

Long-requested bike path gaining ground

Merchants claim lost parking would hurt business

Bicycle Paths
By SOLANA PYNE
SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT

Summer beachgoers may be short 91 parking spaces to make way for a bike path.

SANTA CRUZ

The two-way path will stretch from the intersection of West Cliff Drive and Bay Street, along Beach Street to the San Lorenzo River levee, connecting the West Cliff bike path to the levee path.

The Department of Public Works hopes to start a test project by early summer, said Cheryl Schmitt, bicycle and pedestrian coordinator.

It's been long requested, Schmitt said. Many bicyclists ride along Beach Street daily, but most do it illegally — riding on the sidewalk or against traffic on the one-way street.

"It's a heavily used area," said Piet Canin, the program director for the Bike to Work program.

"Why not make it safe?"

Beach Street merchants complain cutting parking will be bad for business.

"Local residents already won't come down to this area because there's not enough parking," said Steve Parmalee, owner of the Ideal Bar and Grill.

The lost parking spaces will be replaced by a proposed 250-300 space parking lot at the nearby depot site, Schmitt said.

Parmalee worries delivery trucks will have no place to park once loading zones are removed. It also could limit disabled residents' access to the area, he said.

The plan creates new loading zones and moves handicap parking across the street, Jessy Pu said.

"There are alternative bike path routes. There's no alternative to parking near your business," said Matt Twisselman, owner of four Boardwalk concession stands and president of the Beach Area Business Asso-



Dan Coyo/Sentinel

The city plans to take out 91 parallel parking places along West Cliff Drive and Beach Street between Bay Avenue and the river levee to construct a two-way bike path.

'A bike path at the expense of parking is reasonable, even exciting, for bicyclists. There's never going to be enough parking. Let's try to get people out of their cars.'

MICHAEL MOORE, CO-OWNER OF THE SPOKESMAN BICYCLES

ciation.

Twisselman and Parmalee said congested pedestrian and automobile traffic might make the path unsafe.

Bicyclists aren't worried. The plan is a long-awaited victory, said Michael Moore, co-owner of The Spokesman Bicycles.

"A bike path at the expense of parking is reasonable, even exciting, for bicyclists," Moore said. "There's never going to be

enough parking. Let's try to get people out of their cars."

Any alternative route will generate opposition, Moore said. If the path was moved to Third Street, as merchants have suggested, residents might complain.

The hilly street would be more difficult for bicyclists to ride, Canin said. People might keep riding down Beach Street.

"I think we could work together to come

up with something that makes more sense for bicyclists, business and the city," Parmalee said.

The project was approved by the City Council in 1998, but the Department of Public Works just raised the money.

The final plans must pass additional reviews by the Transportation Commission and the City Council, said Jessy Pu, associate engineer at the Public Works Department.

The Beach Area Business Association plans to suggest an alternative route at a public hearing at 7 p.m. Wednesday at the City Transportation Commission in the City Council Chamber, 809 Center St.

Contact Solana Pyne at spyne@santa-cruz.com.