



EXPERIENCE MATTERS

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Positive Outreach

But will it produce results?

By Sophie Braccini



Niko Letunic, center, and a group of interested bikers discuss the route they want to explore on Oct. 3. Photo Andy Scheck

A new group of Moraga residents last week got their feet wet participating in local democracy. Through a brainstorming session and an exploratory bike ride, the residents provided input to update Moraga's bike and pedestrian plan, hoping to make Moraga more bike and pedestrian friendly. The question is, once the new plan is drawn up, will the Town Council make it a priority and fund it?

Consultant Niko Letunic of Eisen/Letunic, a transportation, environmental and urban planning firm, led the public brainstorming session on Sept. 29 at the Ha-

cienda de las Flores. Letunic reminded the 30 or so residents who attended that the purpose was to create a realistic 10-year plan aiming at improving bicycle and pedestrian safety, as well as encouraging more people to use these alternate modes of transportation. Groups of six residents were formed; they looked at a map of the town, pointing out deficiencies from both pedestrians and bicyclists points of view.

The participants highlighted the places where sidewalks and bike lanes are discontinuous or in poor condition. Some asked

that local schools be involved in the study. Everyone noted the poor state of Rheem Boulevard, some asked to improve the connection between neighborhoods and existing trails, while others compared their experience in other cities that welcome pedestrians and bicyclists, and have signage on roads to improve safety.

Approximately 20 people participated in the Oct. 3 bike ride to explore and pinpoint on the ground dangerous areas around town for bicyclists. Most participants were in their mid-30s to late-40s, and were fathers of young children, students and active younger moms, who share a love for the outdoors that they explore on foot or bike, with or without kids in tow. The majority were serious bikers including Lance Larsen of Moraga, who has been on bike teams for years, Miles Frank, who is part of Saint Mary's College bike team, Elaine Ebner, an Orinda resident who is the president of Tieni Duro Junior Cycling, and many other current or former Moraga residents and a few casual bicyclists.

The ride started from the library northbound on St. Mary's Road to the corner of Rheem Boulevard where participants noted how dangerous that stretch of road was, with sometimes a non-existing bike lane. The serious cyclists wanted to focus on the main roads, and not the multi-use trail that also carries some bike travelers: the multi-

use trail is for walkers, families, children learning to bike, not for bikers who want to safely speed along the arterials. Moraga Road, going southbound between Corliss and the Commons Park is similarly dangerous, according to participants, the bike lane reduced to a few inches and in poorer condition than the road itself.

Along the side streets the group noted the need for better striping and signage to direct casual bikers off the main road and through neighborhood streets to reach destinations such as the parks or the schools. Small improvements were also recommended, such as a curb ramp at the end of the pedestrian and bike path connecting Canyon Road and the School Street neighborhood.

"I like that the town of Moraga is doing this," commented Ebner during the bike ride. "Overall we need more safety for bikers; for parents teaching kids how to ride, recreational riders, and the most experienced. Often casual and serious bikers share the same infrastructure so building a safe network for all levels and paces is critical."

Town staff and the consultant will present the preliminary results of the study to the Moraga Town Council on Oct. 14, and residents with additional comments are encouraged to attend the meeting at 7 p.m. at Joaquin Moraga Intermediate School. For more information on the study and to leave a comment online, visit moraga.ca.us.

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