

# Options for King Street

A plan to make King Street a safe and desirable bicycle through-route as an alternative to Mission Street has been in the City's General Plan for more than a decade. The recent deaths of two bicyclists on Mission have refocused attention on this important facility. After the second fatality in August of 2008, the City Council voted to develop plans for a bikeway on King Street.

In order to help neighbors choose which plan is most beneficial and least disruptive, to King and the surrounding streets, People Power has prepared a summary of some likely alternatives. Different treatments could be used east and west of Bay, which have very different usage patterns and traffic counts. If you have any questions or would like to give us your input, please contact People Power at **425-0665** or **micah@peoplepowersc.org**. (People Power represents cyclists in Santa Cruz County.)

## ■ BIKE BOULEVARD

A plan designed by traffic engineers with expertise in the field would discontinue the use of King Street as an arterial by diverting through traffic onto Mission Street. This would be accomplished without increasing traffic on adjacent streets, including Escalona. Bicycles would be able to ride the length of King, and would share the street with local traffic, pedestrians and access for fire trucks and ambulances would be preserved. Bike Boulevards currently exist in communities throughout the country, including Berkeley, Palo Alto, and Portland, Oregon. Berkeley's diverter system was put into place to solve similar problems with University of California automobile traffic using neighborhood streets as alternate through-routes. Drivers will adapt to diverter system by no longer attempting to use neighborhood streets including King to avoid Mission, similar to the current traffic flow south of Mission (Seaside, Acacia, etc.).

The Bike Boulevard plan is supported by many north-of-Mission residents who view it as a way return King Street to a neighborhood street, while lowering overall traffic in their neighborhood. The basic proposal has been endorsed by King Street Neighbors, Lower Escalona Neighborhood, People Power, Community Traffic Safety Coalition, the Coalition for Neighborhood Preservation, as well as teachers in the Greater Santa Cruz School District.

## Advantages

- In addition to creating a safer place to bike, this proposal would make King Street better for pedestrians, children, skaters—and even for residents backing out of their driveways.
- Conversion to a Bike Boulevard would increase property values on King Street.
- Other streets that currently bear cut-through traffic as feeders to King, such as Laurel and Walnut, would have similar benefits to King. Alternative routes such as Escalona would have additional protections to insure that they did not absorb any of the traffic intended for Mission.
- While many drivers would divert onto Mission, some trips would actually be eliminated, as people would choose to walk or ride on the newly created facility. This would reduce the overall amount of traffic in the neighborhood.
- There would be no loss of parking.
- Most cyclists would choose to ride in the street—not on the sidewalks—thus creating a safer environment for pedestrians.

## Disadvantages

- With diverters in place, using neighborhood streets to avoid Mission would be time consuming and discouraging for residents as well as non-local drivers. Traffic on Mission would increase by 5–10%, which could create further congestion, especially at intersections during peak hours. Some increase in traffic would also occur on Bay and High, though probably not enough to significantly worsen congestion.

## ■ BIKE LANES WITH PARKING REMOVAL

The simplest and cheapest way to create a safe corridor for cyclists would be to remove parking on one side of King Street, creating enough room for bike lanes on both sides. The street would have a 4-foot bike lane on one side, two 10-foot automobile travel lanes, and a 5-foot bike lane next to parked cars on the other side.

### Advantages

- Bike lanes are a well-understood feature that occur throughout the city. People Power supports this proposal, though it has not been adopted by any organized neighborhood groups so far.
- Most cyclists would choose to ride in the bike lanes, creating safer sidewalks for pedestrians.

### Disadvantages

- Residents would lose parking on one side of King Street,\* which could impact parking available on the rest of the street or on side streets. Due to the permit parking system, however, only 50-70% of currently available parking on King Street is being used.
- The bike lanes that would be created would be of minimally acceptable width, with narrow automobile lanes.
- Bike lanes would do nothing to decrease the amount of traffic in the neighborhood. As more development occurs on the west side, more traffic can be expected on streets north of Mission.

## ■ SHARROWS

This is a proposal to simply paint the street with symbols indicating that bicyclists should ride down the middle of the lane.

This proposal is not acceptable to People Power, nor does it meet the expectations of the City Council, which has a dedicated bicycle on King Street in their General Plan. To quote incoming Councilmember Don Lane, The City “needs to create a very bike-friendly corridor on King Street and then have good signage to guide Mission Street cyclists over to King.”

### Advantages

- Slight benefit to experienced and confident cyclists would be realized with this option.

### Disadvantages

- Proposal does nothing for inexperienced cyclists who are the primary target of improvements.
- Proposal does not decrease the amount of automobile traffic through the neighborhood.
- Proposal does not create a desirable facility that would draw cyclists off of Mission.
- Sharrows are potentially confusing and dangerous for drivers and cyclists unfamiliar with them.
- Placing cyclists in middle of the lane with current traffic volumes could create long delays for automobiles.

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\* **Option for Mitigating Parking Loss in the Long Term:** In the long term, bike lanes on both sides of the street could be created by cutting parking spaces into the park strips (also known as green strips—the spaces between the sidewalk and the street that currently has trees and other plants) and using space allotted for parking as for adequate full-time bike lanes. Unlike the other proposals, this project would be very expensive (millions of dollars) with no obvious funding source to pay for it. This option would therefore require an interim measure. Thus, conversation on one of the other options is more pertinent at this time, though the green strip parking plan could be viewed as a long term mitigation to a loss of parking, if desired by neighbors.

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