

UCSC report: Garage is best parking cure

UCSC - Growth

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SANTA CRUZ — Responding to criticism of their plan to build a 500-space parking garage, UC Santa Cruz officials say they will provide more types of alternative transportation on campus.

The final environmental impact report for the six-level garage, however, concludes the structure is the only way to relieve parking shortages on Science Hill. The report, released Friday, also binds the university to expanded carpool programs, shuttle service and off-campus park-and-ride lots.

"The (report) proposes a far-reaching new measure that is designed to minimize the number of single-occupant vehicles traveling to and from campus," said Charles Eadie, UCSC director of campus and community planning. "I think the big picture from the chancellor on down is the university wants to be a partner in alternative transportation plans, but we can't do it by ourselves."

While the alternatives are supported by

project opponents, such as university lecturer and City Councilman Mike Rotkin, they say the university isn't doing enough.

"These are simply mitigations for a bad project," Rotkin said. "I believe the university is failing to meet its obligations here."

The project is scheduled for approval by the UC Board of Regents July 16 in San Francisco. Rotkin said a group of garage opponents will attend the meeting.

The council is scheduled to meet in closed session July 13 to discuss its legal options. In May, a majority of council members said they were willing to take the university to court over the project.

The council opposes the garage on grounds it will increase traffic on the Westside. The city also maintains the university has not taken into account alternative transportation methods. It's unclear what effect the new changes will have on the council's decision, although Rotkin said he still favors litigation.

UC officials said the final impact report addresses many of the previous concerns and

legally binds the university to:

- "Immediately" implement transportation alternatives. That includes working with the Santa Cruz Metro Transit District to improve bus service to campus, expand car pool and van pool programs, improve campus shuttle service and work to develop off-campus park-and-ride lots.

- Appoint a joint university-city task force to develop long-term solutions to transportation and parking issues.

- Hire a consultant to develop a transportation-improvement program expanding on the existing UCSC program.

A consulting firm hired by UCSC concluded those plans also must be implemented for the parking garage to be effective.

The university has \$2 million for alternative transportation systems in this year's budget, and money given to the Metro Transit District for bus service, Eadie said. That number will go up about \$400,000 if the mitigation measures are adopted, he said.

The garage will meet parking demand

caused by the construction of three school buildings in the past 10 years, including the science library, a lab and the earth and marine sciences building, Eadie said. Adding to future demand are new buildings for interdisciplinary sciences and physical sciences.

Eadie said the university has plans for more parking structures, but is committed to increased cooperation with the city and the bus system in hopes of relieving the need for more on-campus parking.

"There are no immediate plans beyond this, but we are always going to try and find that right balance between getting people to not drive and provide parking that is necessary," Eadie said.

City Councilman Tim Fitzmaurice said Friday he hadn't yet seen the final impact report, but believed the mitigation measures didn't seem to address the council's real concerns.

As far as increased efforts toward alternative transportation planning, Fitzmaurice said, "It's where we should have gone for a long time now."