

David Young
Ashland Downtown Parking and Circulation Committee
Ashland Public Works
Ashland, OR 97520



Dear David,

June 2, 2015

The Siskiyou Velo Board of Directors supports the addition of a bike lanes through downtown Ashland. The City's initiative serves as a welcomed sign that bicycles are becoming a mainstream mode of travel and people riding bicycles are an important market segment for businesses located in the City's downtown.

Bike lanes are essential for bicyclists, especially for those who may be ill-prepared to negotiate with auto drivers for their fair share of the street. For many of the Club's cyclists, the existing configuration of East Main in Downtown works fine; they simply take the lane and ride at speeds similar, if not equal to, that of the auto traffic (roughly 15 to 20 MPH) from Helman Street to Gresham. They confidently and effectively negotiate for space with auto drivers and become a part of the traffic stream.

That is not the case for less experienced cyclists or people who ride their bike at slower speeds. These road-system users are not comfortable riding their bikes in inhospitable, auto dominated environments (as many might view our existing Downtown). They need an exclusive lane for their use. The proposed bike lane improvements will provide critical connectivity between existing bike lanes on N. Main and those on Siskiyou Boulevard. Additionally, it will open the Downtown to bicycles and facilitate stopping and shopping at local businesses.

A bike lane will not solve all the problems facing cyclists in the Downtown. Some motorists will still not "see" a person riding a bicycle or will misjudge the cyclist's speed leading to the following collisions:

- 1) cutting the cyclist off at the approach to an intersection (right hook),
- 2) failing to yield to an approaching cyclists when pulling onto Main, or
- 3) pulling into a cyclist travel path when a motorist parallel parks.

The first instance, above, is of particular concern where N. Main turns into the Plaza (see attached illustration). While the danger exists at every intersection, it is of particular concern here due to the obtuse angle of the intersection (as opposed to a right-angled intersection). A wider angle at an intersecting street allows turns at higher speeds. Motorist traveling south from Church toward the Plaza may overtake a cyclist riding in the bike lane, misjudge the cyclist's speed, and turn into the Plaza cutting off cyclists riding in the bike lane (which may cause a cyclist to crash into the turning vehicle, a serious and dangerous outcome). With the addition of bike lanes and in compliance with State law (ORS 814.420), cyclists will be forced to stay in the bike lane and thus increase the risk of being right-hooked by a motorist turning into the Plaza. Without the bike lane,

an experienced cyclist would “take the lane” and merge into the traffic flow and thus reduce their chance of being right-hooked. (Note: The motorist, if the collision were to happen, would be in violation of ORS 811.050).

The second problem (cited above) may be exacerbated by the proposed signal at Pioneer which, as currently conceived, will include a permissive right-turn on red (see attached illustration). It is not the signal, per se, but rather the allowance for permissive right turns on red that is of concern. Motorists may pull past the stop bar to improve their site distance before making a right turn onto E. Main and some may also pull-out in front of cyclists traveling south on East Main (either because the motorist misjudged the oncoming cyclist’s speed or failed to see the cyclist at all). I’ve experienced a near miss at the existing stopped controlled intersection – apparently, the motorist did not see me and began to pull through the intersection but stopped as I approached the intersection in response my yell.

The third issue, given the proposed cross-section and the placement of parking to the outside of the travel lanes (both for motor vehicles and bicycle lanes), can only be addressed through public education. ORS 811.050 sets out the requirements but few motorists know the law.

These concerns should not be interpreted as a lack of support for the addition of bike lanes in downtown Ashland. However, they are offered with the hope that future transportation improvements create a safer as well as more multimodal transportation system - one where all modes are treated equally. No one wants to inadvertently create a less safe transportation system - for motorists or for people who ride bikes or walk. We must ensure that any transportation system improvement contributes to achieving ZERO traffic deaths and no serious injuries on the City’s as well as the State’s transportation network.

Thank you and Mike for reaching out to the cycling community and attending the April 8th Siskiyou Velo bike club membership meeting. It was very productive.

Sincerely,



Gary Shaff
President, Siskiyou Velo
League of American Bicyclists, League Certified Instructor #3864

CC: Mike Faught, Art Anderson, Dan Dorrell, Jerry Marmon

Ashland Downtown Bike Lane

- Issue Areas -

