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Aug 27, 2008 12:06 am US/Pacific

San Jose Hopes To Boost Bicycling With New Plan

Environment & The Green Beat

SAN JOSE (BCN) —

A bike plan being proposed for downtown San Jose that would further the city's goal of promoting alternative transportation could also alter the streetscape in the downtown area.

At a City Council Rules and Open Government Committee meeting Wednesday afternoon, a proposal will be introduced that aims to increase bicycle usage in the city.

There are currently 140 miles of bike lanes, 40 miles of bike trails and 16 miles of bike routes in the city, yet residents only ride their bikes to work .9 percent of the time, according to the city's Web site.

"We have much work to do to enable more people to feel safe taking their bike to work," Councilman Sam Liccardo said.

As part of the pilot program the city would introduce a "bike share" or similar rental program, erect more bike racks, and have "bike valets" at major sporting or concert events.

The proposal also calls for adding separated bike lanes along key downtown commute corridors. By erecting a curb or bush between cyclists and drivers, bicyclists would feel safer commuting down busy thoroughfares, Councilman Forrest Williams said.

"Safety should be a top priority for any program. This proposal puts safety first, with the implementation of physically segregated lanes," Williams said.

The program will focus on linking San Jose State University and other major employers and downtown destinations with transit hubs at Diridon station and the Transit Mall, as well as along the Guadalupe River Park corridor, according to the city.

With more people biking to work, there will be fewer cars on the road, which will help decrease pollution, city officials said. Every commuter who bikes to work instead of driving will save five pounds of carbon emissions on a five-mile trip, according to Mayor Chuck Reed.

"Every day, our residents have opportunities to help implement San Jose's Green Vision and save carbon emissions," Reed said. "I hope that this project will make it easier for residents to choose to commute to work or school by bike."

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