TRANSPORTATION

TWO-WAY STREET

Can businesses and cyclists agree on a 13th Avenue bike lane?

A lex Page and other University of Oregon students have a way to improve bicycling between downtown Eugene and the UO campus.

The city's network of bike lanes and designated routes is inadequate for the growing number of bicyclists riding between the university and downtown, they say.

One of downtown's major one-way streets, 13th Avenue, is a favorite for these cyclists, said Page, a 29-year-old community and regional planning graduate student, who rides a bike to school.

But some bicyclists illegally ride westbound on 13th Avenue in the eastbound bike lane. Others ride on sidewalks.

This poses a danger to bicyclists, pedestrians and motorists, Page said.

"There are no safe options" for riding from the university to downtown, he said.

So Page and other students in June

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Bike lane: Plan would affect parking

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completed the "13th Avenue Downtown-Campus Corridor Plan," which recommends the city replace the existing one-way bike lane on 13th Avenue with a two-way bike lane between downtown and the university.

Page said the two-way bike lane would improve the connection between the two destinations and make traveling safer for all.

The students' plan is generating a buzz among bicyclists and others.

Susan and John Minor, whose oldest son, David, was killed five years ago in a bike-car accident at 13th and Willamette Street, are so impressed with the idea that they are willing to donate $100,000 to make it happen.

"We are philosophically behind this 100 percent," Susan Minor said.

But the plan would require changes to the street that may not be to the liking of some business owners or landlords, who could lose on-street parking.

City transportation officials are aware of the two-way bike lane proposal.

On Dec. 4, the city will have an open house to gather public opinion about improving bicycling between downtown and the UO, including the two-way lane concept.

In the months ahead, city officials will analyze the 13th Avenue two-way bike lane, including its impact on car parking and motorists.

The students did a commuter bike study, said Lee Shoemaker, the city's bicycle and pedestrian coordinator. "But to do something like they are proposing takes careful analysis."

Eliminating one car lane

Eugene already has a two-way bike lane — a "bike track" in bicycle terminology — on Alder Street near the UO campus between Franklin Boulevard and East 13th Avenue.

It comprises a 12-foot lane with a dotted line in the middle, plus a 2-foot-wide buffer between the bike lanes and car lanes. The 10-block stretch of 13th Avenue would have to be restricted and otherwise changed to accommodate a two-lane bike lane.

Under the students' concept, the existing bike lane on the south side of the street would be replaced by a wider, two-way bike lane on the north side of the street.

Page said the north side of 13th Avenue is a better location for the new bike lane because fewer vehicles make left turns at those intersections compared to right turns.

Also, bus stops are on the south side of 13th Avenue, and the students wanted to minimize potential bus-bicycle collisions.

To make room for the new bike lane, a travel lane for cars and trucks would have to be eliminated. The street now carries two lanes of eastbound vehicles almost all the way to campus.

But under the students' plan, east of High Street, where the roadway narrows, the new bike lane would eliminate one of the two car lanes, leaving just one to carry cars eastbound.

And push-button activated bicycle oriented

WHAT'S NEXT

An open house to gather public opinion about improving bicycling between downtown Eugene and the University of Oregon

When: 5:30 p.m. to 7 p.m. Dec. 4

Where: Bascom-Tykeson Room, Public Library, 100 W. 10th Ave.

More information: Lee Shoemaker, Eugene bicycle and pedestrian coordinator, lee.shoemaker@ ci.eugene.or.us, or 541-682-5471

To read the 13th Avenue Downtown-Campus Corridor Concept Plan liveonmvo.org/13th

traffic signals would have to be installed to control the movement of bicyclists traveling west toward downtown.

Seven curbside metered parking spaces on 13th Avenue between Oak and Pearl Street would be removed to make way for the two-way bike lane according to the student's report.

The parking factor

Richard Johnson, the owner of Midtown Direct, a store that sells tobacco, pipes and other smoking accessories, would lose parking spaces on the street in front of his store.

"The parking on the street is crucial because it serves all of these businesses, not only on this side of the street but also that side of the street, but kitty-corner over there," he said, motioning to the corner of 13th Avenue and Oak Street.

Page said the plan is a concept that can be changed, not a "hard fast-planned." "We wanted to open up the conversation," he said.

Susan Minor, a retired nurse, said she and her husband do not know if the two-way bike lane on 13th Avenue would have prevented the death of their son in 2003.

David Minor, 27, general manager of Jo Federigo's restaurant and a UO graduate, was riding his bike south on Willamette when he approached the 13th Avenue intersection. He turned left onto 13th Avenue and disappeared into the path of a northbound car.

No charges were filed against the driver of the vehicle.

Susan Minor said she and her husband want to contribute to the two-way bike lane, which they could be named in honor of their late son.

"It's our hope that this bikeway would prevent injuries and possibly deaths because it is safer," she said. "David loved the university and this community, and the contribution seems like a very nice way to give back to the community in his name."

Students step up

Page and the others who worked on the plan are affiliated with LiveMove, a group with students majoring in planning, public policy and management, architecture, environmental studies, business and law.

The students used computer-generated maps, vehicle and bicycle use in Eugene to make their case for the two-way bike lane. They also conducted their own research by counting vehicles, bicycles and parking spaces on the route.

Their average daily bicyclist counts along 13th Avenue ranged from 325 at 13th Avenue and Lincoln Street, which is more than a mile from the UO, to 720 at 13th and High Street, to 1,836 at 13th and Alder, to 2,704 at 13th and Kincaid, next to campus.

The students' plan was prompted in part by the Capstone development project being built at 13th Avenue and Olive Street.

The Capstone development in September opened its first apartments for 380 college students.

When completed by fall, the development is expected to house 1,300 college students, many of whom are expected to ride bikes to the UO and other campuses.

The bike parking garages in the complex will house more than 1,000 cars and have space for 400 bikes.

"The city and the university weren't thinking about it," said John Minor. "Now 13th Avenue to make it a better bicycling route, and so the students decided to do what themselves, said Marc Schlussberg, a UO associate professor of urban policy and management and the LiveMove faculty advisor.

"They volunteered their time over a full academic year for no academic credit," he said. "And most of them will not be living in this town when it gets built."