

City Council OKs widening bike path

Bicycle Path
Approved despite outcry from
West Cliff Drive community

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The City Council on Tuesday rejected an appeal filed by West Cliff Drive residents who oppose widening the road's popular pedestrian and bike path.

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On a 4-2 vote, the council agreed a wider path would better accommodate the diverse users of the 2.5-mile path that parallels West Cliff Drive.

"This is a great opportunity to improve this asset," Mayor Tim Fitzmaurice said.

The project will widen the path to 14 feet between Bay Street and Swanton Boulevard and narrow the road to a minimum of 22 feet. Only 6 percent of the road would be 22 feet.

The council's vote came despite more than a dozen residents who spoke against the project. They said widening the path and narrowing the road is a waste of money and would force fast-moving bicyclists onto the

9.19.01
path, jeopardizing the safety of other users. Residents also said a narrowed road would slow emergency vehicles and that construction could impact the environment.

Craig Britton, president of the West Cliff Drive Owners Association, presented a petition with the signatures of more than 500 residents opposed to the project.

Darrell Darling, owner of West Cliff Drive's Darling House bed and breakfast inn, was one of the opponents.

"The design before us doesn't improve (the path)," he said. "It exacerbates the problems."

He and other residents suggested creating a bike path on West Cliff Drive itself to separate slow-moving pedestrians from cyclists.

But public works officials said a bike path must be at least 5 feet wide, and that there is not enough room.

The project already has gone out to bid, but proposals came in high. The city plans to send the project out to bid a second time and seek additional funding. Currently, the city has \$900,000 to spend on the project. Construction was supposed to begin in the fall, but it will now be pushed back to spring.

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