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## **Mission Street cyclists get approval to 'claim lane'**

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SANTA CRUZ — Cyclists are hoping that new signs on Mission Street will warn drivers that two-wheeled travelers can take over the entire right lane of the state highway in hopes of preventing accidents like the ones that have killed two bikers during the past year.

The signs, which supporters hope to see posted this summer, come as the city and state ramp up safety efforts on Mission, which doubles as Highway 1 as it runs through the west end of the city.

"I think it's fair to say that if these signs were up, then the accident victims would be alive," said Micah Posner, director of bicycle advocacy group People Power.

The most recent death occurred less than a month ago. Christopher Evan Rock, 40, died at Mission and Bay streets April 8 after he was struck by the rear trailer of a quarry truck. No one has been charged in that accident, as Santa Cruz police await toxicology report results for both the cyclist and the truck driver.

Regardless, cyclists, city leaders and state transportation officials have renewed efforts to find a safer way for cyclists to get across the Westside.

Under state vehicle code, a bicycle can take the entire lane of road when there is not enough room to ride safely along the right side, said City Attorney John Barisone.

For example, a cyclist might ride safely next to a motorcyclist or a Toyota Prius, Barasone said. But "if it's a cement truck that takes up the whole lane with mirrors sticking out, then the lane is insufficiently wide and it would be permissible for cyclists to take the whole lane," forcing the truck to drive behind them, he said.

The signs will remind drivers that cyclists have the right to move over and take the lane.

Both the city and Caltrans are evaluating which design to use. City Council members will narrow down their choices May 13.

Meanwhile, Mayor Ryan Coonerty said the city needs to focus on efforts to get cyclists off of Mission and onto parallel routes, like King Street, for longer trips, though the city cannot ban cyclists on Mission.

In addition, Coonerty said, the situation on Mission has grown so dire that some are asking if cyclists can legally ride the Mission Street sidewalk.

Both Coonerty and Barisone said they already use the sidewalk when they personally must ride their bikes on Mission.

"There is no single answer to making bicycling more safe," Coonerty said. "There are many answers, there are many approaches."

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