

End is near for unrestricted beach parking

By CAROLYN
HEEBNER-SWIFT

Those carefree days of unrestricted parking at Live Oak beaches are just about over.

Although the demonstration "park-and-ride," system funded by the Urban Mass Transit Administration (UMTA) missed its target date this year, the parking ordinance that will set the project in motion is expected to reach the County Board of Supervisors by July.

Plans for the "Lot-to-Sea," experiment were outlined for about 30 Live Oak residents at a public meeting Thursday in the Live Oak School cafeteria. The purpose of the session was to re-introduce the idea to the community, and to give residents the chance to talk over their ideas and questions with the project's planners.

Details about the plan were presented by Neil McLaughlin, the project's supervisor, along with Phil Sanfilippo, assistant county

public works director, and Tom Higgins of the Urban Institute, an agency contracted by UMTA.

While some residents had doubts whether the permit-pricing, park-and-ride operation will relieve traffic congestion or solve the parking problems of the Live Oak community, there seemed to be a general acceptance and a "try it and see," attitude toward the two-year experiment.

Higgins, who first spoke to residents when the grant application was made to UMTA two-years ago, told the group about several similar projects now underway in other cities. Live Oak's is somewhat unique and of particular interest to UMTA, he said, because it involves both the permit pricing and residential parking system and the shuttle bus service in a tourist area. UMTA has provided the funding for two years, and during this time it will observe the workability of the project.

Preferential parking, Higgins said, has now been tried in about 25 other cities. Successful projects in northern California include systems in San Francisco, Palo Alto and San Jose which are designed to solve commuter parking problems in residential areas. Another UMTA-sponsored experiment is about to begin in the beach tourist area of Hermosa Beach.

Sanfilippo stressed the desire of the planners to collect as much comment as possible from Live Oak residents, and the audience was urged to share thoughts and opinions about the impact the system may have on local neighborhoods.

McLaughlin added that the system is to remain flexible at all stages. Changes may be made before the mechanics are set in operation, and other improvements can be introduced during the two-year experiment.

The system will operate as a four-point plan. The first component is the "parking by permit only," some to be established along the coastline, extending from the Yacht Harbor to Pleasure Point, south of East Cliff Drive.

McLaughlin explained that permit parking will be enforced only during the summer from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily. The pricing system only applies to the area of the zone, he added, and there are a number of private streets and state-owned thoroughfares that are exempted.

Examples are Black Point Lane, Maguire Street off Johans Beach Drive, South Palisades and Chesterfield

drives, and 23rd and 24th avenues.

Sanfilippo said some residents were concerned because the zone area appears to be too small.

"Everyone who felt they had no parking problem wanted to be left outside the zone," he said. "Yet one thing we really want to avoid is to push the parking problem up into other neighborhoods outside the zone. If it appears that this will happen, then we may have to extend the zone later on."

The second component of this system is the "Lot-to-Sea," shuttle system. Live Oak-bound traffic will be directed to a free parking lot at 17th Avenue and the railroad tracks, near the Live Oak Fire Station. Shuttle buses provided by the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District will arrive at frequent intervals to shuttle visitors to the beaches.

Live Oak resident Barney Bricmont challenged the selection of the 17th Avenue Granite Rock site for the parking lot.

"I have some concerns about the use of this property for the parking lot," he said. "For one thing, it appears you will not have this together until next year, yet the county has already signed an agreement to use the Granite Rock property for another purpose — so it looks as if you are preparing to use it for one year only."

"I am also concerned that this lot is too close to the beach area," he added. "It is going to encourage more traffic through Live Oak to get to that site."

Bricmont suggested the planners investigate the Sears parking lot at 41st Avenue, since this is already an established lot with available space, and is near the freeway.

Sanfilippo explained that costs of the shuttle service are established on a per-mile basis, and a site was needed close to the beach. A study of peak traffic hours also show that congestion on 17th Avenue is greatest on Friday afternoons, while the heaviest

concentration of beach traffic occurs on the weekends.

There will be signs posted from the freeway to direct tourists to the beach lots.

"We remind you," he said, "This will only be in the summer. The signs will be removed when the program ends."

A third component of the project is the seasonal parking permits that will be issued for on-street parking. Residents will be given one free parking permit per household to park in the zone, and additional permits for cars registered at the same address may be purchased. Sites and times that the permits will be issued will be announced in advance. Residents will be asked to provide proof of residency and ownership of their vehicles.

Guest permits for visitors will be provided to residents at a cost of about \$5 per pass for the entire season. McLaughlin assured the audience there will be opportunities to make special arrangements for certain occasions such as wedding receptions or parties if advance notice is received.

GREEN SHEET
May 31, 1980