things that the city is really seriously considering, and I think we were going to proceed with this, is we are going to look at putting together a video that can be posted on our website or can be handed out in terms of community outreach, where somebody can take 8 or 9 minutes and start to understand what is the whole concept of livability, what are the physical things that tie into that? Why did we put in roundabouts? Why did we take out signals and put in roundabouts at these particular locations? Why did we narrow the street here or there? Well, we did it for these reasons and here's how you deal with that. You know, if people understand reasons for things, they may still not be all that happy about them, but they'll tolerate them better. And, of course, you want to make sure that you've got a lot of support from the neighborhood.

One of the places that we are looking at road dieting is we are going to do a roundabout at 10th Street West and Lancaster Boulevard. We have the funding essentially secured to do it. It's very necessary to do it, in fact, because if we don't do it, then the traffic flow pattern in the downtown street doesn't work quite as well as it could. But, as part of it, we intend to take Lancaster Boulevard from four lanes to two lanes west of there, at least out to 15th Street West, possibly further. We think that the traffic volumes will be accommodated quite well on a two-lane street. It will allow for a better bike lane configuration. It will make those fronting houses lots better places to live.

We recognize that this is not -- not everyone is going to love this. We have to proceed slowly. We have to proceed in an effective manner so that we build that support. What I honestly think is going to happen is that as we continue to do this, we are going to get people from other neighborhoods who are going to say, "Can you do that in our street? Can you do that in our area of town?"

Q: I think you already said something about this, but what funding sources are being pursued?

A: In some cases, we have funding that is available through bikeway funding grants. We are really hopeful that we are going to be able to tap a lot -- at the Federal and the State level, there is a great emphasis now on projects that are aimed at livability, healthier communities, even greenhouse gas emission reductions, and things like this. So we are hoping that, especially once we have the plan in place, we are going to be able to successfully compete for those things. We have gone in the past and tried to get grants at times for trails or other things where we have a pretty good plan, but one of the things that we failed at is the reviewers will come back and say, "It's a great project. It's well designed, it does good, but it ties into nothing. We don't understand how people get

to it.” And, they are right. We can’t show them in an overall plan that this is the city’s approach and this is what we are intending to do. This plan will give us that added peace.

We also believe that once -- and Long Beach you mentioned is a great example -- Long Beach sort of just started to do these things and once you start to do it people who hand this programs out, they want to be successful, too, so they are going to look for places that have successfully done it. They want to be a part of communities that have made that shift. We think that if we can make that shift that they are, in fact, going to be willing to fund us. And we’re a great opportunity because we’re the place where everyone says, “You can’t do it. Oh, you’re out on the urban fringe. You have a real low density layout. The weather is horrible.” You can come up with any number of reasons. There the same reasons they told us we couldn’t do our downtown, that we couldn’t do this or we couldn’t do that. We think we can and we think that, as I have told even our regional council of governments. I said, “You should be highly supportive of what we doing, because you want these things to happen. You should be able to point to us and say, see it can be done.” There are a number of ways we can approach doing it, but I think that the key is getting the plan in place and getting people to understand that we are serious and we have a track record and we can point to what we’ve done. I think within a matter of a couple of years we are going to have that pretty solidly.

Q: How is the City of Lancaster going to coordinate with the other entities, Los Angeles County and the City of Palmdale, to make a connecting network?

A: We are already doing that with the County of Los Angeles. They have their own plans underway. We just finished in the last couple of weeks reviewing their plans and comparing it to our drafts. There are areas where we have asked them to recognize some things that we are doing and they have asked us to recognize some things that they are doing. We are about 95% there in terms of coordinating that effort with them. This is very important, especially on our westside, because there are areas that go from city to county to city to county.

The grant that funds this effort [to create the bike/pedestrian plan] is essentially administered through LA County’s public health people, so we have no reason not to work closely with them.

As far as the City of Palmdale, we will work to coordinate as best we can but our impression has been that they aren’t necessarily as involved in this effort as we are. Certainly, if they have planned a network that comes up to our boundary, we want to make sure we pick it up. We are going to make every effort that occurs.

Q: There is an epidemic of obesity with our children. Safe Routes to Schools is one of the movements to try to alleviate that, including both cycling and walking. I live right by a local school and I would say 95% of the children are driven.

A: That may be a low estimate. It may be higher. Three or four years ago, I had a

meeting with Regina Rossall, Superintendent of Westside School District. She and I were talking about a proposed development. I said that the developer wants to provide school sites. It was in an area where long-term the Westside wants them. We were talking about it and in the middle of it, she said, "We have kids, because I've seen it, who live six doors away from our school, whose parents drive them to school. I'm not kidding. I saw a mother pile her two kids into her SUV, pull out into the queue of traffic, and actually sit and wait in the queue until she got to the drop-off point. I was amazed. She could have taken them by the hand and walked them there and back sooner."

As part of the drafting of the plan, we have looked closely at what pedestrian improvements we want and what we want to do as far as bicycling routes around the school sites. We may go to some kind of a colored bike lane in those areas, so that it's called out or use a sharrows approach, even on local streets where it's near a school and we expect heavier usage.

We have tried to come up with ways to make it better for people who want their children to be able to walk or bike. But, I would tell you that this is going to be an ongoing effort. A lot of this, I think, is going to require that even once we get the plan done, we are going to have to go out into the communities. We've got some real great starts, because the city has already been in a number of these neighborhoods through its Unite Program and Safer, Stronger Neighborhoods Program, where we're doing the Wellness Homes in those areas and things of this type. But, it's going to require that those parents -- and I think the schools are a vital lynchpin in this -- to understand that it is okay for their children. It may need more than just a physical improvement. It may get to the point where we try to engage where people volunteer that their houses can be a safe location. If their child is on the way to school and feels someone is threatening them, whether it's another student or somebody else, that there is a place they can go to.

Q: I work at home, so I don't bike comment. Instead, I bike for transportation, utility, errands. There is a dearth of bike parking at grocery stores, at places I want to go shop. How can we encourage the local businesses to consider bike parking in their strategies for attracting customers, keeping customers?

A: Well, for existing places, I think it is a matter of them being approached and maybe they can start to understand economically it is in their interest. From the city's standpoint, we can take a couple of approaches to it. I think when we rewrite our codes, which by the way we are doing, we will simply require that as a part of any development, they have to provide a certain amount of bicycle parking and they have to do it in some approach that is safe and people feel reasonably secure in leaving their bicycle there.

For existing places, I think the best thing to do is that the city needs to get out of the way if somebody wants to do something. Your example about the restaurant providing the bike corral in the one parking space -- I think as a city if it is something that we are trying to do and promoting that kind of ability, then we have to be able to look at our

zoning code or our situation and say, if they lose a parking space, it is not a big deal. Even if the code specifically says they have to have X number, we say, if we don't do that, then we lose the opportunity to do it, so encourage bicycling. Maybe instead of now having the space for one car, you can have 5 or 6 more customers because they can bring their bicycle. We need to be able and be flexible enough to do that.

That's why you need political support for things, so that the person who isn't satisfied when they call a council member and say, "They took out the parking space," and the councilman says, "Oh, yeah, we did that because we are trying to encourage biking. By the way, the business loves it." So that they are ready to defend it.

Q: I've noticed in the AV Press when they report a bike fatality, oftentimes it happened late at night to somebody wearing dark clothing, who had no lights. I often see people riding on the sidewalks, which is illegal. It is a concern that there are people we haven't been able to reach through the bike clubs who need education. Does the city has any plans to educate those individuals who might ride the wrong way in the bike lane or not wear their helmet? Might the Sheriff's Department do a little bit more as far as enforcement?

I'll give you an example of that. Yesterday, I rode to my friend's house. She lives right down here on Fern about a mile south of here. As I pulled up and parked my bike, there was a fellow riding the wrong way down the street, so I hollered out at him, "You're on the wrong side of the street!" and he said, "Of, it doesn't matter." And I said, "Yeah, it does." He said, "There's no law against it!" And I said, "Well, yeah, there is."

A: Certainly if we get the uptick that we hope that we will get in terms of bicycling, we would probably need to get some additional enforcement. I don't know that we have talked specifically about targeting what you might call the adult rider population. We certainly have talked a lot about trying to reintroduce back into the schools where we can through the Sheriff's Departments or others educating kids on the proper way to ride bicycles and laws. But, the adult segment, I hadn't even really considered it. It is probably an area that we are missing and we probably need to fill in, because there are some who have never learned it or some like us, me, who learned a long time ago and may not be the most up to date on it.

Q: There are quite a few people out there who don't know the rules of the road, or if they do they are not willing to change from riding in the given manner that they are and they might be encouraged by a ticket.

A: Yep, sometimes that's what it takes.

Q: Thank you.

A: Let me let you know about something. We have not done a lot of publicity on it yet, but it will be coming soon. We are going to have a community meeting for presenting

where we are at on the Draft Plan, once again giving people a chance to give feedback on it. But we are also looking at making this far greater an event than we had in our initial community meetings.

We are looking at holding it at Mariposa School on the 29th of June. We are looking at activities for the kids that emphasize healthy living, safe bicycling kinds of activities, things for adults so they can start to understand some of the things you mentioned about what are some of the changes you might see in your community, here are areas that we are looking at making changes in, what do you think about that, and trying to get people to understand.

I meet with the Board of Realtors periodically and others. One of things we are trying to work at is when people hear it's the Master Plan of Trails and Bikeways they figure you're kind of figuring out where you can put a trail or a bikeway. What we are trying to say is, no, it's actually far greater than that. We are talking about a significant shift in the way we look at our community and what we mean by making our community livable. This outreach event is part of that effort. I know since you were involved in the walk audit, for example, and obviously have great interest in what's going on. These are the kinds of things that we are trying to do to get the word out. Not everyone is going to get it all at once. It's going to take awhile. We will get blowback, I'm sure, at times on things that we do, but we are encouraged. One of the things that we heard was that in other cities that have made this shift you can point to a time when they made the shift and, as you get 20 years, 25 years away from that time, the differences become very obvious.

It is amazing that you talk about Long Beach -- I don't think anyone thought of Long Beach and bicycling five years ago. I certainly didn't. I mean, Long Beach was an area that planners used to love to look at because they had undertaken such a huge effort at revitalization and rethinking their physical form in their community. We were looking at how transit tied to that. Then the stuff started filtering about how Long Beach is trying to be innovative in this approach on bicycling. They are trying to make walking safer by doing this. Now, they have kind of acquired that reputation. They are viewed as this avant garde, if it's new we're trying it thing. And that's invaluable for them. It really, really is. It has changed the image of their community.

Q: When you talk about 25 years, Portland is usually the example of that. They started way back and it has made a tremendous difference in their share of cycling.

A: Portland is an interesting example from a planning standpoint, because that was never what they intended when they started on the path that they are now on. Their whole deal was they got tired as a community. They were real concerned about loss of farmland out on the fringe. They had development sprawling outward. So what they did was they said we are going to stop that and they created this urban limit line. They said, no, you are going to have to build in here. You want to go in and make it denser.

Although they never really intended to make themselves this real walkable, bikeable

community, they go that as a side benefit because of the fact that physically their form of city changed, and there were now other ways they could get around. They could tear down a freeway and not have it adversely affect them because they could do light rail, they could do bicycling, they could tie these things in. I am always kind of amazed by that. They got huge benefits they never expected from trying to do something else. It is amazing how things happen.

The key thing is, as you mentioned, they made a choice in going a different way. I think that's what you have to do. Who knows, politics being what they are, do we get to some point and you get a political leadership that says no, I don't know. But, if you got a citizenry that has bought into it and is supportive of it, I don't think that happens, because they are going to want people that support those same kinds of things. I think people will begin the connection between how healthy their life can be, how much better it can be, and I don't think they'll want to go back to the old ways after that. That's just my opinion.

Q: Mine, too. Thank you so much.