

Plans for an east-west bike path are stalled, but not forgotten

Bicycle Paths

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City Councilman Keith Sugar has a plan he hopes will break the impasse over the missing link of an east-west bike corridor.

Since the City Council abandoned a plan to build a road across Arana

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Gulch in 1992, it has been studying a bike path

through the 63-acre patch of open space above the Santa Cruz Small Craft Harbor. The route, which would have con-

nected Broadway with Brommer Street, has since been mired in controversy.

Supporters say the path is the most direct route between Live Oak and Santa Cruz. Currently, cyclists must brave heavy traffic on Soquel Avenue or Murray Street to get from area to another.

Critics of the plan, Sugar said, argue the path would cut through the heart of sensitive habitat in Arana Gulch.

Sugar said that at the July 10 City Council meeting, he will propose abandoning the Arana Gulch route in favor of one that cuts through Frederick

Street Park to Live Oak, just below the Broadway-Brommer route.

"As long as we're focusing on Arana Gulch, it's never going to move forward," he said.

Sugar said the Arana Gulch route would probably prompt lawsuits because it passes through sensitive habitat in violation of city ordinances and state law. He said the Frederick Street Park alternative makes sense because it would be cheaper, be less environmentally intrusive and offer handicapped access to the harbor via Frederick Street Park.

Kem Akol, chair of the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission bicycle committee, said he has grown weary of the deadlocked bike path. He blamed delays on "Eco-Nazis" and people who don't want the path in their back yard. They don't see the larger public benefit of the path, he said.

While he prefers the Arana Gulch path, he supports the Frederick Street Park route in the interest of getting something built.

Cheryl Schmitt, bicycle and pedestrian coordinator for the city's Parks and Recreation Department, said an environmen-

6.26.01
tal analysis of two routes across Arana Gulch should be done in two months. The report will not evaluate Sugar's plan, but he said the same data could be used.

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