

SANTA CRUZ

Beach Street bicycle path gets the OK

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In the end, the City Council decided it was time to pedal or get off the bike seat.

The council approved a plan Tuesday night to install a two-way bike path along Beach Street.

"We've been talking about this for 12 years," Councilman Ed Porter said.

As with most plans in Santa Cruz, the path was controversial.

The two-way path would run along the Beach Boardwalk side of the street. Westbound cyclists would travel facing the eastbound traffic. Those cyclist would be separated from vehicles by cyclists traveling eastbound on the bike path and a 10-foot lane for shuttle buses emergency vehicles.

The plan removes much of the on-street parking along the beach side of the street, much to the chagrin of some business owners who said their businesses would suffer.

"We at the west end of Beach (Street) end up with no parking," said Steve Parmelee of Ideal Bar and Grill at the foot of the wharf.

City engineer Ron Marquez said 91 spaces would be removed, but 71 would be created elsewhere, for a net loss of 20 spaces.

Businesses said those spaces would be mostly be on the Beach Flats end of the street, away from the congregation of businesses near the wharf.

Critics also saw problems with moving disabled parking spaces from the beach side of the street and the loss of loading zones. While new loading zones would be created, business leaders said they would be too far-flung to be useful for daily business loading.

Supporters hailed the plan for filling a gap between West Cliff Drive and the eastern portions of the San Lorenzo River levee bike path.

They noted the path would simply legalize what many riders already do, and said those cyclists would be potential business customers.

"If you build something, people will use it," said Micah Posner. "Those cyclists are all customers."

The temporary lanes could be in place by March, Marquez said. After three months, the city will assess any problems associated with the path. In the meantime, the city will meet with business proprietors to discuss their concerns.

Councilman Mark Primack cast the lone dissenting vote, citing safety concerns.