

Date: August 8, 2016

To: Menlo Park City Council

From: Dana Hendrickson, Resident & Editor, Re-imagine Menlo Park

Subject: ***Time To Get East-West Bike Network Connectivity Right.***

I am pleased to learn that the City is taking advantage of the expertise of Alta Planning & Design as it evaluates the desirability and feasibility of an Oak Grove Bike Corridor. This highly respected firm knows Menlo Park well having assisted the City with its first bike network comprehensive plan in 2005, and much more recently, many neighboring cities including Palo Alto. I hope the city will not only evaluate a possible Oak Grove bike corridor but also develop a complete east-west bike connectivity strategy and plan including a clear set of 5-Year investment priorities. The approach of evaluating bike facilities on a piecemeal rather than a system perspective that carefully considers best alternatives was a major shortcoming of the recent El Camino Corridor Study, one I hope will not be repeated.

Menlo Park has three natural locations for east-west bike corridors that improve access to downtown and other popular destinations on the opposite sides of El Camino.

- **Valparaiso and Glenwood** between the Alameda and Laurel best serves bicyclists at the north end of El Camino. This will be completed in 2016.
- **Menlo-Ravenswood** between University and Middlefield best serve bicyclists at the central section of El Camino. I have already recommended a design that would correct existing problems and enhance the bike riding experience between University and Laurel. This could be completed in 2017.
- **Middle Avenue** between University and Alma best serves bicyclists at the south end of El Camino. This will be undertaken during the construction of the Middle Plaza and likely not before 2020. However, the section between University and the Safeway Plaza at El Camino should be completed well before then – perhaps in 2017 or 2018.
- Protected bike lanes, i.e., cycle tracks, on University and a connector between Santa Cruz and Menlo Avenues via Fremont Park are also

- needed to ensure the safety and comfort of bicyclists riding on these main approaches to Downtown and the Menlo-Ravenswood bike corridor.

I believe an Oak Grove bike corridor is not needed and offers no improvement over the nearby existing Valparaiso-Glenwood bike corridor. However, many negative impacts are foreseeable.

- An Oak Grove bike corridor would duplicate the nearby Valparaiso-Glenwood bike corridor that was recently upgraded at a cost of over \$400,000 and largely funded by a county agency. This work was specifically designed to serve students who must access schools on the other side of El Camino Real, e.g. Hillview Middle School, M-A High School, Menlo School, Sacred Heart, St. Raymond's, and Encinal. Why fund a redundant facility?
- This project distracts the City from pursuing a much more important east-west bike corridor based on Menlo and Ravenswood Avenues. This bike corridor would BOTH improve bike access to downtown and travel across El Camino Real.
- The Oak Grove design either relocates or eliminates more than 100 street parking spaces. This is a significant loss given resident concerns about downtown parking availability midday.
- The design encourages bicyclists to share vehicle lanes on Santa Cruz between University Avenue and Crane Streets, a solution that will be inconvenient and stressful for motorists and unsafe and stressful for bicyclists. The vehicle lane is too narrow to allow motorists to safely pass bicyclists so they must slow down. The speed limit on Santa Cruz is currently 25 mph and few bicyclists ride more than 12 mph - 50% less than vehicles.
- The proposed design eliminates the eastbound, right-turn lane on Oak Grove at El Camino. This will significantly impede traffic on Oak Grove especially during evening commute times. This will worsen when station 1300 is built in 2019.

I appreciate the City's recent installation of green bike lane markings at key locations in Menlo Park, welcome the big bike lane improvements on Valparaiso and Glenwood, and am pleased with your decision NOT to add bike lanes along El Camino. Now it's time to shift the focus from being only on an Oak Grove bike corridor to the broader study of east-west bike connectivity. I believe the City would find that COMPLETING a central east-west bike corridor on Menlo-Ravenswood Av <http://bit.ly/mpbikenetwork> would greatly benefit both bicyclists and motorists. And the projects could be implemented in naturally separate phases. Concerns about uncertain future high-speed rail and re-configuration of an El Camino intersection should not be viewed as obstacles because smart solutions can always be found and only a small part of the Menlo-Ravenswood bike corridor would potentially be affected.

Both our local economy and city financials remain strong, and it's impossible to foresee a better time to achieve the Specific Plan objective of greater east-west bike connectivity. I always welcome the opportunity to discuss my ideas and yours.

Additional Resources:

Lets Build A Safe, Convenient And Beautiful Menlo-Ravenswood Bike Corridor
<http://bit.ly/mpbikepath>

How To Make Menlo Park Truly Bicyclist-Friendly.
<http://bit.ly/mpbikenetwork>