

Re: Councilmember Mitch Englander's Motion on LimeBike Bikshare in Northridge

Hello Everyone,

I am writing you today to discuss the addition of a new transportation mode in the Valley – around the campus of California State University at Northridge. The program is a dockless bikeshare program offered by the company ‘LimeBike’ and has been a huge success. Obviously there are ‘growing pains’ with any new addition to a community. Which is why we need your support – as the community to voice your support of a health promoting (stress reducing), traffic congestion reducing, and economy increasing program. Call Councilmember Mitch Englander or e-mail and express your support for the program or sign a petition initiated by CSUN students [which can be found here](#).

That is my pitch, now let me back my pitch up with statistics and testimonials to show data contrary to the information produced in a [motion by the councilmember](#) for an emergency moratorium on bikeshare in the Northridge area. First and foremost, I must state a disclaimer. I write to you as a RESIDENT of Northridge. I am also an employee at the university – CSUN – but not writing on behalf of the institution. I am a Board member of the Northridge East Neighborhood Council – but am not writing on their behalf either. Last but not least, I am the President of Bikecar101 – a non-profit organization with a mission to educate and advocate for greater bicycle use on trains (Metrolink, Metro light rail, and Amtrak) in Southern California. Now that I have covered all of my basis for disclaimers, let me show statistics for the newly emerging and exciting LimeBike dockless bikeshare program.

In the following paragraphs, I would like to briefly state the benefits and a few testimonials regarding the new LimeBike program from my perspective. As you will see, the statistics are showing positive momentum for active transportation. Incorporating a dockless bikeshare program into a community provides another mode of transportation which enhances the well-being of the community through health and economic gain.

LimeBike Statistics and Benefits

With the addition of 400 dockless LimeBikes delivered to the CSUN campus, the program has been a HUGE success among students and surrounding participants in the region. Here are a few numbers from the use of students already:

- 1) 7,000 subscriptions have already been completed. This subscription makes future use easy by storing the user's e-mail and credit card information.
- 2) In just three and half weeks in use, the riders have travelled by bicycle (LimeBike dockless bikeshare) a total of 13,000 miles – Wow!
- 3) LimeBike doubled their workforce to implement 'sweeps' at 7am and 5pm – which consists of driving around each day and collecting unused (or abandoned) bicycles while returning them to areas of greatest use (high demand).
- 4) Students feel safer while riding a bicycle back to their house/apartment at night.
- 5) As of last week, a total of 40,000 rides have been taken on LimeBikes in the Valley.

Now that I have stated the facts, let's put them into perspective. First and foremost is student safety. Students have shown up to Northridge East Neighborhood Council recently (a week ago) and gave statements about the positive attributes of LimeBike use -- specifically personal safety at night. Riding a bicycle back home provides a greater sense of safety. Are we as residents of the Valley going to revoke this new emerging (and growing) program? Student safety is on the backs of LimeBike's opponents.

Next, the numbers of subscriptions and rides are impressive and exceed LimeBike's expectations. With 7,000 subscriptions, LimeBike users have traveled a total of 13,000 miles through 40,000 rides – Wow! To put that number into perspective – 13,000 miles – the total distance traveled by LimeBikes in less than a month, a person could travel a total of 2 round trips from Northridge to New York City. Another way to visualize 13,000 miles is to use 'round trips to San Francisco' as a metric. A person could travel a total of 17 round trips. Yes you read correctly, this means that LimeBike riders have traveled a total of 2 round trips from Northridge to New York City and back or 17 round trips from Northridge to San Francisco and back. [Calculations can be found here](#). That is amazing in just under a month.

Last but not least, the rides taken on LimeBikes have reduced overall traffic congestion in the Northridge area. LimeBikes are being used to access the Metrolink Train Station and the Metro Orange Line. This means that LimeBike is solving the 'first and last mile' to other transit modes. This contributes to the growing momentum toward active transportation playing a greater role in the transportation solution in the future. Remember, these students will be the new professionals of tomorrow. Their decisions around CSUN can positively impact future sustainable transportation decisions. Their experiences will influence their future 'votes'!! With that in mind, local politicians should be jumping on board to promote diversified transportation options. Lead rather than resist change. Change will be on the

horizon regardless when these young professionals vote in politicians that suit their needs – promote health by reducing stress and traffic congestion.

Testimonials

The first testimonial is from myself as a resident living across Reseda Blvd from CSUN. As a resident, one of the first observations I noticed upon launching the LimeBike program, was dockless bikes left in the path of travel on sidewalks. This was an initial concern. I first noticed this at the Bus stop near Reseda and Superior. As I was walking to school, I noticed a LimeBike in the middle of the sidewalk. I decided to move the bicycle closer to the curb. Yes, as a resident, you too can help solve a problem. I wondered at that moment -- when would that bicycle would be used next. To my surprise, no sooner than I could push the traffic signal ‘walk button,’ did a passenger get off of the Metro Bus and stare at the LimeBike I had just moved. I walked up and tried to assist him in unlocking a bicycle. He had already begun the process. The only question that I was able to ask in the brief time was: “Are you headed toward CSUN campus?” To which he responded, “No, I am headed a different way.” I walked off to work and stored this memorable memory about the newly launched program to share at a later date in time – the time has come.

The second testimonial which I would like to share is that of CSUN students showing up to the Northridge East Neighborhood Council last week to speak about the emerging LimeBike program. All were enthusiastic about the release of 400 bicycles around campus. Each were impressed at the time saved while riding coupled to the obvious health benefits (lowers stress level). Additionally, each were especially thankful for the safety aspect that riding a LimeBike home after class. I was unaware of this aspect provided by LimeBike. On the way home from the meeting, I asked my wife if she agreed with the testimonials given by the students. She did indeed agree that having the ability to escape via bicycle would give her a greater sense of safety. At the very least, she stated, she could envision ‘throwing’ the bicycle at an attacker to provide a ‘barrier’ between herself and them. This is a strong aspect/benefit of a LimeBike which should not be discounted by opponents.

Community Concerns

Last but not least, I would like to share the overall feeling of a Northridge Vision meeting which I attended at Councilmember Mitch Englander's office regarding the LimeBike program unveiling. At the time, the program had been deployed just three weeks and was skyrocketing with success (and still is). The meeting was with various stakeholders (including neighborhood council presidents, and Northridge Beautification headed by Don Larson). In light of resident's concerns and the unexpected initial challenges with dockless bikeshare, LimeBike and CSUN representatives discussed potential solutions to bicycles being left on private property and blocking sidewalks. I should make clear that Councilmember Mitch Englander was not present at the meeting.

The LimeBike personnel introduced their product and gave statistics across the nation comparing the way CSUN embraced the dockless bikeshare program with other college towns. LimeBike personnel answered all our questions. After LimeBike personnel introduced their product, Ken Rosenthal from CSUN gave introductions to other CSUN employees who are instrumental to outreach relations with the community: Austin Ericksson, Francesca Vega, and Rafael De La Rosa. CSUN employees were very vocal in their willingness to collect feedback and work with LimeBike to optimize the program.

Of greatest concern were bicycles blocking sidewalks and being abandoned. Each bicycle is equipped with a GPS unit, therefore unused bicycles are flagged automatically. Keep in mind, that LimeBike makes two rounds per day to collect these bicycles – one at 7 am and one at 5 pm. LimeBike made clear to the audience that anyone can call 1-888-LIME-345 ([1-888-546-3345](tel:1-888-546-3345)) 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and a crew will immediately come and collect a misplaced bike. This phone number is displayed on each bicycle. Additionally, users who abandon bicycles in inappropriate locations can be identified. LimeBike is willing to contact the last user and impose a financial penalty.

The greatest discomfort with the new dockless bikeshare program is embedded in the 'dockless' aspect. Ironically, the greatest discomfort contributes to the success of the program – ride a bicycle to your destination and lock the bicycle up without any further responsibility. This locked bike is available for another prospective rider. Which means that a person who is looking for a bikeshare bicycle can look on their 'app' on their cell phone, instead of traveling to the nearest 'hub' where bicycles must be returned to. The dockless nature of the bikeshare program contributes to the greater freedom of destination. LimeBike suggested that a geographical constraint is an option for the program, called geofencing, but in our view this would be a mistake.

When using Tower Bridge Bike Share in Sacramento over this past winter break, we experienced uncertainty and anxiety associated with riding along the American River. Although the trail was wonderful and offered miles of protected riding, we realized that we had ventured outside the intended geofence of the program. We were unable to lock the bikes for fear of a \$100 penalty and ended up calling the customer service to confirm the exact procedure that would avoid the fine. The conclusion is that geofencing causes unnecessary fines and diminishes the utility of the bicycles for their intended purpose of enhancing mobility at a low price point (\$0.50 per 30 minutes for those with csun.edu email addresses, or \$1 per 30 minutes for non-CSUN users).

I left the meeting thinking that these LimeBikes have definitely shown to be a mode of transportation which has benefited the community health and economy. Of course, any new program has a certain amount of ‘growing pains’ associated with the implementation. This takes time. Which brings me to the last point. Councilmember Mitch Englander has not given the community enough time for the LimeBike program to grow into a beneficial program.

Councilmember Englander Aims To Shut Bikeshare Program Down

Recently, Councilmember Mitch Englander proposed a ‘Motion’ to impose an emergency moratorium on LimeBike to stop the program within the community of Northridge. The councilmember further moves that the city council together with LADOT to write guidelines for substantial permitting process with penalties and revocation of permits if dockless bikeshare companies do not adhere to their guidelines. The motion is shortsighted in my mind and is extremely premature, given that these regulations are yet to be written and have no timeline for completion -- which could drag on indefinitely. Yet the LimeBike program will be immediately halted if Englender is allowed to move forward with this agenda.

The meeting at Councilmember Englander’s office was adjourned with steps which would be taken if LimeBike (and CSUN) could not correct or address neighborhood complaints with the initial implementation of the dockless bikeshare program. Remember, Councilmember Englander was not present at that meeting. No indication of resident’s complaints were discussed at the Northridge Vision Meeting on Wednesday, February 14th. Only one resident spoke at the Northridge East Neighborhood council meeting on Wednesday, February 21st and he was upset about students running over cats with their cars (not a LimeBike issue specifically). One resident asked how the LimeBikes would be monitored with respect to theft, which is not an issue since each bicycle is GPS-enabled.

Two days after that meeting, on Friday, February 23rd Councilmember Englander released his ‘motion’ to regulate transportation sharing programs, including bikes, electric scooters and cars. Englander’s motion contains extreme measures which were not discussed at the meeting at his office.

Councilmember Englander’s motion did not consider that the community would need time to naturally adjust to the infusion of LimeBikes. Implementation of any new program is going to cause a shift in the limited space available for all road, parking lot and sidewalk users.

Already, in the two weeks since the councilman’s motion was filed, there have been fewer issues with abandoned bicycles and bikes blocking sidewalks. Although it is unclear what factors have been responsible for this change in LimeBike user behavior, we celebrate that LimeBike users have grown more considerate with practice. Admittedly, the month of January offered all users 10 free rides. With a decrease in incentives, there may be fewer casual users and more regular users who appreciate the freedom of the LimeBike program and exercise it responsibly.

Councilmember Mitch Englander is rushing to shut down the program at CSUN. What this shows is that Councilmember Englander is not for active transportation. Furthermore, Councilmember Englander does not support bicycles as a mode of transportation. Although, I have heard him brag in the past about having the “highest density of bike lanes in his district.” These two ideas are at odds with one another. I am disappointed in Councilmember Englander’s position. His motion shows that he is not a ‘forward thinker’ as he claims to be on a frequent basis. He is stuck in a car culture mindset which is sad – since the rest of the world are starting to wake up and incorporate other modes of transportation into their respective communities.

Conclusion

In conclusion, we live in a democracy. As a result, politicians such as Councilmember Englander are elected individuals. Unfortunately, Councilmember Englander has decided to listen to a ‘few residents’ stuck in the car culture mindset and propose a motion to shut down the LimeBike dockless bikeshare system. Since we live in a democracy, this affords us the opportunity to express our views through our votes. Furthermore, in between elections, we can express our views via avenues: social media, e-mail, phone calls, and letter mail. **I would ask each member of the region to reach out to Councilmember Mitch Englander’s office and express your concern about shutting down a great addition to the**

community. Tell his staff or him (more importantly) that you support LimeBike dockless bikeshare program – Do Not Shut Down the LimeBike Bikeshare program!!!

Remember the safety aspect of the program aside from the economic gain for the community. Let's make our region a better place to travel within. Last but not least, CSUN is holding a petition which you can sign if you choose not to contact him yourself – [click here](#). Below is the contact information for Councilmember Mitch Englander:

Phone: [\(818\) 882-1212](#)

E-mail: Councilmember.Englander@lacity.org

Address: 9207 Oakdale Ave., Suite 200, Chatsworth, CA 91311

Thank you for your help. Have a great day.

Sincerely,

Mike

