

## An Interview with Justin Link Transportation Services Manager, City of Oxnard

### **1. Tell our readers about your background. How did you decide to go into the field of Transportation Engineering?**

I spent most of my childhood playing with Legos and, believe it or not, designing and laying out street networks in the backyard. We used to call it “playing roads,” complete with matchbox cars and buildings made out of patio bricks and rocks.

By the time I got to college, enrolling in Civil Engineering at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo seemed a foregone conclusion. Following graduation, I went into private consulting as a transportation and traffic engineer, designing roadways, traffic signals, and electrical plans.

### **2. Do you have a favorite local street? What makes it great?**

I really love walking down A Street in Downtown Oxnard. There is a sense of place with all of the shops and restaurants. There are wide sidewalks for pedestrians, angled parking so you can stop and stay a while (with the added benefit of slowing cars down -- a form of traffic calming) and, with slower speeds, a bicycle-friendly street, too. It's the closest thing to a Complete Street that we have in Oxnard.



### **3. What current projects are you working on in your city that are most exciting to you?**

The City is working on a lot of exciting projects right now. We have arterial street maintenance projects, whole-neighborhood pavement overlays, and intelligent transportation system projects. The most exciting, though, is probably the Rice Avenue at Fifth Street Overhead. This project will span Fifth Street and the Union Pacific Railroad with a 420-foot bridge in order to eliminate the at-grade railroad crossing at the intersection. In addition to all of the improved safety and traffic flow benefits, the project will also incorporate a Class I, off-street bicycle path, and the bridge itself will be an opportunity for beautification.



### **4. How does transportation engineering contribute to making more livable communities?**

Transportation, at its very basic core, is about access. Without streets and roads, there is an inability to get from point A to point B. That is why it is so important that we invest in our infrastructure, with funding sources like the Gas Tax (Senate Bill 1) and Measure O in the City of Oxnard. If we can better maintain our streets and roads, and keep them in a good state of repair, our police officers can respond more quickly to combat crime. Our fire and emergency services personnel can respond more quickly



to save a life. With more and better pedestrian and bicycle facilities, people of all ages and demographics will have safer access to parks, community events, and activities. All these things contribute to a better living environment, and greater enjoyment of life.

## **5. As our population ages, how will that impact mobility needs in your community?**

The need for access doesn't wane over time; it may even increase with age. That is where our transit operators become invaluable. When the population ages to the point where a driver doesn't feel comfortable behind the wheel anymore, paratransit or dial-a-ride becomes crucial. Demand for those services will certainly increase, and it is our duty to ensure that those services are available and funded.

## **6. What are some challenges you face in designing “streets for all ages/abilities” and “complete streets”?**

The biggest challenge of complete streets is balancing the needs of all road users with a limited amount of space and funding. While we aspire to add bicycle and pedestrian facilities to our major roads originally designed to carry vehicle traffic, it is difficult, and sometimes unwise, to mix peds and bikes with vehicles. This is especially the case where we have high speeds, limited right-of-way (the amount of physical space a road can occupy), and limited funding to implement those facilities where we are able. That's why I subscribe to the idea of “Not every mode for every road.” The City of Oxnard does its best to add pedestrian and bicycle facilities where they are most suited, where conflicts with other road users can be reduced or eliminated.

## **7. What is the biggest traffic related myth or misunderstanding you'd like to dispel?**

I think the biggest traffic myth is that video detection cameras have the ability to record your face or your license plate. While technology has caught up over the years, and the resolution of video detection is much greater, we only use the cameras to detect a vehicle's presence. We don't record any video and we can't see your face.



## **8. What transportation technologies will have the greatest impact in your city the next 2-3 years? How about in the next 10 years?**

Technology in transportation is moving so fast it's very hard to keep up! One of the greatest impacts over the next two-to-three years will be adaptive traffic signals. We will be able to program traffic signal corridors (such as Rose Avenue or Gonzales Road) to “adapt” to traffic in real-time to move more vehicles, reduce the number of stops and the amount of greenhouse gases generated.

Over the next ten years, we expect to see a greater number of self-driving or autonomous vehicles on our roads. One aspect of these vehicles is the ability to talk to traffic signal infrastructure, or V2I (Vehicle To Infrastructure). In the near future, technology will be available in and around Oxnard to tell your car (if it is so equipped) when the traffic signal will turn green and how long you have left to wait.

## **9. What are some great projects from other cities (either in Ventura County or around the world) that inspire your work in Oxnard?**

Any project that leverages technology and creativity to do more with less is always inspiring. The days of adding capacity to carry more traffic will soon be over as available land (and funding) becomes more scarce. Projects that optimize existing facilities to better handle large volumes of traffic at very low cost, like the Los Angeles Avenue Traffic Signal Synchronization Project in Moorpark, is a great example of doing more with less, and how I see the future of transportation.

#### **10. Is there anything else you want our readers to know?**

Making sure we invest in our infrastructure should always be on our minds. Whether it's by car, bus, bicycle, foot, or train, we shouldn't take for granted the infrastructure that enables us to get from Point A to Point B. Without it, we wouldn't be able to get anywhere!



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