

# Solutions to Capitola Mall-area traffic jams seem no closer

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The controversial issue of what to do with traffic in the residential areas around the Capitola Mall seems no closer to a solution today.

The Capitola City Council briefly discussed the issue last Tuesday night during a "clean-up" meeting scheduled after the council failed to finish its agenda during its regular meeting the previous last week.

A majority of council members asked City Planning Director Steve Russell to consider a series of plans, some already rejected by the council, for handling traffic in the Gross Road-Deanes Lane area north of the Capitola Mall.

Russell was also instructed to

consider a new plan that would open Deanes Lane between Clares Street/40th Avenue and Gross Road, and then to connect the southern end of Gross Road with Lotman Avenue.

The Council also suggested that the county Board of Supervisors be asked to join the city in master planning the entire area between the Mall and Rodeo Gulch, and Capitola Road and the freeway.

"It seems that we will come up with a better plan if we have some input from the county," Mayor Michael Routh said after suggesting that the supervisors be contacted by the city.

The council discussion, more of a brainstorming session than a discussion of a series of alternatives, covered the entire gamut of possibilities for the

area.

The city has received strong opposition from residents living along Gross Road and 40th Avenue to any proposal to funnel additional traffic, from either the Mall or nearby residential units to be built on Deanes Lane, on to their streets.

One suggestion made last week by Mayor Michael Routh would have solved one political problem for the council by extending the Redevelopment Agency boundaries to cover the 40th Avenue residential areas (which is now in the unincorporated county area) and then buying up the homes and turning the area into a commercial development.

"If you want to force those peoples' hands," councilman Bob Bucher said, "then just take down the barricade." A barricade on 40th Avenue now blocks Capitola Mall-bound traffic from using the residential street.

Councilman Dennis Beltram seemed skeptical of the proposal. "If that neighborhood chooses to cease to exist, then the barricade is the key to the final solution," Beltram said. "But I don't think these people

will agree."

Bucher argued that "40th Avenue is the key. We should have a meeting with those people and ask if they want to sell. There are developers out there interested in the land. Commercial property is more valuable than the homes are worth."

Bucher also endorsed Routh's suggestion of opening the connection between Gross Road and Lotman Avenue. A barricade now blocks through traffic.

"Lotman has to be opened up to Gross Road," Bucher asserted. "We should connect the streets the way they were designed and before the barricades went up."

"Opening up Gross to Lotman makes a lot of sense," concurred Councilman Jerry Clarke. "That is the way it was designed."

Beltram argued the opposite. "We should be thinking cul-de-sacs. We should buffer these neighborhoods, insulate the neighborhoods from the Mall."

"There won't be any answers until we realistically start tying neighborhoods together and open up 40th Avenue," Routh said.