



**CITY OF SANTA CRUZ
TRANSPORTATION AND PUBLIC WORKS
COMMISSION
AGENDA REPORT**

DATE: March 10, 2016

AGENDA OF: March 21, 2016

DEPARTMENT: Public Works

SUBJECT: Pilot Proposal to Change the Direction of Certain Segments of Pacific Avenue and Related Side Streets to Facilitate Southbound Wayfinding (ED/PW/CN)

RECOMMENDATION: That the Commission consider and recommend that City Council: 1) Approve or disapprove changing the direction of Pacific Avenue to one-way southbound between Church and Cathcart Streets, 2) If approved, prioritize the project in the FY 2017-19 Capital Improvement Program, with or without private funding, and 3) If approved, recommend installation of a northbound bicycle contraflow lane.

BACKGROUND: In September 2011 the City released a Santa Cruz Retail Market Study completed by national retail expert Robert Gibbs that indicated that conversion from the existing street configuration of Pacific Avenue to full two-way traffic would bolster sales and improve overall wayfinding. Since the release of the study, downtown business and property owners have been interested in analyzing the possibility of converting Pacific Avenue to two-way traffic. In late 2011, the City Council held a study session in which Council directed staff to analyze the possibility of converting Pacific Avenue to two-way traffic. Following multiple traffic tests on Pacific Avenue it was clearly demonstrated that a two-way Pacific Avenue was neither safe nor feasible with parking on both sides of the street. Following the traffic tests, effort focused on the possibility of one-way traffic along Pacific Avenue, but insufficient interest among a majority of stakeholders resulted in the proposal being tabled.

Over the last year, interest was rekindled in further exploring the concept of converting certain sections of Pacific Avenue (Church St to Cathcart St) to allow for continuous southbound navigation along Pacific Avenue through the downtown area. In March of 2014 the Downtown Commission unanimously approved its 2014 work plan which included recommendations towards possible conversion of certain sections of Pacific Avenue to enable one-way traffic southbound. The proposed southbound configuration would still allow two-way traffic where it exists currently, but would additionally necessitate the reversal of the existing one-way configurations on Walnut Avenue and Lincoln Street (see attached map). More recently, the Downtown Association has voted to approve the conversion of certain northbound one-way sections of Pacific Avenue to enable continuous southbound traffic; provided that the conversion is a pilot which is coordinated with the Citywide Wayfinding program and that it is implemented after the 2015 holiday season.

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City Council heard this item in September 2015 and moved to send the discussion to the Transportation and Public Works Commission(TPWC). Council directed that the TPWC discussion include notification to business and property owners (downtown), discussion of adding a contra-flow bike lane to the project, and discussion of possible (private) funding sources. Council minutes are attached.

DISCUSSION: The overall benefit to modifying the existing street configuration is to allow more intuitive traffic flow through our primary downtown shopping arterial. Coordination with the Wayfinding program will allow for cohesive signage for tourists and visitors to conveniently navigate from various entry points to the downtown area; addressing a challenge long understood by downtown merchants and property owners and cited in the Gibbs 2011 Retail Market Study as one source of downtown retail leakage and lost sales revenue.

Compared to the earlier proposed two-way street conversion, loss of on-street parking and meter revenue is minimal and there will be a less significant impact on emergency response time. If the Pilot Proposal is implemented, further testing on the impacts of emergency response time will be evaluated, potentially requiring removal of several more parking spaces and the potential removal of the Pacific Ave. on-street bike parking opposite Soquel Ave.

Other drawbacks have been identified as: the change being initially confusing; the change does not encourage a northbound beach connection nor lead to side streets with Garage facilities (as is the case now); there will be two additional DO NOT ENTER signs; and, the current Del Mar Trolley Stop will need to be relocated.

The change in direction and the change to a continuous one-way flow will likely result in more traffic along the street. Delay modeling was performed for the intersections along the street using increased volumes. The increases are based on assumptions made from equalizing parallel streets that currently carry disproportionately higher volumes of southbound traffic. Increased flow for beach access, cruising, and cut-through is unknown and not included. Results of the modeling are shown in the table below.

| Intersection Along Pacific Avenue | Existing Configuration Level of Service / Delay | Southbound Configuration Level of Service / Delay |
|--|--|--|
| Cathcart St | A / 8.8 sec | B / 12.9 sec |
| Lincoln St | A / 8.6 sec | Free movement |
| Soquel Ave | C / 16.8 sec | C/19.3 sec |
| Walnut Ave | Free movement | B/13.3 sec |
| Church St | A / 8.1 sec | B/11.6 sec |
| Cooper St | C / 16.4 sec | D/28.2 sec |
| Locust St | A / 7.5 sec | B/12.8 sec |

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Reversing the direction of one-way traffic on Walnut St cannot occur with the existing parking garage flow-pattern, unless two-way traffic is allowed between Cedar St and Commerce Lane. This will result in reversing some of the angled parking on the south side, changing some to parallel parking, and eliminating 4 spaces (12 existing, 8 proposed, 4 removed). With this layout, no change will be required for the lower deck of the garage and both the garage and Commerce Lane (alley) will be allowed to exit either left or right onto Walnut St. These changes could cause congestion at Cedar/Walnut especially when eastbound vehicles attempt to turn left into the parking garage. A future solution may be to disallow this movement either with signs or delineators.

If the bicycle contraflow lane is included with the pilot, enhanced bike access will be realized for the Pacific Avenue. The National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) lists benefits that apply as: providing connectivity and access to bicyclists in both directions, reducing dangerous wrong-way riding, and decreasing sidewalk riding.

Conversely, the contraflow lane will also create new conflicts. The contraflow lane will be positioned on the east side of the roadway (so both directions keep right) allowing bikes to travel northbound between the southbound traffic and southbound parking lanes. This is consistent with the standard in NACTO for contraflow on one-way streets, but NACTO lists left side parallel parking across the bike lane as one of the hazards, and a “con” to be considered. NACTO States: “Special consideration should be given before implementing contra-flow bike lanes adjacent to parking. Cars entering and exiting the parking lane will be maneuvering head-on with oncoming bicyclists, introducing an increased speed differential and unfamiliar traffic operations. The driver of a vehicle parked adjacent to a contra-flow lane will have reduced visibility of oncoming bicyclists when compared to parking adjacent to a with-flow bike lane. Increased bike lane width paired with parking-side buffer striping may be used to increase maneuvering space and sight distance. Most existing installations use a double yellow line to separate the contra-flow bicycle lane; however local ordinance may prohibit parking in the opposite direction of the contra-flow travel lane. A dashed yellow line, or dashed white line may also be used to separate the contra-flow bicycle lane. Local urban practitioners should use best engineering judgment to determine which strategy to implement.”

FISCAL IMPACT: Staff has estimated that the cost to implement the pilot conversion would not exceed \$50,000 and is more likely in the range of 30,000-\$40,000. Adding the bike facility would raise the cost estimate to \$65,000. There would also be a potential loss of meter revenue on an annual basis of approximately \$6,000. If the pilot is unsuccessful, the cost to revert to the existing traffic configuration would be approximately the same as the initial pilot costs (\$65,000).

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Submitted by:

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Attachments:
Minutes from Sept 29, 2015 City Council
Pacific Ave One-way Overview Map