

Park Avenue parking ban challenged

The placement of "No parking" signs along both sides of Capitola's Park Avenue is being challenged by one resident as unfair to the area's residents.

The City Council will hold a public hearing at 7 p.m. Thursday on the appeal by Thomas of 516 Park Ave., of the erection of the "no parking" along bike lanes on both sides of Park Avenue from Monterey Avenue to Kennedy Drive.

The signs are already in place along the roadway but they remain covered until the Council rules on Thomas' protest.

"I find it difficult to comprehend how this decision was reached, considering the fact

that no public notices were posted in the vicinity and no notification was given to the residents whose homes were directly affected by this decision.

"Don't get me wrong, I am all for the bike riders' enjoyment and safety on our streets, but not when it causes a serious hardship to the property owners' ability to use the same. I understand and agree that Park Avenue can be dangerous to drivers, bike riders, pedestrians and residents, but those of us who live along this stretch of road are well aware of the problem and live accordingly."

The decision is an old one, dating back to Sept. 24, 1981,

when the Council unanimously approved the creation of a bike lane on Park Avenue and no parking along both sides of the roadway.

The bike lanes were striped along both sides of the street, says Public Works Director Craig French in a memo to the City Council. "At the time the striping was done, the signs were not put up because little conflict existed. Since then, however, conflicts have arisen with autos parking in the bike lane."

The issue came to a head, French said, when the County Transportation Commission's bicycle coordinator reminded the city that state standards for a "Class II bike lane" include

a minimum five foot striped lane and no parking restrictions along the roadway.

Thomas says the work will have a major conflict on the residents along the street.

"Please consider for a moment," she wrote the Council, "what it would mean to you if you were no longer allowed to park in front of your own home; if your friends preferred not to visit because of limited off-street parking, if your parents had to park their car blocks away and walk on a rather dangerous street, perhaps in the rain, to get to your front door; if you couldn't give a party unless you provided your own shuttle service."

Thomas added in her appeal letter: I feel that the options available were not given sufficient consideration, and I must admit the thought crossed my mind, because there are not many of us who would be affected by the change, that maybe we wouldn't notice or bother to complain. Well, we couldn't help but notice and we have to object — emphatically!"

She suggests leaving the "no parking" signs along the railroad side of Park Avenue only and provide an alternate bike route for west bound traffic along Monterey Avenue, or re-stripe the bike lane to allow parking and bike lane usage in front of the residential areas with access to Park Avenue and reduce the speed limit to 25 or 30 mph (it's now 35 mph).

French wants to go ahead and unbag the "no parking" signs.

In his memo to the council,

the public works director said "The only conflict with cars occurs on the north side of Park Avenue between 600 Park Avenue and Washburn Avenue. Residents do park in this area.

"Rerouting the bike lane, say to Monterey Avenue, poses more conflict than would exist on Park Avenue and Park Avenue represents the more direct and more traveled route," French, who lives on Monterey Avenue, noted.

Thomas ended her appeal, saying "I appeal to your better judgement on this matter, not so much for us personally but for our neighbors who will be affected more severely than ourselves. I don't think this is asking for any more than the rest of the residents in Capitola enjoy. I only ask that as you evaluate the alternatives, that you act as though you were living on Park Avenue and it is you whose lifestyle will be altered accordingly."