

April 16, 2021



Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition
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Dear Reimagining Community Safety Advisory Group,

On behalf of Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition, a nonprofit working to improve the community, economy and environment through the everyday use of the bicycle, I am writing to convey our early thoughts on the Advisory Group process.

First, we at the Bike Coalition want to be clear in acknowledging that this process was prompted by the death of George Floyd. While this letter outlines the specific ways in which the bike movement is impacted by law enforcement, first and foremost, this process is about the safety of those who are a part of the BIPOC community.

That said, the main reason for SVBC's interest in the Advisory Group's work is the role that public safety plays in traffic enforcement. Bicyclists are some of the most vulnerable roadway users. The Bike Coalition's membership is keenly interested in making sure that those who ride for fun or because they can't afford an automobile, are able to do so without getting maimed by a car.

We also know that a minor ticket can be the first step on a fast escalator to bad outcomes for those who identify as BIPOC. For that reason, many in the movement for mobility justice, including SVBC, have officially removed enforcement from the tools advocated for to create safer streets. We rely instead on engineering and design that compels good driver behavior. For example, we know that speed kills and that 9-foot roads will cause drivers to slow down, reducing the need for officers to police the streets.

This topic has larger implications if broadened to incorporate the policing of people in public spaces, whether walking, jaywalking, living outside or having fun at outdoor events and festivals.

That brings us to another reason SVBC is interested in this process and that is the role of law enforcement in open streets programs like Viva Calle as well as slow streets networks. This is a concern shared by others who organize festivals in San Jose as the cost and time associated with police staffing requirements can make an event prohibitive for a nonprofit. SVBC helped spur San Jose to create Viva Calle and finds it difficult to justify the police staffing requirements, especially since open streets events take place all around the world with little to no police involvement.

On the topic of slow streets, at the beginning of the pandemic, SVBC along with several other organizations, (SPUR, Greenbelt Alliance, Walk San Jose, and Silicon Valley Leadership Group), approached the City of San Jose. Together, we requested that the City do as Oakland had done, to limit through-traffic on residential roads, allowing residents to walk and play in the streets in the era of social distancing and sheltering in place. The response from the City was no. The reasoning was rooted in the amount of required police

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review of a slow streets network and the perceived need for police to continue to monitor and enforce that network. Other cities have implemented a slow streets network with little to no police involvement, including 79 miles of streets in Oakland.

While the Advisory Group is a long way off from discussing these types of specifics, we wanted to help you all understand why this is an important issue for people who pedal for transportation. This is in addition to all the other important reasons that motivate each and every one of you to be a part of this process, that first and foremost, we must, whether it directly impacts the bike movement or not, work to eradicate racist systems, practices and policies, and create a wonderful and safe community in San Jose.

The Bike Coalition would like to highlight three other thoughts related to process:

Briefing Packets: Staff should make sure to draft and provide briefing materials to the Advisory Group and have those posted and easily accessible to the public one week in advance. While we understand that the General Plan Update Task Force is resourced at a much higher level, that Task Force's website and quality of materials should be a model to follow. An agenda and power point posted three days in advance is not enough.

Resources: SVBC questions whether the Advisory Group is adequately resourced to tackle such an important topic and raises the question of whether a request should be made to the City Council for additional budget to fund adequate data collection, outreach, and staffing.

40: Forty members is too many without other methods to ensure quality conversation that results in outcomes that are supported by those involved. At the last Advisory Group meeting, there was discussion about breakout groups. This approach was used for the City's Diridon Station Area Advisory Group, (SAAG) and SVBC felt it worked well. Regardless of the method, SVBC would encourage an outlet for facilitating conversation amongst Advisory Group members outside of the official meetings.

Thank you for your consideration of our comments early in this process and for your commitment to taking on this important work. We look forward to helping to create a San Jose that is safe through the strength of its connections between residents, especially since we at the Bike Coalition know that community-building and safety can be accomplished, in part, by living life joyfully by bike!

Sincerely,



Shiloh Ballard
Executive Director
Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition