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New signs a step closer to Mission St.

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Cyclists are crossing their fingers that a sign approved by the City Council Tuesday night will soon warn drivers on Mission Street that bicyclists legally can occupy an entire traffic lane when riding on the busy thoroughfare.

The sign at issue was chosen over two others. Council members said they preferred it because the visual image of a cyclist and car did the best job of warning drivers that cyclists may be riding in the middle of the lane in front of them.

The sign now goes to officials at Caltrans, the state transportation agency, which will decide later this month whether to approve hanging them along Mission Street.

Caltrans engineer Dario Senor said he expects the signs to receive the state's blessing.

Many in the standing-room only crowd of cyclists had hoped for a different sign, which included a drawing of a bike and the words, "may use full lane."

But cycling advocate Piet Canin, who organizes Bike to Work weeks in the fall and spring, said he still approved of the council's choice. Canin said he sees the sign as part of a larger effort to improve bicycle safety on the Westside.

"Nobody wants to see more deaths on Mission Street," Canin said. "You can't say you can prevent them 100 percent, but you can do more to minimize the risks."

Canin, along with Mayor Ryan Coonerty, Assemblyman John Laird, D-Santa Cruz, and other members of a bicycle safety task force, supports the new sign as part of a strategy that could also include a new bike path on King Street and allowing bicycles on sidewalks. The efforts come after two cyclists were killed at the intersection of Bay and Mission streets within the past year.

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