



Memorandum

TO: City Council

FROM: Councilmember Rose Herrera

SUBJECT: Downtown Sidewalk Bicycle Riding

DATE: November 26, 2014

APPROVE

Rose Herrera mg

DATE

11/26/14

RECOMMENDATION:

Accept staff's recommendation of Option 1 with the addition of:

1. Reduce enforcement hours of the ban to exclude late night and early morning hours where there is significantly reduced pedestrian traffic
2. Direct staff to study adding bike infrastructure enhancements to Santa Clara Street and report back to the Transportation and Environment Committee on potential projects and their costs

BACKGROUND:

Many concerned pedestrians have come to us over the last year with stories of how they have been jostled, harassed and even struck by cyclists riding on the sidewalk. This concern reached its highest level a few months ago when a pedestrian was struck and killed by a cyclist riding through San Jose State's campus. The nature of this problem in the downtown area has been well documented by both anecdotal observations brought to our attention by residents and staff and data collected from a study of Santa Clara, San Fernando and First Streets. We know that there have been collisions between pedestrians and cyclists, especially among the senior population, and taking place in downtown areas that see high volume use by cars, pedestrians, and cyclists. We know that around the peak hours of concern, 75% of cyclists using Santa Clara Street rode on the sidewalk, and of them 17% displayed reckless riding behavior. It is for all these reasons that I support the staff recommendation to ban riding bicycles on the sidewalk in the Option 1 designated zone.

However, as we discuss this issue we must also take into account the safety of cyclists in the downtown area. Every year we can see cyclists getting struck and killed by cars that were sharing the street with them at the time. Just as the speed and size of bicycles can cause harm to pedestrians, so can cars cause very serious harm to cyclists as they ride in an unprotected portion of the street. There are two ways we can address this concern without significantly changing the protection this policy affords pedestrians. The first is to allow cyclists to ride on the sidewalk late at night and in the early morning. During this span of time bars in downtown start to let out and there can be seen significantly fewer pedestrians and seniors on the sidewalk. For these reasons, during this time there is an increased risk of reckless driving throughout the downtown area and a decreased chance of a

cyclist colliding with a pedestrian on the sidewalk. During this time we must allow for a cyclist to utilize the sidewalk without worry of repercussions should they feel the street has become unsafe.

This is not a debate about pedestrians versus cyclists as sometimes portrayed, but rather a debate on how everyone, cars, busses, light rail, pedestrians and cyclists alike, share a public right of way. Until we build the proper infrastructure that enables cyclists to both take advantage of their right of way and feel safe, we will see more conflicts between pedestrians and cyclists.

One particular street of concern is Santa Clara Street. The street is not designed to separately allot space for motor vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclist. We can see that the results of this is tension between cyclists, cars, and pedestrians. Without clear space separation or guidelines from the city, cyclists with no designated space will have to choose between sharing limited space with cars or pedestrians, increasing the potential for collision and harm for all parties. This is why we must look into what it would take to make the downtown public right-of-way truly a multimodal space that safely facilitates many kinds of transportation.