

Santa Cruz Bikeway Program Has A Start

Bicyclists soon will find some city streets more safe and pleasant to use during east-west travel to their destinations, courtesy of the Santa Cruz City Council.

Some parking spaces - usually a sacred cow at City Hall - will be eliminated to improve the east-west bike route now being developed through the city. Four streets will be affected at this time, under decisions made by the City Council Tuesday. The streets are:

Mission Street - Mission Street narrows to 40 feet between Sylvar Street and Highway 1, and thus can accommodate a Class II bikeway only in the west-bound direction. To accomplish this, five parking spaces in front of three residences immediately west of Sylvar on the north curb will be eliminated.

Highland Avenue - Four parking spaces will be removed on Highland in the 100 block on the east curb adjacent to the church.

High Street - A Class II bikeway can be installed in the westbound direction between Highland Avenue and Storey Street if High Street is converted to a one way street. Parking on the north curb will be removed on High Street between a point 600 feet west of Storey Street to Kalkar Drive, affecting residences from 656 to 716 High St. About 80 parking spaces will be removed.

Water Street - Parking will be removed from 621 Water Street to Ocean Street on the north curb of Water. It is estimated nine spaces are involved. On the south curb of Water, some five spaces will be removed in front of Firestone Tires and the Victorian Inn Motel.

There was an additional proposal to remove four or five spaces on the north side of Water near Seabright Avenue so that a left-turn pocket could be established to ease traffic congestion and to provide safer conditions for cyclists traveling through the intersection.

However, a number of business people from this area turned out to protest the loss of the spaces. George Morondo said, for example, that the city had previously removed four spaces in this area and now proposes to remove four more although there are five businesses that depend on the spaces.

The protesting business people won at least a reprieve. On a proposal by Councilman Bert Muhly, all the parking space removals were approved except the ones the business people sought to save. There will be more discussion on these among the city, merchants and bicyclists to work out a solution.

One bicyclist, Kathy Skinner, suggested a good compromise in difficult situations would be to eliminate parking spaces at corners.

Another bicyclist reported she deliberately uses the more dangerous routes to show business people the routes that bicyclists want to use. But she said that the striping of Laurel Street "struck a happy medium" and she seemed to think more of this could be done elsewhere.

These are the first parking-space removals proposed under the city's bikeway plan. A public hearing was held on these, and other public hearings

will be scheduled as the other spaces come up.

The City Council has expressed determination to

make the streets safer for bicyclists while at the same time trying to protect the rights and interests of others.

The bicyclists want that safety and their rights on the road, too, but at all hearings to date they have been willing to accept proposals that appear to them to be reasonable.