

Santa Cruz Valley Bicycle Advocates

Bring Positive Change, Improve Conditions for Cyclists

By Bill Adamson

About six years ago a group of local bicyclists from the Santa Cruz Valley area concluded that cycling was becoming less pleasant and significantly less safe along popular bicycle routes. Increased traffic congestion coupled with significant gaps in the available network of bike lanes caused us serious concern. This lack of safe routes led to a letter-writing effort to government officials, to which we received no response, and letters to the editor of the local newspaper.

The group then sent a letter, signed by 50 cyclists, to the County Supervisor requesting that the most dangerous gap of 0.7 miles in our bike lanes be filled. We requested a meeting with the County Supervisor, and 50 showed up to emphasize the group's seriousness.

The meeting stimulated action by the county, and the cyclists formed a committee, now known as the Santa Cruz Bicycle Advocate Committee (SCVBAC).

The key bike lane connection the group requested was completed in September, 2004, just nine months after the meeting with the County Supervisor. This initial success was the beginning of a mutually satisfactory, cooperative

relationship for safer bicycling between the SCVBAC, the county supervisor, and DOT that continues today.

That success was recognized by the local Green Valley council, which asked that SVBAC become a council subcommittee to develop a master plan for future planning. This was an opportunity to remedy other gaps. SVBAC convened a meeting of bicyclists, and developed a list of gaps that they prioritized according to safety concerns based on cyclists' experience riding them.

This formed the basis of a "Master Plan for Lanes and Trails," published by the Council in 2005. The plan shows both the most urgent projects recommended for improved safety and also a projection of projects needed in the future. The plan is updated annually and can be viewed on the SVCBAC website, scvbac.org.

SVCBAC participates in all regional government bicycle advisory groups, task forces, workshops, and bicycle facilities construction projects.

SVCBAC also promotes funding for bicycle projects, and has won three Transportation Enhancement Grants. County voters in 2005 approved a

Regional Transportation Authority that collects a ½ cent sales tax for funding transportation for 20 years. The bicycle and pedestrian projects are \$60M over 20 years.

SVCBAC encourages more people to ride bikes. The Website lists contacts for local rides and scheduled rides. The group published a regional bike map showing the broad network of connected routes in the area, and has distributed 9,000 copies. An update and reprint is in the works. SVCBAC also supports local Senior Games, Bike to School, and Bike Week events.

SVCBAC success has resulted in more people riding their bikes, which has provided immense satisfaction for us

advocates. We have found great support and cooperation from our government agencies and community, and greatly improved cycling safety and enjoyment. I hope our success inspires other communities that do not have a bicycle advocacy group to form one.

Bill Adamson is co-chair of the Santa Cruz Valley Bicycle Advocate Committee.



Ms. Ward's Fifth grade class poster celebrates a bike path