

Council likes new intersection plan

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SANTA CRUZ — Driving habits would be dramatically changed if City Council members follow through on a complicated road project at one of the town's worst intersections — Morrissey Boulevard, Soquel Avenue and Water Street.

City Council members tentatively approved traffic-pattern and signal changes Tuesday to address problems of long waits at traffic lights, a high accident rate, difficult left-hand turns, unusually long crosswalks and a general state of confusion at the intersection.

Council members and city traffic engineers hope the changes will be for the better, although they conceded drivers may have a hard time getting used to the new traffic pat-

tern.

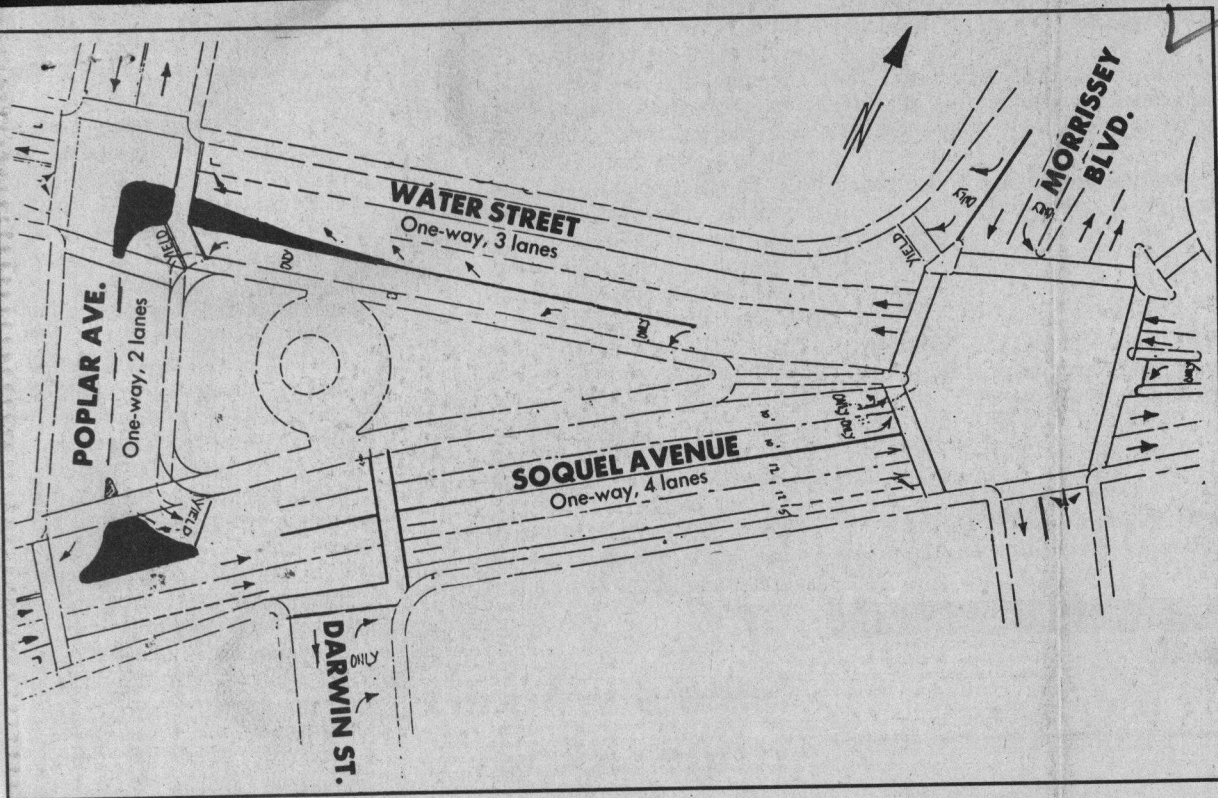
Traffic Engineer Jim Helmer said the changes would result in a "triangular traffic circle, counter-clockwise."

Added Councilwoman Jane Weed: "I've often wondered what we're going to do with this intersection. It's clearly a brainteaser for traffic engineers."

Council members unanimously agreed to seek bids from contractors to do the work, and to hold a public hearing in coming weeks on Public Works Department recommendations.

They tentatively approved recommendations to change portions of Soquel Avenue, Water Street and Poplar Avenue from two-way to one-way.

Soquel Avenue would be one-way. Please see back of section



Driving habits would change with proposed traffic pattern.

Traffic

Continued from Page A1 eastbound from Darwin Street to the intersection. Water Street would be one-way, westbound from the intersection to Poplar Avenue. Poplar would be one-way, southbound from Water to Soquel.

Traffic lights would be changed to reduce the wait between green lights.

It now takes as long as two minutes for a red light to turn green at any of the five streets feeding into the intersection, said Helmer.

"It has more delays than any other signaled intersection in the city," Helmer told council members. He said traffic-signal changes would reduce the waiting time to about 80 seconds or less.

The rotational order in which the lights currently change would be eliminated. Left-turn arrows, more dividers and bike lanes would be added.

Eastbound Water Street traffic would take a jog onto Poplar, then yield onto Soquel Avenue, before continuing through the intersection.

Morrissey southbound traffic would no longer flow into Soquel westbound, because of the change to one-way. A long left-hand turn lane on Water Street would feed westbound traffic into Soquel Avenue, via Poplar.

Council members ordered a review of the changes six months after the project is completed.

Helmer reported the number of accidents at the intersection is 10 to 15 each year, several with injuries. There were 13 accidents last year, he said.

Traffic Commissioners have held several well-attended public hearings on the traffic problems in the area, said Helmer.