

## People Power Candidate Questionnaire — August, 2006

Bruce Van Allen, candidate for Santa Cruz City Council

1. A. The county has expressed its support for a Rail Trail along the railway from Santa Cruz to Watsonville. Do you support this trail? If you support this trail, how do you envision creating it as soon as possible? How much do you think it will cost? Where will we get the money? How long will it take?

**Yes, I strongly support the Rail Trail, and I believe public acquisition of the railway corridor should be actively pursued. In the meantime, I support public as well as informal efforts to establish usable trail sections as soon as possible. Full public acquisition of the railway corridor will cost about \$25 million, including some track improvements and studies. About half of the total will come from State funds allocated from Proposition 116 transportation bonds. It's too soon to take positions on what might come to the voters from the Transportation Funding Task Force (the "Keeley Process"), but I look forward to seeing a serious commitment to the Rail Trail and rail corridor acquisition and improvements.**

B. Do you support passenger train service between Santa Cruz and Pajaro? If yes, what kind of service do you envision and what will you do to make it happen?

**Yes, I support passenger service; this will connect most of Santa Cruz County to the wider statewide rail system, by linking to the new service coming to the Pajaro station. I feel cautious about promoting this for long-distance commuting, because that makes it easier to maintain suburban land uses that depend on automobiles even if a household member commutes by train. As a City official, I would be interested in trying a variety of approaches to re-establishing the idea of passenger rail in the county, without locking into a specific idea prematurely.**

2. A. Do you support plans to widen Highway 1 between Santa Cruz and Watsonville? What effect do you think widening the Highway would have on county land use and development? Would it reduce traffic congestion? If so, for how long?

**No, I oppose widening Highway 1 between Santa Cruz and Watsonville. Widening the freeway here will just maintain the land use patterns that reinforce wasteful and expensive automobile use, by encouraging residential development far from jobs and commercial areas of the County. Congestion? After several years of construction impeding existing traffic, there might be a brief period when drivers experience less congestion on a widened freeway. But history shows that it would be only a short time before congestion reaches its former levels or worse. In addition, more cars flowing on the freeway means more congestion on streets in the County.**

B. Do you support the auxiliary lane project which would extend the current merge lane project out to Soquel? If not, what will you do to defeat this or other attempts to widen Highway 1?

**No, I don't support the auxiliary lane project. I think it has to be opposed both by elected officials, especially those appointed to the Regional Transportation Commission, and also by local residents who want more sensible transportation policies.**

3. For almost a decade now the city has planned to put in a bicycle connection from Broadway to Brommer. Do you support the city's latest plan for this connection?

Yes  No Additional comments?

**My "Yes" assumes that the City actually carries out adequate measures to protect the habitat and plant communities of Arana Gulch. Given further Coastal Commission review and the recently-filed lawsuit, there might have to be some changes to the City's latest plan.**

**The point is that, if done right, there are two great public benefits potentially to be achieved: the open space and habitat values of the land, and an accessible non-auto path for cyclists and pedestrians. I was on the City Council in the early 1980s that killed the huge road plan connecting Broadway and Brommer, and I helped lead the fight to protect and publicly acquire the Arana Gulch Greenbelt lands. Years later when cyclists began proposing a pathway, I felt this was an acceptable use if done in the context of a properly managed Greenbelt. Most protected habitat areas (Wilder, Pogonip, etc.) have designated paths in order to reduce human impacts on the majority of their land areas. While the debate over the Broadway-Brommer path has become acrimonious, I would still want and work for a solution, and I am committed to working on it in good faith with all parties if elected.**

4. City residents are worried about more cars and more car trips generated by a potentially expanding University. What will you do to insure that there is not an exponential increase of cars and car trips related to University expansion?

**First, I will vote this November for City measures I and J, to make UCSC expansion take local impacts into account. I will continue to support community efforts to persuade the University at all levels to meet its commitment to house more students on campus and to minimize auto usage by the campus community. While I don't believe the Santa Cruz community should bear the costs of the transportation required for access to the UCSC campus, I would support more public transit ways of reducing single-auto traffic. This might include expanded bus service, fixed- and flexible-route shuttles, bike shuttles/trailers, as well as more creative approaches that will take more time to conceive and implement.**

5. Do you support bicycle boulevards as a traffic calming/bicycle advocacy measure? (To make a bicycle boulevard, automobile traffic is blocked at strategic points while allowing bicycle and pedestrian traffic to go through—a good example is Bryant Street in Palo Alto.) Would you support creating bicycle boulevards on Pine, King, or Cayuga Streets?

**I like the idea, and think to do it is mostly a matter of devising specific plans for street sections with neighborhood support.**

6. The city council has given staff direction to extend the river levee under Highway 1 to the Tannery Project. The bicycle portion of this project doesn't appear to be progressing quickly. What do you know about the current status of this project? If you are on city council, how would you work with staff to make sure that this and other projects are implemented in a timely manner?

**I have worked for this since 1985, when it was added to plans for restoration of the San Lorenzo River after public meetings. I suppose that my experience with the overall river project shows that determination to move forward gets more than impatience does. I will continue to advocate for this trail linkage to be ready by the time the Tannery project is built. If elected, I will make sure that City staff understands the importance of this improvement, and I will pursue the issue in Sacramento, which has some responsibility for the delay.**

7. The parking of private vehicles on public and residential arterial streets is considered a right by many drivers and business owners. Parked cars often compete with bicyclists for road space and the opening of a car door into a bicyclist's path can result in a serious and common traffic accident. Would you support the removal of on-street parking where it will facilitate a safer space for cyclists?

**Yes. I want to see more places where parking near arterial streets is modified as will be done in the plans for the new Soquel Avenue bike lanes. I've been "doored" more than once, so I also would like to see more driver education and even tickets for drivers who fling their doors open into traffic without looking.**

8. What steps would you take to promote bicycling and bicyclist's safety? What improvements are you prepared to champion? How?

**Increasing bicycle safety and access is one of my motivations to run for City Council. If elected, I will continue to advocate for bike-friendly policies and more bike facilities throughout the City. I worked for the bike lanes added in downtown Santa Cruz in the earthquake recovery plan, and the increase in safety has been dramatic. This should be continued throughout the City. I also want better street-cleaning, so bike lanes are free from broken glass and other hazards.**

**Some improvements that come to mind are along the San Lorenzo River, which I have worked on for thirty years with a major goal being non-auto transportation improvements to the levee path system: getting a better bike/pedestrian bridgeway next to the railroad trestle at the river mouth, building a bridge across Branciforte Creek connecting the levee path with San Lorenzo Park, and getting the path improvements under Highway 1, which will serve not only the Tannery Arts project but also everyone seeking a safe way to ride to the Harvey West area and Highway 9.**

**It's worth mentioning here that a huge project that I have worked on for years will start construction in 2007: the pedestrian-bicycle bridge over the river just downstream of Highway 1; this will be cause for great celebration when it opens.**

**More generally, I want to fill the gaps in the City's bikeway system, especially for cross-town travel and access to schools. Rather than giving a long list of desirable improvements, I commit to being an active representative for cyclists, and to encouraging Santa Cruzans to bring forward their ideas for making bike travel available and safe.**

**Finally, in the coming year, Santa Cruz will adopt a new City General Plan, and I want to be sure that we incorporate bike-friendly policies throughout the Plan.**

9. How will people transport themselves in Santa Cruz twenty years from now in light of global warming and depletion of oil supplies (peak oil)? What policies and actions would you support to help the community face the consequences of climate change and decreased availability of fossil fuels?

**Transportation infrastructure and the built environment make old-fashioned approaches and dependencies persist long after they are recognized as destructive, so we have to start now to change the policies and investment patterns based on the old economy of cheap fossil fuels.**

**It's hard to predict what condition we'll be in twenty years, although we can expect fuel to be much more expensive, and all of us to be facing impacts of global warming that we only vaguely sense now. Drastic increases in fuel costs might not turn out to reduce auto usage very much in twenty years; demand for auto use is highly inelastic because it provides so much individual freedom and convenience, and because it seems so "natural" in our lives.**

**Cars provide great freedom, so I want to see large numbers of people freed from needing to drive cars for daily life. Cars are very convenient, so the healthier and more sustainable ways of moving must also be made as safe and convenient as possible. Cars fit lifestyles based on consuming without seeing the full costs to society and the environment, so I want pricing, education, and public awareness that reflects how our own choices link to the bigger picture of human survival.**

**I want the City to pursue serious steps now to address global warming in local transportation, architecture, and promotion of "green" industry. For transportation, the City could play a role in easing the hardship residents will experience as fuel becomes more expensive; this may come in many forms, including expanding public transit, assisting residents' efforts to reduce their driving, land use policies that eliminate the need to drive a car for daily commuting to work or school, and moving the rail trail and local passenger rail service forward. I will push to change major infrastructure policies, such as further highway expansion, so that we don't perpetuate the fossil-fuel economy that threatens to destroy us.**

10. How do you transport yourself?

**I am celebrating my twentieth year of not owning an automobile. My principle mode of transportation is my bike; I take the bus for some trips, and for longer trips or times when**

**I have to move large loads, I always look first for ways to share a vehicle already going my direction.**

**I rent cars or trucks on some occasions, although I have to watch out because I am now so acclimated to riding my bike that more than once I have left home and gone several blocks before realizing that the strange car parked in front of my house just cost me another day in rental fees.**

**I know that I am very fortunate to have health and work that allow me to do without my own car, and one of my goals in running for City Council is to make it easier for more people to share this good fortune.**