

**SCCRTC- 2021 Consolidated Call for Projects (RSTPX, STIP, HIP, & CRRSAA)**

**APPLICATION/PROJECT PROGRAMMING REQUEST**

**A. Project Information**

<b>Applicant/Implementing Agency</b>		<b>Public Agency Sponsor (if different)</b>	
Ecology Action		SCCRTC	
<b>Project Title</b>			
Santa Cruz County Bike Challenge ++			
<b>Brief Description/Scope of Work (attach extra pages to fully describe scope)</b>			
The Bike Challenge ++ is a continuation of Ecology Action’s digital bike encouragement initiative designed to meet the ever-changing challenges of Covid impacted mobility. The program’s flexible architecture allows us to meet the transportation demands of varying groups. We will host two annual online Bike Month Challenges, conduct a multi-channel marketing, education and engagement campaign, deploy incentives for participation, and conduct participant surveys. This work will be coordinated with other Ecology Action bike encouragement and education programs.			
<b>Location, Limits, Length (attach map(s)/photos on separate tab)</b>			
Santa Cruz County, Cities of Santa Cruz, Watsonville, Scotts Valley and Capitola.			
<b> roadway Functional Classification: (if applicable)</b>			
<b>Summary of Project Benefits, Purpose and Need</b>			
The Bike Challenge ++ is designed to shift more people to choose the bike for transportation and to increase the frequency of those who currently bike commute. As local jurisdictions build more and better bike infrastructure—such as sections of the Rail Trail —there is a need to create the social infrastructure of support, encouragement, and community to get more people to chose their bikes for every day transportation. Benefits include reduced commute and other drive alone car trips therefore reducing VMT, GHG emissions, and safer, less congested and more livable streets. There is a need for bike encouragement and education as more people are biking for a variety of trips. Many who are discovering or re-discovering biking during the Covid bike surge are poorly equipped, do to a lack of safety education and resources, to navigate the busv local streets.			
<b>Funds requeste</b>	<b>\$270,000</b>	<b>Total Project Cost</b>	<b>\$306,750</b>
		<b>Estimated # of Daily User</b>	<b>1,000</b>
<b>Was project previously programmed for funds by RTC?</b>		<b>Y</b>	<b>RTIP ID</b>
			<b>EA 03a</b>
<b>Project Cost by Mode (list approximate percentage of total project costs)</b>			
<b>Mode</b>	<b>% of Total Cost</b>		
<b>Pavement Preservation (rehab, overlay, etc.)</b>			
<b>Road-Auto serving (not rehab)</b>			
<b>Bicycle</b>	100%		
<b>Pedestrian</b>			
<b>Transit</b>			
<b>Transportation System Management (TSM)</b>			
<b>Transportation Demand Management (TDM)</b>			
<b>Other:</b>			
	100%		
<b>Priority</b>	Project is priority # <b>1</b> of <b>2</b> applications submitted		
<b>Contact Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>E-mail Address</b>	
Piet Canin	831-227-8987	<a href="mailto:pcanin@ecoact.org">pcanin@ecoact.org</a>	

## **RSTP 2021 Adult Bike Application**

### **Summary of Project Benefits, Purpose and Need**

**The Bike Challenge ++** is a continuation of Ecology Action's (EA) digital bike encouragement initiative designed to meet the ever-changing challenges of COVID-impacted mobility needs and restrictions. The program's flexible architecture allows us to meet the transportation demands of varying groups, including commuters, families, college and high school students, and other individuals seeking healthy, safe, affordable, and sustainable modes of travel.

Love to Ride, our online platform, is ideal for creating, nurturing, and maintaining a community of people riding their bikes for a variety of purposes. The Santa Cruz County Love to Ride community is made up of over 3,300 cyclists, of which 448 are new riders, and is associated with some 194 worksites. This online cohort continues to grow with every new Bike Month Challenge (EA has hosted six successful Challenges).

During the pandemic, while other forms of sustainable transportation experienced reduced ridership (public transit, vanpool, and carpool), biking surged as a healthy and COVID-safe means of transportation and exercise. Bike sales increased as many discovered or rediscovered biking to break the monotony of shelter-in-place and to get fresh air.

Over the past 18 months of the RST-funded cycle 2020/2021 Bike Challenge + program work, Ecology Action has conducted three Bike Month Challenges (with a 4<sup>th</sup> upcoming in October) resulting in the following impact for our community:

- 2,677 bike-riding participants (includes duplication from the 3 Challenges)
- 132 new riders
- 505 infrequent riders
- 364,163 miles biked
- 31,189 bike trips taken
- 47,754 lbs. of avoided CO<sub>2</sub> emissions
- 66% logged as recreation trips (default setting for Strava)
- 23% logged for commuter trips
- 8% logged as other transportation trips

Our Bike Challenge + impact grew as more people participated in the May Bike Challenge than did so in 2020. Simultaneously, Ecology Action staff developed and implemented new activities which spurred and supported this community of bike riders along the way and in our Bike Month Challenge. These activities generated a buzz and enabled people to participate in different ways for more sustained periods of time, including: eight bike commuting webinars, a westside Rail Trail group ride, an ongoing social media campaign, and monthly bike content delivered via our online newsletters. The Love to Ride platform and activities allowed riders to connect, support, and encourage each other to ride more. This trend is supported by the following data comparing the October 2020 Challenge to the May 2021 Challenge:

- 40% increase in overall participation
- 52% increase in new rider participation
- Increase from 30% to 34% of transportation trips
- Average increase of approximately 25% of bike commuter trips during the three Bike Month Challenges (according to Strava Metro data)

As a baseline, 75% of those classified as new riders and 22% of those classified as occasional riders reported cycling more regularly after the 2020 challenges. This shows that Love to Ride Santa Cruz has elicited positive changes in cycling behavior among participants in a very short amount of time—something that is difficult to achieve in behavior change programs.

In 2020, a total of 60 bike-centered content emails were sent between April, in the lead up to Bike Month, and our Biketober results announcements after our October Challenge. Many of these emails were segmented by various criteria based on participant behavior, such as trips recorded, goals set, or whether the individual was taking part solo, with a group, or with a workplace. The average open and click rates were 60% and 10% respectively. For reference, 21% and 2% are Mailchimp’s email marketing benchmarks for travel and transportation. Love to Ride Santa Cruz’s rates exceed Mailchimp’s industry benchmarks significantly—our participants are engaging with the bike-centered content. Data also showed that 69% of new riders were female—a much higher rate than occasional and frequent riders by gender.

Ecology Action staff’s co-management of communications through the local Love to Ride platform gives us the tools to foster this upward participation trend as we reach out and connect to a variety of local users to get more people biking for transportation, more often. The potential to increase biking in our community is considerable as we harness the “COVID bike boom” by converting more recreational rides into bike commute trips. To that end, 19% of riders who did not commute by bike prior to the Challenge reported biking to work at least once a week after the Challenge. As this comes at a time when a significantly higher number of workers are telecommuting, we do not see a high percentage of bike commuting, due to the pandemic. However, the number of overall cyclists has increased and many who have taken up cycling for COVID stress relief are expanding their trip purposes to include shopping, going out to eat, going to the beach, and other transportation trips by bike.

The core focus of the Bike Challenge ++ is the two Bike Month Challenges annually hosted on the Love to Ride platform, supported by a variety of elements including noteworthy and targeted incentives, and an extensive marketing and engagement campaign designed to recruit, retain, and nurture local riders. Program impact and modifications are guided by participant surveys.

#### **Program components:**

- **Twice-a-year Bike Month Challenges** (usually spring and fall). We will use the online Love to Ride platform to recruit, inspire, support, and nurture bike transportation for a variety of riders. The Bike Month Challenge is the core of our programming, as it is a public space for all cyclists, which generates community buzz and exposure. The

Challenge is well suited to comply with COVID health restrictions while creating a connected online community supported by other digital and physical activities. Participants are encouraged to set biking goals and compete with others on individual leaderboards, or to join a club or workplace to take part with friends or coworkers. Participants also post photographs, give and receive encouragement (digital high-fives), track each other's progress, and can comment on fellow Challengers' rides. The campaigns are run with the Love to Ride platform, supported by our encouragement and education-designed program elements.

- **Incentives:** Sizable incentives help generate attention, interest, and commitment to the Challenges. We position a variety of cash prizes to incentivize new riders and others to bike commute and do so regularly. There are several ways to earn credits for our cash and product giveaways; participants can increase their opportunities to win by logging more trips and encouraging others to join the Challenge. We have refined our incentives based on participant survey responses. We also use bike shop gift certificate giveaways to drive traffic to local businesses who in turn support people riding their bikes.
- **Marketing and Engagement Campaign:** Building on existing Challenge marketing, education and engagement collateral, design, and branding will allow Ecology Action to recruit new participants, deepen current engagement, and cultivate habits for participants to normalize regular bike trips as transportation. Communication is the connective tissue that propels the Challenge towards its ultimate goal of increased bike transportation. We will focus our appeal and engagement targeting new and infrequent riders using a variety of communication channels including social media, original content, photographs and videos, digital graphics and art, e-newsletters, ads, news stories, and on-street promo. This multitude of communication channels allows us to connect with a wide audience via many light, medium, and deeper touches, as we build a larger community of every-day cyclists.

We produce original content for our regular e-newsletter, sent out to some 3,761 readers, covering a range of bike topics including local bike infrastructure updates, highlights of safe routes, latest trends in biking, biking tips, personal biking stories, and best practices. The e-newsletter is a source of local bike news written by Ecology Action staff members that keeps the growing Love to Ride bike community connected to an inclusive larger movement.

Ecology Action's locally procured marketing and messaging is supplemented by Love to Ride's built-in framework of Challenge communications. We complement our mostly digital communications with hard-copy collateral such as posters, on-street promotions, stickers, and promotional participation items such as bandanas. These items reinforce the Challenge's brand, experience, and online presence.

- **Survey and Data Collection (baseline and follow-up surveys):** We will collect both baseline and follow-up survey data to track the impact of the Challenge and quantify the results of this ongoing effort to increase bike transportation among new and experienced cyclists. The online platform lends itself to data collection and to the back-

and-forth communication of participant surveys, as we also look to iterate our offerings to meet the varying needs of the community. Each new participant completes a baseline survey to determine what type of rider they are (new, occasional or regular), how often they ride (infrequent or frequent), what type of riding they do (recreational or commuter). This data is used to target appropriate messaging, information, and support to engage the different type of riders.

These program components, for which we are seeking RSTP funding, are coordinated to generate rising interest and long-term engagement in biking throughout Santa Cruz County. Ecology Action has other funding sources (RTC TDA, local jurisdiction, business sponsorship, and individual donors) for bike encouragement and education activities that also support the Challenges. These include bike commuter webinars, group safety and fun rides, and Bike to Work/School Day activities.

Ecology Action leverages a variety of community resources to amplify the RTC's investment in the Challenge by partnering with local and national businesses, community groups, individual donors, and volunteers. For example, we were able to increase the audience of our bike commuter workshops in coordination with REI, who distributed the invitation to their sizeable customer email list. We are also able to offer enticing incentives funded by donors and business sponsors.

These program offerings elevate the impact of the monthly Challenges as effective tools to address transportation-related issues—greenhouse gas (GHG) and other polluting tailpipe emissions, traffic congestion, traffic collisions, and lack of exercise due to daily sedentary travel. We must reduce GHG emissions generated by transportation, as this sector is the largest single source of carbon emissions in Santa Cruz County. Biking and e-bikes (increasingly more popular) provide a viable means to reduce individual GHG emissions and help address the climate crisis.

The Challenge's behavioral change approach complements local public agencies' expanding investments in bike infrastructure, such as the Westside and Watsonville sections of the Rail Trail, Water Street protected bike lanes, the county-wide bike signage network, and other improvements. The riders we recruit to the Challenge become a part of our communication network which highlights the many current, new, and soon-to-be constructed bike projects throughout the county. We also provide education on how to use bike boxes, sharrows, and other innovative bike improvements.

The refinement of the Bike Challenge ++ provides many transportation benefits addressing pressing county needs with an ever-growing community of riders actively engaged in improving our community. Thank you for considering our request.

**B. Project Benefits/Evaluation Criteria**

Information in this section will be used to evaluate projects. The RTC is required to consider how well projects advance regional, state and federal goals, policies, performance metrics and targets, including how projects will contribute towards implementation of the long-range transportation plan (Regional Transportation Plan) and other state and federal regulations including the California Complete Streets Act of 2008, SB375, the Federal FAST Act.

See **Attachment 2** of the call for projects for examples of type of information to demonstrate benefits.

<b>Project Title:</b>	Bike Month Challenge ++
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**Generally, what are the benefits of this project?**

*(ex. goal/purpose/benefit of project; problem to be addressed; importance to the community)*

The Bike Challenge ++ is designed to shift more people to choose the bike for transportation and to increase the frequency of those who currently bike commute. As local jurisdictions build more and better bike infrastructure—such as sections of the Rail Trail —there is a need to create the social infrastructure of support, encouragement, and community to get more people to chose their bikes for every day transportation. Benefits include reduced commute and other drive alone car trips therefore reducing VMT, GHG emissions, and safer, less congested and more livable streets. There is a need. The Challenge fulfills transportation plans shifting car trips to healthier, more affordable and more sustainable bike trip.

<b>Benefit Category</b> (see Attachment 2 of Call for Projects for additional information and supporting data)		<b>How does this project address any of the following?</b> Projects are not expected to address all of these; if not applicable or not a primary purpose, write "N/A".
<b>1</b>	<b>Safety (reduce fatal or injury collisions)</b>	Both the County and City of Santa Cruz have the dubious distinction of high bike crash rankings compared to other California jurisdictions. According to California Office of Traffic Safety 2018 data, Santa Cruz County ranked 3rd worst and Santa Cruz City 4th worst for number of bike crashes. The Challenge ++ will provide bike safety education opportunities for program participants. Also, data shows that there is safety in numbers -- the more cyclists are on the road normalizes them for motorist who become more aware of cyclists and drive more carefully.
<b>2</b>	<b>System preservation (maintain existing transportation infrastructure, service, or program)</b>	NA
<b>3</b>	<b>System Performance</b>	NA
<b>3a</b>	<b>Reduce emissions and/or vehicle miles traveled</b>	The core purpose of the Challenge ++ is to shift car trips to bike trips for a variety of mobility needs and destinations across our county. The program actively engages thousands of county residents to increase bike trips from a few a month to their number one go-to form of transportation. Over the last year and half of program participants have eliminated 47,754 pounds of greenhouse emissions by biking instead of driving.
<b>3b</b>	<b>Improve travel times, travel time reliability; reduce delay</b>	A benefit of biking is that you don't get stuck in traffic jams, so travel times are very reliable with few delays.
<b>3d</b>	<b>Improve freight or goods movement efficiency</b>	NA
<b>4</b>	<b>Increase Access for All (Expand multi-modal travel options/choices, especially to and within key destinations for all users)</b>	Our Marketing campaign reaches a broad audience with the objective of increasing mobility options for everyone. Our digital content is in both English and Spanish and covers the entire county.
<b>5</b>	<b>Health and Equity - Enhance health, safe access to key destination for transportation-disadvantaged populations</b>	Our county wide program provides low cost, healthy and sustainable transportation for everyone. The Bike Challenge ++ serves disadvantaged communities in Watsonville and the Beach Flats with an emphasis on the Slough Trail Network, new sections of the Rail Trail and the San Lorenzo River Walkway paths. Our marketing and communication messaging highlights family, safe routes and other group rides. And we also provide links to basic bike resources such as how to buy a used bike and bike repair.

5a	<b>Improve public health or promote healthy communities, provide outreach to targeted users/health issues</b>	The Challenge improves public health by reducing tailpipe pollutants, reducing potential car collision, reducing automobile noise while engaging individuals in a daily healthy physical activity. Biking not only improves cardiovascular, muscle tone, and coordination, it also provides relief from the mental stress of the continuing uncertainty and hardships of Covid. People tend to interact with their neighbors more when riding a bike that can give people an additional mental benefit of feeling connected to their community.
5b	<b>Serve people who are transportation disadvantaged due to age, income, ability or language or other challenges</b>	The Challenge engages a wide diversity of county residents and appeals to locals who are young and old (ebikes make biking possible for seniors and those with physical limitations), who cannot afford a car and to Spanish speakers and readers. The bike is <i>the</i> every person mobility device.

**Additional Considerations in Project Evaluation:**

A.	<b>RTP Consistency:</b> If project is included in the 2040 or Draft 2045 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Project List, list <b>RTP Project Number</b>	The Challenge is included in the Draft 2045 RTP as project #EA 03a.
B.	<b>Consistency with Complete Streets</b> guidelines and policies: Describe how is project consistent with guidelines, integrates complete streets elements	This NI bike program complements Complete Street policies and IN projects.
C.	<b>Consistency with other plans.</b> What other plans is this project listed in, if any?	Bike engagement and increased biking is listed in the City of Santa Cruz and Scotts Valley Active Transportation Plans. Also increasing biking, by making it safer, is part of local climate action plans and the City of Watsonville's Vision Zero Action Plan.
D.	<b>Public engagement:</b> How was this project determined to be a priority? What outreach will occur during implementation?	Ecology Action presented to the RTC Bike Committee in the initial phases of development and used their comments to shape the program. We also survey program participants to determine, among other metrics we gauge, what motivates them to bike and bike more often. The survey responses help us refine the program to meet the needs of participants. We continue to survey participants and make adjustments to the program as a result of their feedback.
E.	<b>Scale of Benefits-</b> How many users are expected to use the facility, service or program? What is the source of this estimate?	The Santa Cruz Love to Ride platform has some 3,300 participates of those 448 are new riders. We estimate adding another 500 riders to the platform. Love to Ride allows us to track active users, their bike trips, miles, and other useful data as a result of the challenge. Participation enrollment and activities (number, distance, and type of bike trip) are tracked by the Love to Ride platform.
<b>F. Potential Risks (and plans to mitigate them)</b>		
F1	<b>Funding</b> - Is this project fully funded?	Yes.
	How will potential cost increases be funded?	Through other funding sources such as donors and sponsorships.
F2	<b>Schedule:</b> Describe any potential delays to schedule	No delays are anticipated.
F3	<b>Deliverability:</b> Describe why your agency is capable of delivering this project. (sufficient staff, project management, performance in past)	Ecology Action has the staff capacity and experience to successfully deliver this pro
F4	<b>Environmental:</b> Describe any potential environmental issues, mitigations, risks associated with current and future environmental conditions (climate change, extreme weather, seismic)	NA.
F5	<b>Other:</b> Describe any other potential risks and plans to mitigate risks	NA.






**E. Certification and Assurances** - After reading each item, initial and sign to certify your agency agrees to each.

**Project Title:** Santa Cruz County Bike Challenge ++

As authorized representative for my agency, I hereby certify that the information contained in this application, including required attachments, is accurate and hereby certify the following:

- |    |   |    |
|----|---|----|
| 1  | The project implementing agency possesses legal authority to nominate projects and to finance, acquire, construct, and/or implement the proposed project;   | JM |
| 2  | This project is among the highest priorities for this agency;   |    |
| 3  | The proposed transportation investments have received the full review and vetting required by law;  | JM |
| 4  | Such investments are an appropriate use of taxpayer dollars. The agency shall adhere to principles and policies that ensure government oversight and management of the contracting process to ensure taxpayer funds are spent wisely; contracts are not wasteful, inefficient, or subject to misuse; unnecessary no-bid and cost-plus contracts are avoided; and contracts are awarded according to the best interests of California taxpayers; | JM |
| 5  | The agency will maintain and operate the property acquired, developed, rehabilitated, or restored for the life of the resultant facility(ies) or activity. I understand that with the approval of the California Department of Transportation, the Administering Agency or its successors in interest in the property may transfer the responsibility to maintain and operate the property;   | NA |
| 6  | If these new funds are used to replace funds previously committed to this project, the agency will maintain its effort with regard to redirecting those funds to similar transportation projects;   | JM |
| 7  | The agency will give RTC and California Department of Transportation’s representative access to and the right to examine all records, books, papers, or documents related to the project;   | JM |
| 8  | Work on the project shall commence within a reasonable time after receipt of notification that funds have been approved, allocated or obligated, as applicable, and that the project will be carried to completion with reasonable diligence;   | JM |
| 9  | The agency will comply where applicable with provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards and Guidelines for Archaeology and Historic Preservation, and any other federal, state, and/or local laws, rules and/or regulations; and   | JM |
| 10 | The agency shall comply with all reporting requirements outlined by FHWA, FTA, RTC, Caltrans, the California Transportation Commission (CTC) or state statute, as applicable;   | JM |
| 11 | The agency will commit the funds necessary to ensure this project is fully funded.  | JM |

Implementing Agency Representative:

Signed  \_\_\_\_\_ Date 10/1/2021  
 Printed (Name and Title) Jim Murphy, CEO  
 Implementing Agency Ecology Action

Project Sponsor – if different

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Printed (Name and Title) Enter Name/Title  
 Sponsor Agency Enter Sponsoring Agency Name