

Santa Cruz Sentinel
5/13/2008

Expect cyclists on Mission this evening

Genevieve Bookwalter - Sentinel staff writer

Cyclists are planning a group ride tonight to honor those who have died biking on Mission Street.

Organizers, though, said they expect none of the drama from last Friday evening, when one cyclist was struck by a car and another punched the window out of a Nissan Pathfinder in a similar group ride.

Friday night's ride, called "Crank Mob" by organizers, consisted of about 100 college-age students. The ride drew complaints as cyclists blocked traffic and yelled at drivers as they rode by downtown.

Micah Posner, director of bicycle advocacy group People Power, said mass rides are organized by a number of different people. Those responsible for Friday's ride are not the ones planning tonight's event.

In fact, he said, Friday night's event organizers might not plan many more rides at all, as fellow cyclists complained that the group gave rule-abiding riders a bad name.

"My guess is Crank Mob will be recycled into the annals of bicycle history," Posner said. "The name is descriptive, so hopefully it's over."

The ride this evening will consist of cyclists pedaling down Mission Street to honor the two that have died there in the past year. Riders likely will return via King Street, the site of a proposed bike boulevard, Posner said.

As for future events, Santa Cruz police spokesman Zach Friend said officers are not planning to increase security downtown this Friday in anticipation of another ride.

"The onus is really on the bike community to condemn the actions of these riders, to show that such behaviors don't represent the views of the entire community," Friend said.

Friday night mass rides are a common event, usually made up of cyclists who follow the rules of the road, use lights and helmets and don't cause a ruckus, police officers said.

Tonight's ride will begin at 6 p.m. at the Town Clock and end at the 7 p.m. city council session. Council members are scheduled to discuss new signs on Mission reminding drivers that cyclists can take an entire lane of traffic if riding along the side of the road is not safe.

Contact G. Bookwalter at 706-3286 or gbookwalter@santacruzsentinel.com.