

From: [Pocekay, Dennis](#)
To: [Joshua \[REDACTED\]](#); -- City Clerk
Cc: [Peggy Flynn](#); -- City Council
Subject: Re: Council October 16 Workshop on Active Transportation - D street and SRTS
Date: Thursday, October 12, 2023 11:36:48 AM

Hi Joshua-

I do agree with you in most every way, and I loved seeing the words "now" and "accelerate" in the Active Transportation Plan that will be discussed on Monday evening. I will keep pushing; please keep pushing yourself as well. Thanks,
Dennis

From: Joshua Benson [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, October 12, 2023 11:17 AM
To: -- City Clerk <cityclerk@cityofpetaluma.org>
Cc: Peggy Flynn <pflynn@cityofpetaluma.org>; -- City Council <citycouncil@cityofpetaluma.org>
Subject: Council October 16 Workshop on Active Transportation - D street and SRTS

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Dear Mayor, Councilmembers, and City Manager -

I want to let you know that I strongly support Active Transportation improvements throughout Petaluma. A critical element of those improvements is bike/mobility lanes, which are in line with Petaluma's policies and values. Improved bike lanes will help reduce traffic speeds and give our residents (including kids and seniors) more fun, healthy, and climate-friendly options for getting around town.

I commute to work every weekday morning by riding my e-bike (and sometimes my pedal bike) from Westridge Knolls to the SMART station (and from there, I take the train down to Larkspur). I use D street to get downtown - because D street is the quickest and most direct route to the train station. As I ride down D street, I encounter many vehicles PARKED in the bike lane (oftentimes with inattentive workers loading/unloading lawnmowers, opening their car doors, and/or swinging large landscaping power-tools around). As a result, I am repeatedly forced to veer out of the bike lane and into the car lane, causing me to weave in and out of northbound D street traffic... so every morning, as I weave around parked vehicles (especially when the driver-side door is open), I hope and pray that the traffic coming down D street (behind me) sees me and gives way.

My kids (5 and 9) love to ride their bikes too. And they really love to bike to school. There are two elementary schools nearby (McNear and Grant). There are only two options for little kids wanting to bike to either of these schools from Westridge Knolls: (1) ride up I Street and turn right onto Grant Ave (for Grant) or left onto Sunnyslope Ave (for McNear); or (2) ride up and over Sunnyslope Road and turn right onto Sunnyslope Ave (for McNear).

Riding up I Street is a complete non-starter for kids... I street is little more than a narrow alley

with no painted “bike lanes” and only a razor thin sidewalk on one side (that is usually populated with walkers and dogs). Cars and big trucks often drive down I street at around 30-35mph. And while there are “bike symbols” painted on the road - no thoughtful parent would let their kid ride a bike down I street (especially alone during morning commute hours).

Riding up Sunnyslope is more doable for kids, as it has unprotected but decent painted “bike lanes” on both sides. However, the climb is a workout (especially for little kids). But more importantly, there is NO BUFFER between the bike lane and car lane... so cars are constantly buzzing by in close proximity to the young bikers. And then, once the kids descend down Sunnyslope Road and turn right onto Sunnyslope Ave, there is NO BIKE LANE on that street - even though Sunnyslope Ave feeds directly into McNear school! So once again, the little bikers have to ride in the car lane and hope that the cars behind them give way and slow down.

It truly astonishes me that there are not, at the very least, painted “bike lanes” on the very streets that feed directly into both McNear (Sunnyslope Ave and G Street) and Grant (Grant Ave). It’s almost as if Petaluma prefers to see long lines of idling SUVs slowly dropping off kids at school. Personally, I’d rather see a bunch of various sized groups of yelling and laughing kids pedaling their bikes up to the school bike racks and teasing each other as they lock up their bikes and head off to class.

I can drive my Jeep when a bike just doesn’t work (e.g., if I need to carry something heavy, or go farther than just around town). And I have a battery on one of my bikes for when I don’t want to work or sweat too much. I also have 35 years of driving experience, I have an M1 motorcycle license, and I have taken several CHP courses in defensive driving/riding (mostly geared towards defensive motorcycle riding). Bottom line: I can protect myself while biking on almost any road as I have the experience and training to know where the hidden dangers lie.

But unlike me, Petaluma’s youngest bikers don’t have driving experience (let alone decades of driving experience), they aren’t licensed to ride motorcycles, most don’t have batteries on their bikes (NOT YET ANYWAY - BUT THAT IS COMING, AND SOON), and they only have the car option if an adult agrees to drive them.

When I was kid growing up in Davis—a nearby AG town that is similar in many ways to Petaluma—me and all my friends rode our bikes EVERYWHERE, EVERYDAY. Regardless of whether it was hot, cold, rainy or foggy; regardless of whether we were going to school, to baseball practice, delivering newspapers to our neighbors, seeing how much “air” we could get off a dirt jump, or just exploring the various nooks and crannies of our little town with friends - we would invariably be on our dirt bikes. Our parents did not have to double as taxi drivers every time we wanted to get out and about in our town. I am very hopeful that someday my kids too may have similar sentiments about their hometown.

By the way - I commute home every weekday evening on my bike too. But since it is dark and I am not in as much of a hurry to catch a train, I usually take F or G street up to Sunnyslope. On that route, I only have to deal with 2-3 cars.

Thank you for your time and commitment to the future of Petaluma. I am looking forward to

seeing our Active Transportation infrastructure improve in the coming years.

Joshua Benson