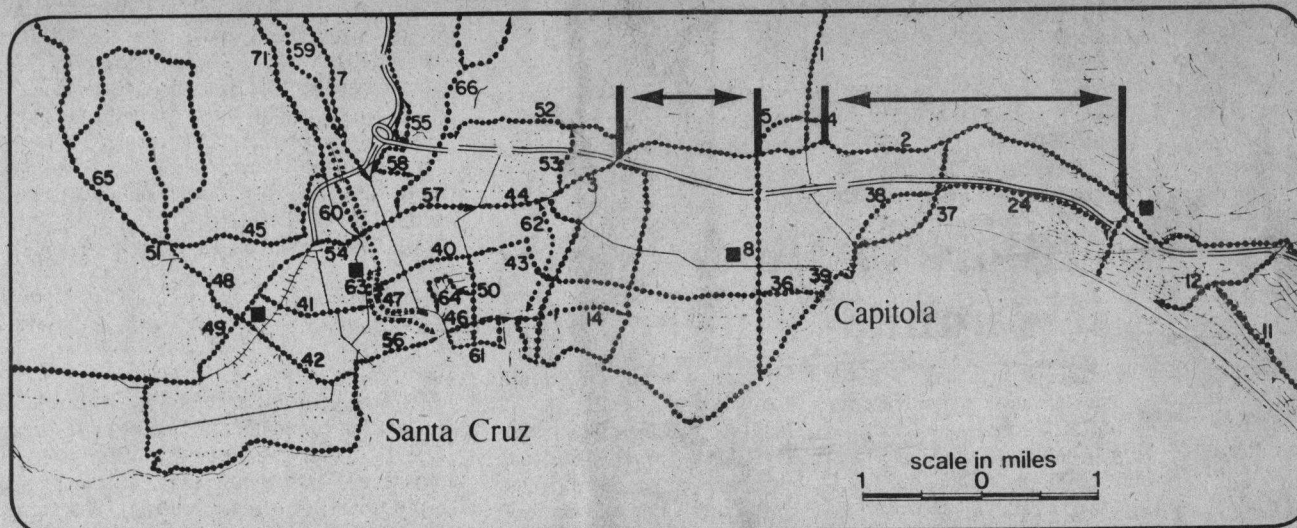


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Bicycle Paths



SOME OF THE BIKEWAYS planned as part of the county-wide network are shown in the map above, taken from the Regional Transportation Plan. The sections affected by the proposed parking ban are indicated, showing the exemption made for the Soquel village area. Not shown are five other exemptions to the ban, all businesses: Redwood Gifts; Oasis Lounge, Stan's Surfside Signs, and Paul's Auto Parts and Garage; Kester's Flower Shop; County Appliance Repair, Soquel Trading Center, and Byrmar Kennels; and Acme Wonder Antiques.

Ban of Parking on Soquel Drive bikeways

by Maxine A. Cohen

No one has objected to adding more buses or the expanded service of the Santa Cruz Metropolitan Transit District.

Nor has anyone protested plans to improve streets, highways and freeway access, such as the lengthy list of projects in the Regional Transportation Improvement Plan approved by the Board of Supervisors last week.

And no one got too excited about the bike routes that have gradually appeared during the past year at various locations in the county UNTIL the Board of Supervisors took the next step in implementing the Bikeway Element of the 1975-1995 Regional Transportation Plan, and acted to ban parking in bike lanes along Soquel Drive.

That brought merchants and residents on Soquel Drive, and citizens from neighboring areas, up in arms.

A heated protest surfaced Feb. 2, when a petition bearing some 1300 signatures was presented to Supervisors Dan Forbus and Dale Dawson at a special meeting at Mar Vista School.

The Supervisors promised the angry merchants a Public Hearing on the matter of the proposed parking ban, and originally set the meeting for March. It had to be postponed, and now is set for Tuesday, April 6, at 7:30 p.m. at the Soquel High School cafeteria.

It will be a full-blown public hearing, with the Supervisors from each district on hand to hear what people have to say. It is also anticipated that staff from various county departments will be present to answer questions.

Supervisor Forbus, who represents the 1st District, commented "I hope there will be a good turnout. I hope that everyone who wants to give testimony will do so." The greater

part of the route in question lies within Forbus's district, but also extends well into the 2nd District, represented by Dawson.

Dawson, along with Supervisors Cecil Smith, Ed Borovatz and Gary Patton, are members of the County's Transportation Commission that developed the Transportation Plan; the plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors a year ago. Prior to its adoption, six citizen input sessions were held throughout the county, and there were four public hearings before it was formally accepted by the Board.

Subsequently, the Supervisors adopted a Bikeway Policy at their meeting Nov. 25. The stated policy is to encourage bicycle use, working toward the goal of acceptance of the bicycle as "a major form of transportation and recreation." It is hoped that, by 1995, 20% of all residents' "work trips" -- trips to and from employment -- will be made by bicycle.

Ultimately, a county-wide network of bike routes is envisioned, connecting work, shopping, school and residential areas. Recreational/scenic routes are lower priority.

Some of the bike routes will be added to existing roads; some will be added as new roads are built, and some will be specially constructed to carry cyclists on separate paths.

Ideally, the routes that are identified by pavement markings as "bike lanes" will feature maximum safety for cyclists, and that's where the parking bans come in.

The sections along Soquel Drive identified in the proposed parking ban meet the high priority criterion. Access to shopping, schools -- in particular Cabrillo College and Soquel High School -- and some work and residential areas can be provided.

But parking problems already exist, according to merchants and others along the affected portions of Soquel Drive. New off-street parking lots have been discussed but are not yet a reality.

There is a traffic congestion at four separate peak times during each weekday; while various traffic control measures have been implemented and the 41st Avenue Extension is expected to alleviate some of the congestion, it will take time and more money for projects to arrive at solutions.

At it stands now, existing shoulder markings are multi-purpose: used by vehicles for parking, for bus stops, and by pedestrians where no other walkways exist.

Solutions to immediate problems, as well as the ones seen in the future due to growth projections, have been the subject of planning efforts reflected in a variety of documents.

For example, the Soquel General Plan adopted in 1973 suggests the elimination of parking along Soquel Drive as a partial solution to some of the area's problems. "Park-and-ride" areas are proposed in the Transportation Plan to facilitate and encourage use of public transit and/or bicycles as alternatives to the automobile.

Not yet adopted by the Board of Supervisors is the Urban Design Plan for Soquel and the new Aptos General Plan, recently completed after months of public input and professional planning. The Live Oak General Plan is still in being developed.

It is suggested that anyone not familiar with any of these documents, or with adopted County policies, take the time to consult them in order to place the bikeway parking ban in perspective. Copies are available for public review at the County Planning Department and at Public Libraries.