

Soquel Avenue bike lanes planned

Bicycle Path
Eastside project
to cost \$225,000

By **DAN WHITE**
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

SANTA CRUZ — The city will undertake its largest bike-related project in a decade when it adds bike lanes to a half-mile stretch of Soquel Avenue this summer.

The lanes will be added between Seabright Avenue and Capitola Road at a cost of \$225,000, mostly to pay for relocating utility poles, install traffic signals and relocate some parking from Soquel Avenue to side streets, which will add spaces, city bicycle pedestrian coordinator Cheryl Schmitt said.

The Monterey Bay Air Pollution Control District will fund \$175,000 of the project, which the City Council approved last week.

The city is applying for state funds to reconfigure the Soquel/Capitola Road intersection to make it safer for bikes and pedestrians.

The lanes will be added between Seabright Avenue and Capitola Road at a cost of \$225,000, mostly to pay for relocating utility poles, install traffic signals and relocate some parking from Soquel Avenue to side streets, which will add spaces.

Residents such as Rick Hyman, a local bike advocate, have told the city the improvements are long overdue. He said there was talk of striping the avenue in the 1970s.

The road is the Eastside's main cross-town route, passing by key destinations: popular restaurants, a family drugstore, a medical clinic. But Hyman told the council it is a "nightmare" to ride bikes there.

Schmitt said the most "hale and hearty" of bicycle riders take Soquel Avenue back and forth to downtown.

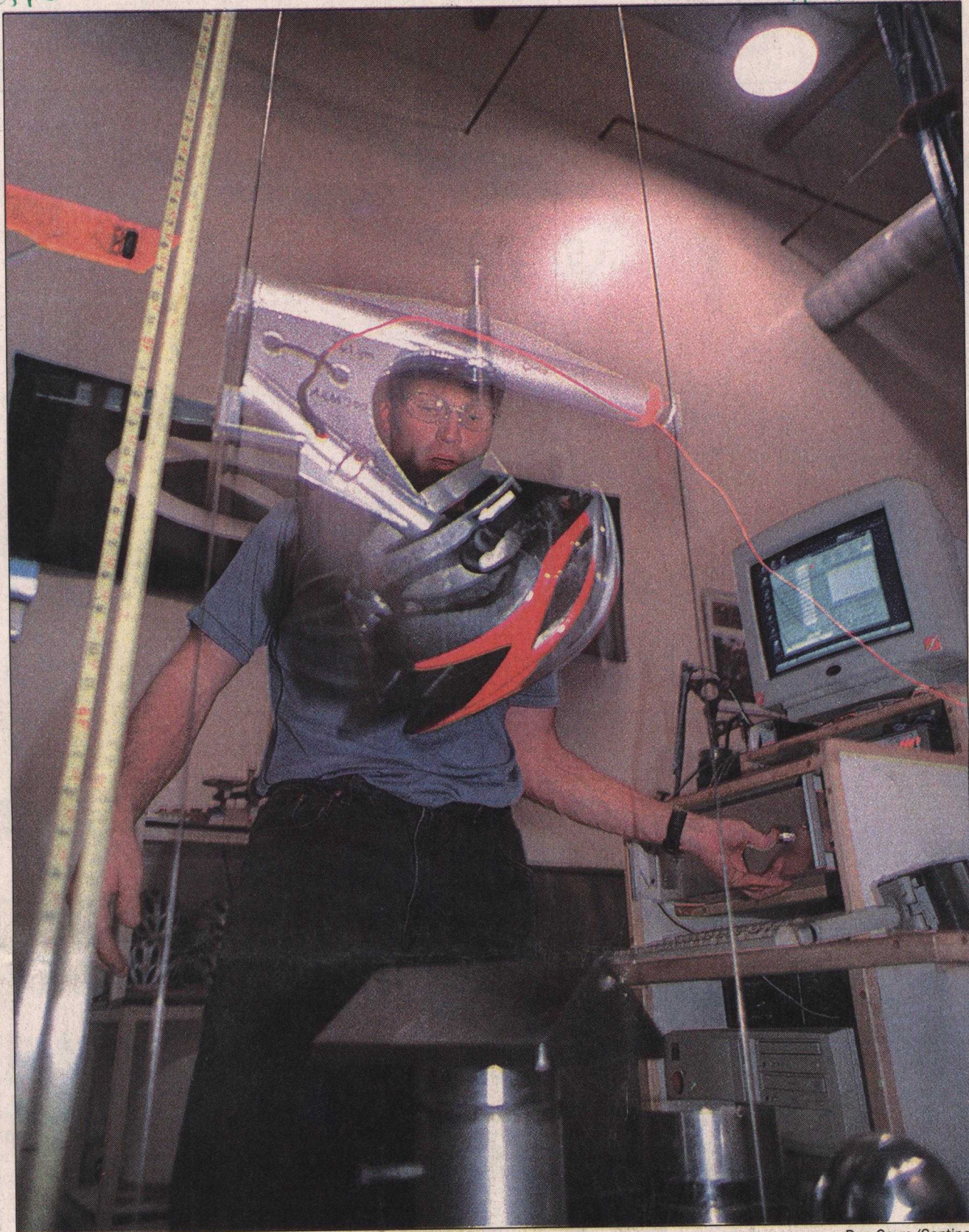
According to the city's latest traffic survey on the avenue, taken for one hour during an afternoon in October, 1,218 cars were counted going eastbound on Soquel Avenue, and 28 bikes. In the opposite direction, 575 cars, and 16 bikes, were counted.

For most of the half-mile section, Soquel Avenue will continue to have two lanes in either direction. The exception will be between Seabright and Poplar avenues. Between those streets, Soquel Avenue will be one lane in each direction with a dual left-turn lane into a row of business driveways.

The street in that section is now two lanes eastbound and one lane westbound. A westbound left-hand turnout to Frederick Street will be eliminated because there is not enough room, Schmitt said.

But the city will add a left-hand turnout from Soquel onto Trevethan Avenue.

Please see **LANES** on **BACK PAGE**



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Brian Sidwell conducts impact tests on Bell Sport's newest Giro bike helmet at the company's manufacturing facility near Harvey West Park.

Businesses getting behind bicyclists

By **NICOLE STRICKER**
SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT

SANTA CRUZ — Bicycling is big business in Santa Cruz and local cycling companies have banded together to flex their economic muscle.

The newly formed Santa Cruz Bicycle Industry Coalition, composed of bike shops and manufacturers, will advocate for cyclists using the clout of the large

Local industry generates \$125M annually

local industry.

The group aims to improve and increase cycling with local lobbying, promoting safety education and organizing events.

"I thought of everything that's already been done and realized, nobody is twisting the economic screws," said Michael Moore, chairman of the coalition and co-

owner of The Spokesman bicycles in Santa Cruz. "This is absolutely a legitimate business that has not thrown its weight around."

The local cycling industry generates more than \$125 million a year, and employs nearly 500 people, according to

Please see **BOOST** on **BACK PAGE**

Lanes

Continued from Page A1

She said there will be some widening for part of the project between Park Way and Mentel, directly in front of the Ford dealership. The city will widen the road in front of Carr Parts near Forest Avenue.

Soquel Avenue has bike lanes from Seabright to downtown, and from Capitola Road into the unincorporated areas.

"That's why this particular piece is so critical, because traffic volumes are so high right there, and that's exactly where bike lanes are missing," Schmitt said.

One outspoken opponent of the lanes is David Eselius, who said the city needs to do a comprehensive study on traffic flow, the impact of county traffic patterns, "the impact on the city downtown, the peak demands for traffic."

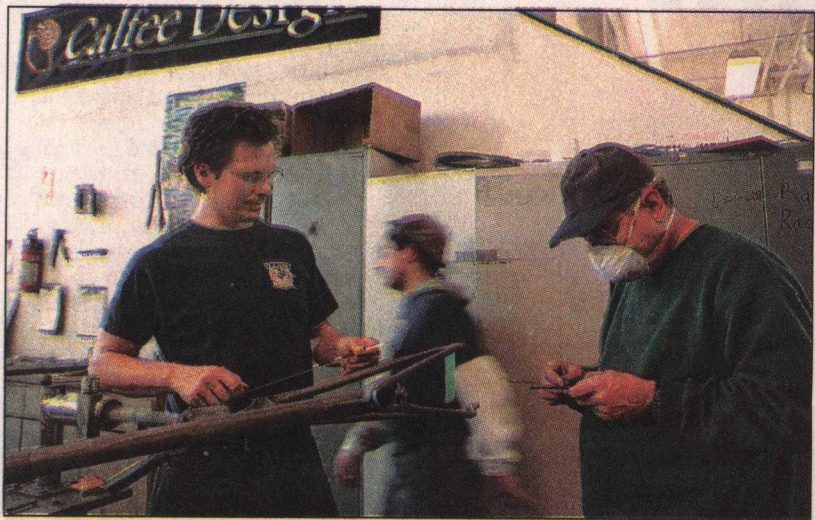
Eselius, who lives near Mission Street, said the city runs into safety and traffic-flow problems when it puts bike lanes on arterial streets.

"Look, bicyclists don't like that road to begin with," he said.

The council also gave a six-month extension to a "contra-flow" lane on part of High Street between Storey Street and Highland Avenue. The lane was added six months ago. The section is one-way traffic for cars going up toward UC Santa Cruz. Many bikes going down from the university tend to roll down that part of High Street against traffic in spite of the lack of a lane.

"We wanted to figure out a way so we could accommodate what was happening anyway and make it safe," Schmitt said.

Contact Dan White at
dwhite@santa-cruz.com.



Dan Coyo/Sentinel

Craig Calfee, left, makes high-end custom bikes in a section of the old Wrigley plant in Santa Cruz.

Boost

Continued from Page A1

a coalition survey. The revenue rivals the local strawberry market, the area's largest agricultural crop.

Local companies also lead cycling innovation. The helmet and wheels accompanying Lance Armstrong to his fourth Tour de France victory were designed here. This year, shocks designed by Watsonville-based Fox Racing Shox were deemed "most innovative" by a competitive cycling magazine.

Of the county's 33 bike shops, bike makers and bicycle component and accessory manufacturers, 27 responded to the survey. Nine of those companies have joined the coalition so far.

Their first order of business is to encourage the city transportation division to make temporary bike lanes permanent, especially one along Beach Street, a popular cycling route.

The group also will push for the rails-to-trails project — an effort to buy 32 miles of Union-Pacific rail line running from Davenport to Watsonville. Bike trails alongside the coastline tracks would span the county.

"It's a huge project," said Piet Canin of the coalition staff. "It's definitely the biggest bike project in the county."

Rail rights will cost \$15 million to \$20 million and Union-Pacific negoti-

ations are ongoing, Canin said. The transportation commission has dedicated more than \$10 million to purchase rights for the tracks, but the coalition worries pressure to widen Highway 1 may threaten the funds.

The coalition also will promote bicycle safety and security education. Because coalition members hold sway with the local cycling community, education efforts will be well spent.

"We have such breadth at the retail level — a lot of bike shops who do a lot of volume," said Moore. "We have the ability to touch hundreds and hundreds of customers every day."

The coalition hopes cyclists are more likely to heed safety messages from bike shops.

"These companies have clout and a coolness factor," said Canin. "When they deliver it, a lot more people will listen."

Cooperation with statewide and national bicycle-advocacy groups will fuel other coalition projects, including efforts to create more mountain biking paths, improve city cycling conditions and organize cycling events.

The coalition seeks to give a new voice to bicycle advocacy.

"It's not your typical band of advocates," Moore said. "These are business owners. It's a different set than the cliché bicycle revolutionary."

Contact Nicole Stricker at
nstricker@santa-cruz.com.