



February 27, 2019

To the Albany Transportation Commission and Solano Complete Streets consultants:

Thank you for undertaking a [Complete Streets plan for upper Solano Avenue](#) in Albany. The [latest draft](#) proposes many improvements to reduce automobile speeds, make Albany's main street more pleasant, and encourage people to walk to local businesses. It also suggests a few accommodations to help people ride bikes across Solano Avenue in their journeys north and south. However, it does not envision a Complete Street as commonly understood. For instance, the [US government](#) states:

Complete Streets ... support mobility for all users ... whether they are travelling as drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists, or public transportation riders.

Albany's bicycling community has been informed by many stakeholders, including [two members](#) of the Albany City Council, that Solano Avenue does not and should not welcome bicycle traffic — that people visiting our downtown by bicycle should instead arrive from a perpendicular street and park at the corner, and should use parallel streets a long block away for all east-west travel.

It would be difficult to support a plan titled Solano Avenue Complete Streets that does not support people riding bicycles on Solano Avenue.

A proper Complete Streets program for Solano Avenue would provide dedicated, protected street space for safe bicycle riding. Cycletracks and protected bike lanes are the state of the art to encourage a wide range of people to use bicycles comfortably and safely. Other cities have successfully and eagerly rearranged their main streets with features like these. We could certainly do the same on Solano Avenue. However, it might require a change in car parking configuration that would substantially reduce the number of spaces available. Albany can't seem to settle on an opinion of how valuable these spaces are — many stakeholders seem convinced that drivers would choose not to use them if faced with a small fee to do so — yet it apparently remains politically impossible to reduce the number of spaces.

Without significantly reducing the number of car parking spaces, it would still be possible to improve safety for people riding bicycles by merely changing the orientation of the car parking. Today's configuration requires drivers to back out into moving traffic with almost no view of the conditions they are backing into. Allowing drivers to pull forward out of angled parking spaces would give them a clear view of oncoming traffic, both motorized and pedal-powered, enabling them to enter the roadway at a time when it is safe. This design would also make it safer for customers to load packages into their trunks, as their trunk would be close to the sidewalk rather than next to moving traffic.

Albany Strollers & Rollers has long [supported](#) the compromise of keeping angled parking, giving up on real bicycling infrastructure, but reorienting the parking to improve safety for those who choose to ride bikes on Solano anyway. This was proposed in the [Active Transportation Plan \(2012\)](#), the [Solano Complete Streets Grant Application \(2015\)](#), the [Request for Proposals \(2017\)](#), Toole Design Group's [proposal \(2017\)](#), and the [Scope of Services agreement \(2018\)](#). Yet the latest plan does not show the updated parking orientation on any of its design pages. It discusses the concept in its text, but postpones consideration, design and construction of it to some undefined future time. It confusingly states:

The proposed design presented in this Plan is a preliminary concept and illustrative in regards to parking. Back-in angled parking could be considered as a part of the development of 30 percent engineering designs. Engineering designs will be required for review at approximately 30, 60, and 90 percent design levels prior to any permanent implementation and construction.

In the end, the plan does not enshrine or even recommend any improvement whatsoever for the safety and comfort and people riding bicycles on Albany's main street. The small improvement that has been promised for many years has now been shunted off to some unspecified future revision.

Albany's Transportation Commission serves as the Active Transportation Advisory Committee for the city. As such, the Commission should take a strong stand to support bicycle access as part of Complete Streets.

Albany Strollers & Rollers sincerely hopes that Albany will update this plan so that it lives up to the principles of Complete Streets. In its current form, Albany Strollers & Rollers would not be able to support it.

Sincerely,

Harry Chomsky, on behalf of Albany Strollers & Rollers
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