



Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition
634 S. Spring St. Suite 821
Los Angeles, CA 90014
Phone 213.629.2142
Facsimile 213.629.2259
www.la-bike.org

May 11, 2015
FOR RELEASE AT 10:00 A.M.

Contact: Carol Feucht
213-629-2142, x116
carol@la-bike.org

LOS ANGELES COUNTY BICYCLE COALITION CELEBRATES BIKE WEEK 2015 WITH FOCUS ON SAFETY FOR LOW-INCOME BIKE RIDERS

New data from Operation Firefly program, which gave away bike lights to over 2000 “invisible” bicyclists this season, highlights need to prioritize low-income communities of color for bicycle safety improvements.

LOS ANGELES, Calif. –

This morning, Tamika Butler, the new Executive Director of the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition (LACBC), kicked off Bike Week by releasing results from the coalition’s Operation Firefly/Operación Luciérnaga program’s latest season. Operation Firefly is an education and bicycle light distribution program intended to make sure people are riding safely at night in Los Angeles County. During the 2014-2015 season, the program served over 2,000 people at 36 distributions in 13 different cities across the county, installing front and back bike lights on their bikes, educating them about riding safely, and surveying them on riding habits. Neighborhoods targeted for this initiative are often low-income communities of color where light recipients lack lights and proper bicycle infrastructure, despite the fact that many people are riding out of necessity. Some of our key survey findings include:

- 75% of recipients surveyed used a bike as their main form of transportation.
- 33% of recipients don’t usually ride with lights at night.
- 86% of recipients are misinformed regarding the legal requirements for biking at night.
- 19% of recipients identified as female.
- 31% of recipients cited Spanish as their primary language.

These findings show that many neighborhoods across Los Angeles County have large numbers of so-called “invisible” bicyclists who ride for economic or legal reasons, despite the lack of investment in safer streets in these communities. “Invisible” bicyclists refers to low-income riders who often use bikes to access early or late-shift jobs and therefore must commute during darkness. These individuals often don’t have the time or means to participate in community organizing and are underrepresented in transportation decision-making. A recent national report, *Building Equity* by People for Bikes and the Alliance for Biking and Walking, mirrored what LACBC saw in its Operation Firefly survey respondents. *Building Equity* noted that people of color bike most for transportation, but poor infrastructure is rampant in low-income communities of color. As last year’s report from the 2013 Los Angeles Bicycle and Pedestrian Count noted, ridership continues to grow in Los Angeles, but not everyone feels safe riding without better bicycle facilities. As one of the most diverse cities in the country, people in all neighborhoods deserve safe and healthy streets.



“Operation Firefly was a great introduction for me, as a new ED, to the incredible work LACBC is doing on the ground to serve those who need us most,” said Executive Director Tamika Butler. “Bike lights allowed the riders we served to ride off with a smile, new knowledge about the law, and a safer feeling. However, they would ride off into their neighborhoods full of potholes, lacking protected bikeways, and full of heavy traffic. A healthy, safe, and equitable Los Angeles means all community members feel safe whether they are riding, walking, or driving.”

In Los Angeles County, 19 percent of all trips are made on foot or by bike, but 39 percent of roadway deaths are people walking or biking. Injury and fatal collision rates are highest in low-income communities of color. In the City of Los Angeles, Mayor Eric Garcetti’s Great Streets Initiative and new Sustainable City pLAN are looking to reimagine streets for people and increase the number of people biking and walking for transportation. LACBC hopes to work with Metro’s new CEO, Phil Washington, to prioritize biking and walking as Angelenos look towards a connected, multi-modal future.

With programs like Operation Firefly working together with bike-friendly infrastructure, policies, and initiatives, L.A. County is one step closer to becoming a safer and more equitable place to ride a bike. As one Inglewood light recipient, Mario Guerrillero, stated, “[I]t meant a lot to me and my wife. She received lights as well...it made me feel like the city provides people with safety and secureness for the community.” Soon LACBC will be organizing free bike safety classes across the county sponsored by Metro and funded by the California Office of Traffic Safety. LACBC is particularly focused on making sure resources are distributed equitably to those who rely on bikes as their main form of transportation by partnering with local groups to assess the needs of communities, targeting areas where everyday bicyclists ride, and creating multilingual and culturally appropriate programs.

Whether it is through campaigns on particular projects or generally making Los Angeles a better place to ride a bike, LACBC is excited that programs like Operation Firefly help those most in need gain access to organizations and resources to make their commutes safer. “Es bueno saber que existen organizaciones como LA Coalición Bicicletas del Condado, que se preocupan por hacer conciencia en los ciudadanos sobre nuestra seguridad al usar bicicletas,” said West Los Angeles bike light recipient Manuel Escobedo Méndez. (“It’s good to know that organizations like LACBC exist that concern themselves with raising awareness about safety for people who ride bikes.”)

LACBC looks forward to continuing to partner with elected officials, agencies, and organizations throughout the city and county of Los Angeles as we all work towards a healthier, safer, and more fun place to ride a bike. With a background in economic justice and public health, Butler reaffirmed LACBC’s commitment to making equity a key value in all of its work. “I may have only been on the job for four months, but I know the potential of transforming Los Angeles into the best place to ride a bike is limitless,” said Butler. “LACBC looks forward to being a leader in this movement and will continue to pass out lights, advocate for policy, and create an environment that is healthy, safe, and equitable. An environment where bicycle advocacy spotlights the diverse voices of all those impacted by transportation issues in Los Angeles.”

Founded in 1998, the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition is a membership-based, volunteer-driven nonprofit organization that works to make all communities in Los Angeles County into healthy, safe and fun places to ride a bike. Through advocacy, education and outreach, LACBC brings together the



diverse bicycling community in a united mission to improve the bicycling environment and quality of life for the entire region.

Operation Firefly's season sponsor for the 2014-2015 season was the Laemmle Charitable Foundation, with additional sponsorship from New Belgium's Environmental Stewardship Grants Program and the City of Long Beach. Other sponsors include:

- Arroyo Seco Neighborhood Council
- City of Huntington Park
- City of Pasadena
- City of Pico-Rivera
- City of South Pasadena
- City of West Hollywood
- Former County Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
- Los Angeles Councilmember Felipe Fuentes
- Los Angeles Councilmember Joe Buscaino
- Los Angeles Councilmember Jose Huizar
- Los Angeles Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell
- Los Angeles Councilmember Paul Koretz
- Los Angeles Councilmember Tom LaBonge

Over 100 volunteers for "Team Firefly" dedicated over 700 volunteer-hours to make this season a success. The program was made possible by local LACBC chapters Walk Bike Burbank, Culver City Bicycle Coalition, Walk Bike Glendale, Pomona Valley Bicycle Coalition, Santa Monica Spoke, West Hollywood Bicycle Coalition and the Bicycle Coalition at UCLA. Several distributions were conducted in collaboration with the Central, South, West, and Valley LAPD Traffic Divisions. Additional lights were distributed through partners at Bici Libre, the Bicycle Kitchen, the Bike Oven, Valley Bikery, Bikerowave, Gensler Los Angeles, Youth Moving On, and The Place in South Pasadena.

For more information and to download a copy of the Operation Firefly Fact Sheet, go to <http://la-bike.org/OperationFireflyFactSheet>

###