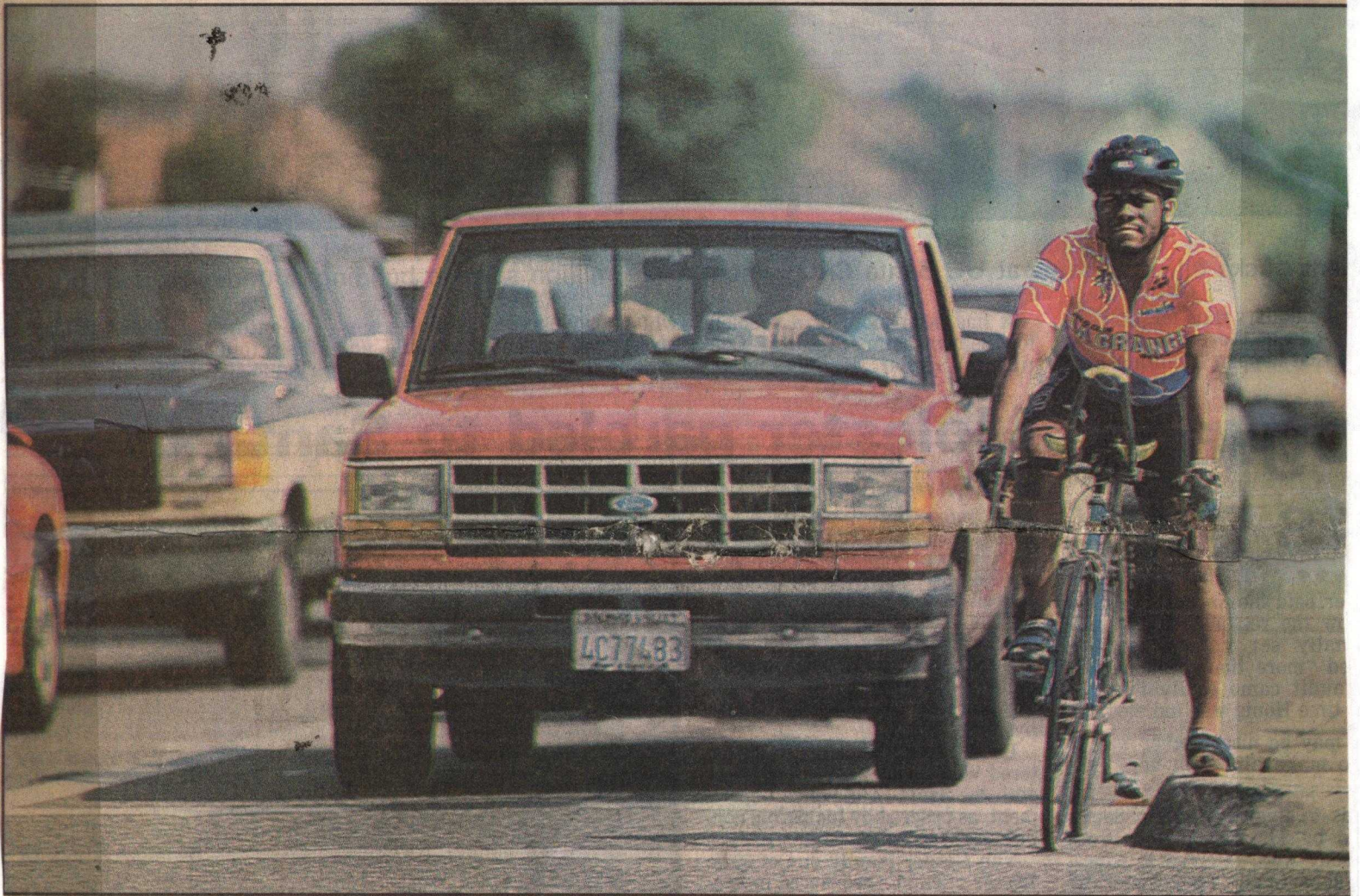


Congestion management



Bill Lovejoy/Sentine

County hopes more people will follow Marshall Wallace's lead and bike to work. He rides from SC to Watsonville daily

Program to get wheels off the road

By DENISE FRANKLIN
Sentinel staff writer

WATSONVILLE — Sweaty workers who ride their bikes to work freshen up in one of four showers. Others scan the ride-share board, searching for someone to ride to work with. Those successful in setting up car pools breeze into parking spaces set aside just for them.

A vision of the future? No.

Within the last four years, West Marine Products has voluntarily started these programs for its 250 employees in Watsonville. More and more employers will be following their lead, encouraging employees to stop driving alone to work as the county Congestion Management Program gets rolling next year.

"Those are for sure the kinds of things we want to see the major employers do as part of the implementation of the Congestion Management Program," said Pat Dellin, principal planner with the county Regional Transportation Commission.

The commission is required by state law to put together the program, which will affect

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— Pat Dellin,
Regional Transportation
Commission planner

all state highways and major streets in the county.

The program is spelled out in a 196-page draft document on which public comments, will be accepted through Thursday. After that, a final draft will be put together and made available for comments in June.

All urban counties were mandated to come up with a program to ease congestion when

■ Profile of a bike commuter — A12

voters passed Proposition 111 in June 1990.

By passing Proposition 111 and two other propositions, Californians set aside a lot of money through bond sales and a gas tax increase specifically for improving transportation. They also directed that counties come up with programs outlining how best to spend the money.

The state Legislature passed laws instructing what should be in the programs. For example, it ordered that all programs must require local cities and counties to adopt so-called "trip reduction ordinances" to ease congestion by cutting down on vehicle trips.

These ordinances are the part of the program that probably will affect employers most directly.

"Traditional business interests are concerned about the costs," said Linda Wilshusen, the commission's executive director.

The commission, working with local em-

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ployers, is putting together a model ordinance that local jurisdictions can use when coming up with their own by January 1993.

"The actual model trip reduction ordinance is under development ... But what we've been talking about is that it include some activities that large employers of a certain size will have to do," said Dellin.

"For instance, they can have carpool parking or put in bicycle lockers or do a ride-share board," Dellin said.

"Or they might require that employers do a survey of what transportation modes employees are using and start a program with various incentives of their choice. Then they would do a survey a year later to find out what kind of increase in the use of alternative transportation modes they have gotten."

Local cities and the county probably will gear their trip reduction ordinances to air pollution reduction goals recently set by the Monterey Bay Unified Air Pollution Control District, she added.

The county's Congestion Management Program does other things as well. It sets up:

- A level of service for all state highways and major streets intersections.

This level of service is a traffic engineering concept that measures the performance of an intersection. If intersections get too congested and don't meet this level of service, then the local jurisdiction where the intersection is located has to show how the problem will be corrected.

- A computerized model that will be used for evaluating the transportation impacts of development proposals.

- Standards for the frequency, routing and coordination of all bus services.

- A seven-year capital improvement program aimed at improving or maintaining levels of service on intersections and bus standards.

- Ways to analyze the impacts of development on transportation.

- Ways to monitor levels of service at intersections and bus standards and to annually determine that each local jurisdiction is following the program.

If it's discovered a local city or the county isn't meeting the mandates of the program, the commission can turn them in to the state controller, who can withhold gas tax money.

"That really is the stick in this document," said Wilshusen. "I don't think it would actually ever come to that. But we want people to take this seriously and try to follow the policies as much as possible," she said.

Written comments on the draft Congestion Management Program can be sent to the Santa Cruz County

This commuter fits program perfectly

WATSONVILLE — Marshall Wallace is the kind of commuter the writers of the draft county Congestion Management Program like to see.

Wallace, single and 24, bikes nearly 44 miles roundtrip from his home on Swift Street in West Santa Cruz to his inside sales job at Port Supply, the wholesale supply division of West Marine Projects in Watsonville.

And when he can't bike to work on his 18-speed Miyata, he rides in a car pool.

One of the goals of the congestion program is to have all local jurisdictions adopt an ordinance by January 1993 requiring employers to encourage their workers to find alternatives to driving to the job alone.

Those alternatives could include bicycling, car pooling, or using public transit.

West Marine Products is one of the local businesses that is ahead of the game.

"They actually do promote using alternative methods such as car pooling or riding a bike," said Wallace of his employer who he's worked for since June.

West Marine helps make Wallace's bike trip possible by providing showers where he can freshen up before work. It also has a ride-sharing board and reserved parking for car pools.

"I sold my car right after I got out of the Marines and have been riding my bike ever since," said Wallace, who says his bike commute also keeps him in shape for bike racing.

"Everywhere I go is within 30 miles of my home, so it is easy. Right now, I am looking into buying a motorcycle as an alternative means of transportation if I want to go to Monterey or Southern California."

But even now when he takes long trips to Southern California, Wallace has come up with a way to ease congestion. He usually hitches a ride with a West Marine truck that's headed that way.

Denise Franklin

Regional Transportation Commission, 701 Ocean St., Room 220, Santa Cruz, where copies are available. The public hearing will be at 9 a.m. Thursday in the Board of Supervisors chambers on the fifth floor of the County Center, 701 Ocean St.