

From: Rick Hyman

Subject: Public Comment on Item 5 (Oral Communications), RTC Bicycle Advisory Committee Meeting Agenda 4/14/25

Should bikes be encouraged to mix with pedestrians?

At its January 2025 meeting, the Bicycle Committee was presented with proposals to eliminate one or both bike lanes on a roadway (Park Avenue) and direct cyclists to an adjacent raised multi-use pathway. The Committee endorsed removal of both bike lanes in favor of the adjacent multi-use pathway. In the past, the Committee has consistently supported a multi-use pathway in the rail corridor away from roadways. But, this proposal is the first of likely more where the rail-trail alignment will be located adjacent to a roadway with bike lanes (e.g., possibly along San Andreas Rd.).

At its March 2025 meeting, the Bicycle Committee was presented with proposals to prohibit cycling on a raised multi-use pathway and direct cyclists to the roadway (East Cliff Drive, which would have one contraflow bike lane and only sharrows in the other direction). Although the Committee did not endorse a specific option to accomplish this, it endorsed the overall concept.

RTC staff reviewed a City of Santa Cruz proposal (Downtown Plan expansion) to replace a bike lane with a multi-use pathway (Pacific Avenue). Staff endorsed the concept with the caveat that it be wide enough to accommodate both pedestrians and bicyclists while slowing vehicle traffic. Another part of this proposal also relocates existing bike lanes on a few blocks of Front and Laurel Street to sidewalk level adjacent to the sidewalk. Staff appeared to endorse this concept as well. (This matter has not been before the Bicycle Committee.)

Bicycle advocates reviewing options for West Cliff Drive have expressed preference to turn one lane of the roadway into a two-way bike pathway whereas currently there is a raised multi-use pathway (originally built as a bike path, but now heavily used by pedestrians) adjacent to the roadway. (This matter has not formally been before the Bicycle Committee, at least recently.)

The City of Santa Cruz is proposing to eliminate standard bike lanes on a roadway (Bay Street) and replace them with a two-way separated bikeway on one side of the street. While most of this two-way bikeway will be at street level, a portion (by Bayview Elementary School) will be at sidewalk elevation directly adjacent to the current sidewalk; i.e.,

effectively become a raised multi-use pathway. (This matter may soon be before the Bicycle Committee.)

These examples raise many questions, such as:

1. Should the Bicycle Committee strive to take a consistent approach to this question of on-road bike lanes versus adjacent off-road multi-use pathways, or let the site-specific facts for each proposal dictate the appropriate approach?
2. If on-road bike lanes are to be favored:
 1. Should cycling be prohibited on the adjacent pathway, and, if so, for some or all of the time, for some or all ages, and for some or all types of bikes (e.g., different rules for electric bikes)?
3. If adjacent to roadway multi-use pathways are to be favored:
 1. Should there be pavement markings, materials and/or signing to indicate a separation between cyclists and pedestrians?
 2. Should there be minimum width or other standards to accommodate both cyclists and pedestrians?
 3. Should these pathways be raised, or if being at street level is acceptable, should there be roadway separation standards (e.g., widths, separation materials)?
 4. What transition treatments should be recommended at either end of the pathway and for cyclists entering and leaving the pathway from the street?
 5. Should the bike lane on the opposite side of the street from the side that will be adjacent to the multi-use pathway remain or be eliminated?