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Increased Safety For All

By Sophie Braccini



A town where bicyclists and pedestrians can safely travel is the goal of the Moraga Citizens Advisory Committee. The passionate group of town residents, which discussed a map of improvements and paths at its last December meeting, has been working with consultant Niko Letunic of Eisen/Letunic, and plans to present a walk-bike plan to the public in February.

Letunic listed the results of two surveys that were proposed to the residents regarding the state of the streets. "Not surprisingly, the roads that are of most concern are the big ones," said Letunic. He noted that the most often cited issue was the lack of continuity of sidewalks and bike lanes: "People cited gaps, obstacles, parts that are broken up, inadequate shoulders for bikes." One of the residents' major concerns is driver behavior, "specifically speeding and distracted driving," he reported. Other issues frequently noted included

pedestrian and bicyclist conflicts on the trails, difficulty of crossing some roads, and bicycle parking. "The biggest one was the need for an adequate, continuous facility (for both pedestrians and bicyclists) along Moraga Road," said Letunic.

The consultant compiled all of the comments and proposed options for feedback from the committee. "In terms of walking, we propose filling up sidewalk gaps to create continuity, improving crosswalks at key locations, making them safer and more visible," he said. He added that possibly the most important aspect would be to enforce the traffic laws. "That would be a policy recommendation the town council would have to decide on," said Letunic.

On the bicycle side, Letunic said the most important item would be to create a town-wide continuous network of bikeways. "Depending on the available rights of way, it could be bike lanes, sharrows (an arrow on a paved street showing that bicycles can use that road), or just bike routes with signage," he said. He added that at street light crossings, bike lanes could be painted to avoid confusion, and he recommended the addition of bike parking on public land.

Letunic asked the committee members, all volunteer Moraga residents, for their opinions and suggestions regarding the proposed plan. The residents highlighted the importance of the school zones both for pedestrians and bicyclists, and they also noted that serious bikers would rather have a safe bike lane on St. Mary's Road, rather than have to use the trail where conflicts happen with other users. They indicated that School Street could be a safe alternative travel path, although the connection with the shopping center and the path going toward Orinda needed a lot of improvement. They also noted that the Rheem Shopping Center and Rheem Boulevard needed connectivity enhancements. The volunteers suggested additions to the proposed bike network, such as upper Corliss to reach Los Perales or Ascot Drive, where a lot of parked cars can make it unsafe to bike.

The committee members unanimously agreed that enforcement should have a higher priority; they

concurred that speed and distracted driving was recurrent and dangerous. They noted that the message needs to be positive and should get buy-in by proposing increased safety for all.

A public workshop is scheduled on Feb. 4 where residents will help prioritize the pedestrian and bicycle improvements that will be included in the walk-bike plan. On Feb. 24 the town council is scheduled to discuss that list of priority improvements based on public input.

The consultant also introduced the way-finding plan proposed for the town. It proposes different signs for pedestrians, bicyclists and cars. A survey is available on the town's website at <http://www.moraga.ca.us/opentownhall>.

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