

Voices & Visuals in Planning

Expanding communication
and audience through graphic
language and storytelling.

dcrdesign & **PedalLove**

“Elected officials get tired of hearing from the same people, so it’s important for advocates to seek out and encourage members of our community to tell their stories. That’s how we can convince our decision makers that we need more active transportation infrastructure.”

- Lea Brooks,
Long time SLO bike advocate



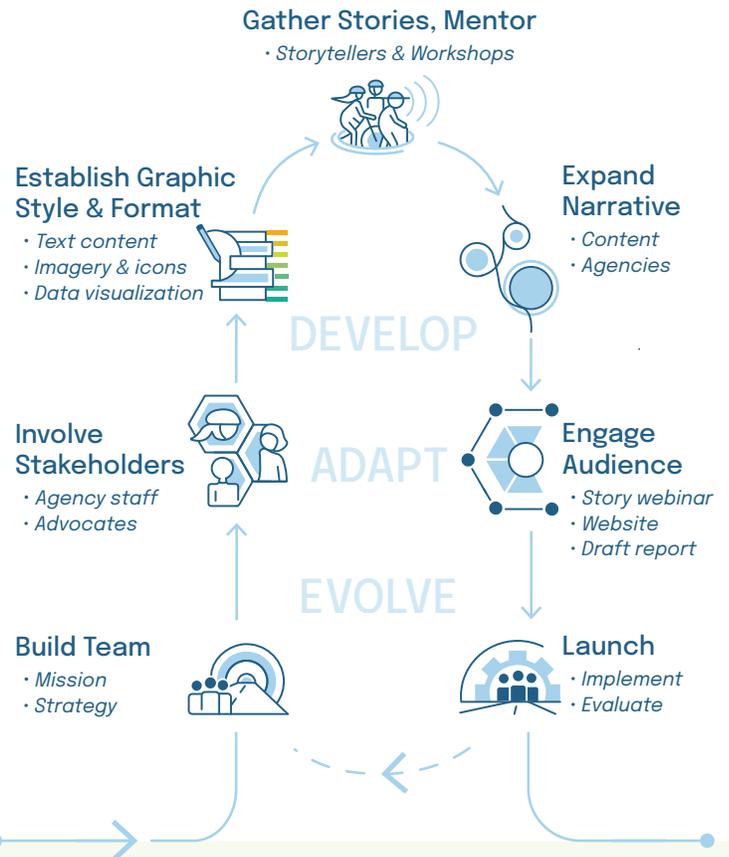
The Setting

Who: San Luis Obispo Council of Governments (SLOCOG), DCR Design and Pedal Love

What: First ever SLOCOG Active Transportation Plan

Where: Central Coast of California

DCR Design, assisted by Pedal Love, helped develop and produce SLOCOG’s first ever Active Transportation Plan (ATP) using graphic design, visualization and storytelling to breathe life into staff reports and related project material. The ATP will be a platform for regional active transportation coordination and direction as well as support for related grant funding.



2020

Journey



Build Team

Together with the client, we established early team chemistry and built a vision of the project goals. We committed to a communication plan and defined team roles, as well as an intent to make the process fun. It's easy to learn and succeed when you're having fun!

"Our nimble team combines design thinking with leading edge graphic design, transportation planning, data driven cartography, photo/video and storytelling skills."

- David Figueroa
Principle, DCR Design

SEPTEMBER

120
resident
contacts
established



Involve Stakeholders

An outer circle of regional stakeholders, as with most planning projects, were critical for contributing experience, views and other inputs to the process. Many of these became tied to the success of the project, describing their own efforts within active transportation.



OCTOBER

1st out of **11**
newsletters sent
→ **40%** Open Rate
→ **3.8%** Click
Through Rate



Establish Graphic Style & Format

DCR developed graphic guidelines, a framework for all content and a project web site. Graphic development included mapping, icons and visualizations of data and the range of active transportation users. Our process allowed for iterative thinking to influence outcomes along the way, encouraging creativity.

"We're telling a story about SLO that hasn't been told before. Our graphic communication and custom iconography reflect the community and reach a broader audience."

- Georgia Crowley
Graphic Designer, DCR Design

2021

JANUARY

2 online
storytelling
workshops
hosted



Gather Stories, Mentor

Local citizens took part in a robust storytelling effort. The main goal was to communicate the diverse local experience of biking and walking. Mentored and coached by Pedal Love, the storytellers crafted their individual experiences emphasizing the importance that biking and walking holds on local mobility needs.

"It was exciting to help the storytellers recognize that telling their stories makes them much more effective."

- Jim Brown
Contributing Editor, Pedal Love

"Sharing my personal experience about this path rather than just the facts has motivated me to reach out to a new group of people who could possibly jump on board with me."

- Meg Syfan
Los Osos Community Storyteller



FEBRUARY

- Completed...
- 23 interviews
- 5 photoshoots
- 1 videoshoot



Expand Narrative

Recognizing the opportunity of this endeavor, SLOCOG expanded the content to include snapshots of progress from regional agencies, including cities within the region. Additional staff reports were added to better communicate the status of regional active transportation efforts.

By including their voices, we gave local public officials a direct stake in the project and helped remind them why their decisions matter.”

- Jim Brown
Contributing Editor, Pedal Love

APRIL

- Storytelling webinar held with...
- 6 storytellers
- 60+ attendees



Engage Audience

The SLOCOG ATP became a cohesive and compelling account of the state of active transportation in the San Luis Obispo region, as well as a roadmap for the future. The stories were celebrated via a storytelling webinar on Earth Day. DCR and Pedal Love facilitated this event, featuring the local storytellers.

I think SLOCOG was surprised by how valuable these stories were. Well-crafted stories open hearts and change minds. That’s why we focus so much on teaching the craft of storytelling.”

- Melissa Balmer
Founder, Pedal Love

AUGUST

- Board approvals received!



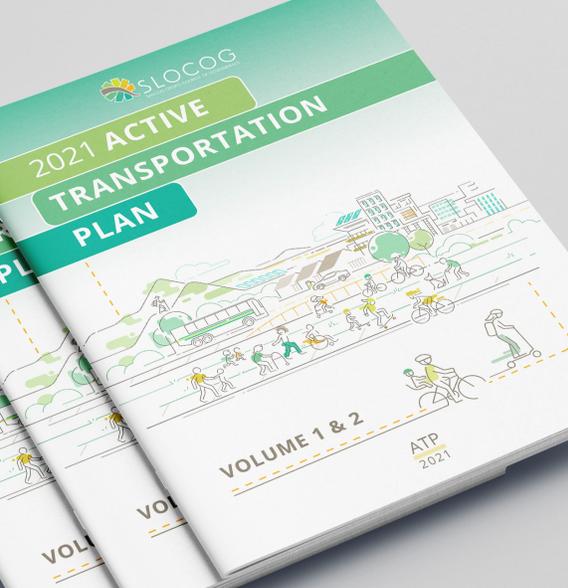
Launch, Reflect

Stakeholder reviews contributed valuable input to the final product, the launch celebrated through social media and other channels. Post-launch the project team should reflect on the original goals and review steps taken along the journey. We believe the power of graphic expression and storytelling can be effectively applied to other similar projects.

Having worked on numerous planning projects, I can’t recall ever seeing an outreach effort have the same impact as recruiting and mentoring storytellers had in this project.”

- David Figueroa
Principle, DCR Design





Results & Takeaways

→ We extended SLOCOG's graphic language to include active transportation themes and developed a multi-media approach to delivering the final products (printed and bound report, online pdf, website, related video).



- We successfully introduced powerful tools, graphic communication and storytelling, to SLOCOG and the active transportation community.
- By teaching storytelling skills, rather than just collecting stories, we helped the community storytellers become more effective advocates for active transportation. SLOCOG can call on this cadre of community activists for input and support on specific issues and priorities.

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"The Technical Advisory Committee gushed love for the graphics and design of the plan as well as the stories...We continue to receive feedback on how compelling this plan is and how enriching the stories are."

- John DiNunzio
Project Lead, SLOCOG

"It's so visually attractive that it makes the reader want to read all 118 pages! Great job!"

- Melissa Mudgett
Regional Transportation Authority (RTA)



See the report at slocogatp.org



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