

Menlo Park Planning Commission studies El Camino Real options

I am an experienced cyclist who frequently rides 40 to 60 miles a week and would not ride on El Camino regardless of the type of bike facilities. The significant additional risk versus other available bike routes is simply too high.

Much of the discussion about the El Camino Real Corridor Study has centered on the needs of cyclists who maintain that **ADDING** bike facilities to this highway and **REDUCING** the number of vehicle lanes to two in each direction would make bike riding more convenient. Unfortunately, this is too narrow a view. Instead, our residents and City Council should consider the interests and well being of cyclists, drivers and pedestrians. Any major changes to El Camino Real will entail compromises, all **SIGNIFICANT** trade-offs warrant consideration, and personal safety is **THE** critical criteria. Our decisions also need to be well informed and well reasoned.

There about 60 spots on El Camino where cars would cross paths with cyclists riding in either bike lanes or bike paths and cars can be traveling fast when they exit the highway. This is a dangerous situation for both drivers and cyclists, and the latter bears the greater risk of personal injury. When either a driver or cyclist is not cautious or is distracted the risk of an accident or collision climbs dramatically.

If bike facilities were added to El Camino cyclists and pedestrians would mix at busy intersections; this is a dangerous situation for both.

If bike riding on El Camino were a good idea Palo Alto would already provide this capacity. Both Palo Alto and Menlo Park have relied on the same “bike plan” consultant (Alta Planning + Design) and they have **NOT** recommended including El Camino Real in the two bike networks as a high priority.

Reducing the vehicle lanes on El Camino to accommodate bike facilities will likely increase congestion and generate more cut-through traffic in adjacent neighborhoods like Allied Arts. Today there are about 45,000 daily vehicle trips on El Camino between Sand Hill Road and Ravenswood Avenue. Where will these vehicles go if lane capacity is reduced by 33%? No one really knows. But the negative impact could be large and the risk high.

Finally, while I have heard a great deal about the general issue of cyclist inconvenience I have not heard any actual examples of routes that would be significantly more convenient if El Camino was included. Nor has anyone mentioned the delays caused by stoplights. Menlo Park has a fine existing bike network, and many ways to make it even more convenient and safer without encouraging cyclists to ride on El Camino have already been identified.

Making bike riding a **LITTLE** more convenient for some cyclists who wish to travel between **CERTAIN** points in Menlo Park does **NOT** justify exposing all riders to **GREATER** danger and **SIGNIFICANTLY** penalizing drivers and our neighborhoods.

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