

## **Bike plan unveiled for King Street**

Genevieve Bookwalter - Sentinel staff writer

After two cyclists in the past year died pedaling Mission Street, many agreed that something must be done to help bikers safely cross the Westside.

A special committee rushed to form ideas for a bicycle boulevard on King Street, which parallels Mission and is often touted as a safe, easy, less-traveled alternative.

Next week, advocates will see if any of those plans stick with cyclists and those who live on King.

Cyclists who want a safer alternative to Mission stressed that they will work with King Street neighbors as much as they can to ensure both parties are happy with the result.

"You don't want people to feel like something's being imposed upon them," said Piet Canin, who organizes the county's two Bike to Work weeks each year. "Hopefully the city and the neighbors and everybody comes together to approve a plan."

Santa Cruz is considering three possible alternatives for a bike boulevard on King Street. One would include removing parking along the street and creating bike lanes; another would divert thousands of cars off of King Street to allow safer passage for cyclists without bike lanes; and a third would widen the street to accommodate both bike lanes and on-street parking.

The effort comes after two cyclists were killed and another seriously injured on Mission Street in the past year. There are no bike lanes on the busy thoroughfare, the county's busiest surface street which carries 50,000 cars each day.

Many avid cyclists say they avoid Mission when possible, but must travel it occasionally to access its shops and restaurants.

King Street resident Carol Kent said she hopes to attend Wednesday's community meeting to discuss her concerns with the plan. Kent said she doesn't want to lose easy access to her house, and doesn't like the idea of losing on-street parking, either. She also is concerned about what traffic on Mission will be like if thousands of cars are moved off of King Street.

"If you move 3,000 cars off King Street and you put those cars on Mission, it would make that street almost undriveable," Kent said.

Cheryl Schmitt, the city's Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator, said she isn't sure what kind of reaction to expect Wednesday night.

"Nailing down what exactly the appropriate project is could be difficult," Schmitt said.

Last month, the Santa Cruz City Council approved signs for Mission Street that tell drivers cyclists are allowed to take the full lane when conditions are not safe to ride along the curb. But cyclists and city leaders are looking to do more to ensure bikers' safety.

If neighbors and cyclists reach consensus on a plan for King Street soon, the city could apply for a grant in July to pay for the signs and any necessary construction, Schmitt said.

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