

# Cyclists peddle a plan for safer bike routes

## HAIGHT ASHBURY

### Residents welcome reduction in traffic, noise

BY JEANETTE GOOD

Neighborhood Correspondent

The automobile may be king of the streets of San Francisco, but if the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition has its way, cyclists will get to wear the crown on at least one of the city's streets.

David Snyder, executive director of SFBC, spoke to residents of the Haight Ashbury District about the coalition's traffic calming concept for Page Street, "the most popular route from the Sunset and the Haight to downtown."

Snyder told residents at the February 8 meeting of the Haight Ashbury Neighborhood Council that the coalition would like the street, which propels downtown-bound cyclists with a gentle downhill slope, to be a more bicycle-friendly thoroughfare "that admits cars as guests."

#### Installing traffic barriers

Snyder discussed several options identified by the coalition, the most favored of which would close the street every few blocks to through traffic, discouraging all but resident vehicles from using the road, which stretches from Stanyan Street to Van Ness Avenue.

Snyder pointed to the city of Berkeley as a feasible model, where posts, which can be circumvented by cyclists but not by motorists, adorn many streets.

"Barricades provide incredible opportunities for community gardens. It's a way to get some green space back," Snyder said, adding that residents on Page Street would

benefit also from the reduction of traffic noise if the plan was approved by the Department of Parking and Traffic and the Board of Supervisors.

"DPT is not likely to oppose it if we can come up with the money," Snyder said in an interview after the meeting, adding that the plan would not "mess up" major traffic patterns in the neighborhood. "This is the gentlest way."

Snyder said funding had not yet been identified for the Page Street traffic calming, which is part of a citywide bicycle project aimed at making the streets safer for cyclists.

"There are lots of reasons to really slow down traffic [on Page Street]," he said.

Several institutions that service children are located on Page Street, he said, and the traffic calming concept would provide a safer environment for young pedestrians.

#### Feasibility questioned

Residents at the meeting seemed open to the idea of banning the

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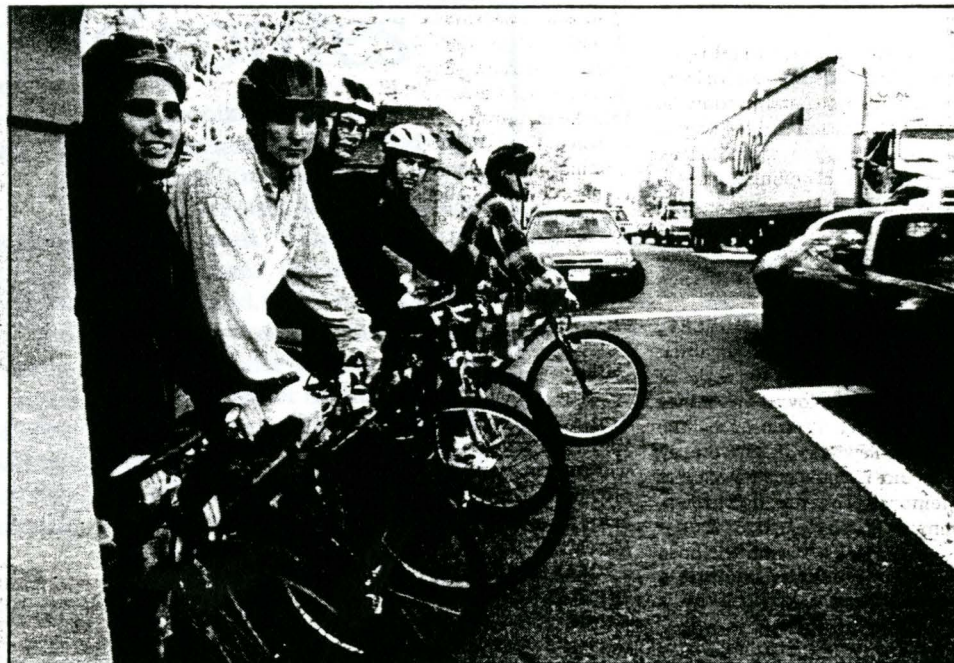


PHOTO: JUDI PARKS

**HOLDING UP TRAFFIC:** Bicyclists on Page Street wait for an opening in the flow of cars on Stanyan Street. Shown here (front to back): Melanie Gaier, David Snyder, Lucinda Means, Deirdre Crowley, and Ann Sterin.



# CYCLISTS: Safer bicycle routes

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bulk of automobile traffic from Page Street but expressed concern about the plan's feasibility.

"As a resident on the street, I'm all for closing Page," one man said, "but I don't think the Fire Department would go for it."

Snyder told those in attendance that it was possible to close the road in such a way that emergency vehicles could still easily gain access to Page Street.

"There are barriers that only high-suspension vehicles can make it over," he said, joking that emergency vehicles and privately owned high-suspensioned Jeeps would not be forced to use routes other than Page Street.

Another, more conservative option would grant Page Street traffic the right of way and slow automobiles down so that cyclists would not be overwhelmed by speeding cars.

He suggested a change in the street's stop-sign configuration, which would require cross traffic to stop, while the traffic on Page Street would continue at a steady pace.

"But then cars would use it as a [nonstop] freeway," Snyder said, noting that low, wide speed-bump

would slow motorized vehicles down but not impede cyclists.

## **Bikes-only option**

Some residents weren't ready to compromise, however, and strongly supported the idea of closing the street entirely.

"Why can't we have two streets in San Francisco with no cars?" one resident and member of SFBC, demanded, berating the coalition for being "wimpy." "Why can't we take a stronger position and make

Page for bikes only?"

Snyder said neighborhood organizations, like HANC, were key to getting the plan, which is still tentative, passed. "If they support us, then we stand a chance," he said.

But, he said, bicycle-riders should also take on some of the responsibility to create a more practical environment for themselves.

"It's the cyclists' job to convince people on Page Street that it would be to their benefit to only have bicycles on their street," he said.