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### If you build it, they will come

By Nicole Makris  
Ross Valley Reporter

Cyclists love Fairfax, and Fairfax, for the most part, loves cyclists. It's a symbiotic relationship that's made Fairfax a hub of biking activity in the past, and the recent passage of the Fairfax Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan will likely bring more cycling enthusiasts to the town, as well as encourage walking and biking among residents.

At its Feb. 20 meeting, Town Council unanimously approved the plan, known also as BPMP. A core group of nine Fairfax residents worked as part of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) to make recommendations to the town on what it saw as necessary updates to the town's current sidewalks, bike routes and pedestrian-accessible walkways. The plan will be used to gain state and federal funding for projects that increase access to pedestrian and bicycle-friendly routes, and is a welcome appendix to the town's general plan, which is in the process of being updated. The general plan is required by state law to be updated every 10 years.



"The [BPMP] is part of an ongoing idea, which is to coordinate surrounding communities to encourage multimodal transportation," said Councilman Larry Bragman, who co-chairs BPAC. Bragman looks forward to utilizing the \$150,000 made available by the federal Nonmotorized Transportation Pilot Program (NTPP) to collaborate with the towns of San Anselmo and San Rafael to create an east-west bike route. He believes the passage of the BPMP is a step toward this route's creation.

The plan proposes 7.24 miles of new bikeways and seeks to improve sidewalks throughout the town, including bike lanes on Center Boulevard, which are currently under construction. In addition to the BPMP, the town also approved funding for a flashing signal at a crosswalk across Sir Francis Drake Boulevard to provide a safe route for children walking or biking to a number of schools in the area. Council also adopted a supplementary "complete streets" resolution at the Feb. 20 meeting, which requires the town to take bicycle, pedestrian, public transportation and disabled-access matters into consideration with any new planning and construction that occurs.

"The past era was the era when the car was at the apex of the transportation pyramid, and that type of planning has limited the usefulness of our rights of way and has discouraged bicycle and pedestrian usage," said Bragman, who sponsored the complete-streets resolution. "Complete streets encourages planners to widen the scope of their vision to include bicyclists and pedestrians when doing a right-of-way improvement."

The BPMP's approval comes at an opportune time for the town, as it is now eligible for some \$7.2 million awarded annually for bicycle projects. The approval is also a response to significant increased in cycling in the town; a bicycle count conducted by the NTPP found that bicycle commutes in Fairfax increased by over 200 percent on weekdays between 1999 and 2007, and nearly 300 percent on weekends. The increase has caused local residents and bicycle enthusiasts to call on the town to support facilities aimed directly at cyclists, such as pay showers, more bike racks and bike campgrounds.

"I think that is definitely an unfulfilled niche in the Fairfax market," Bragman said. "I hope someday some ambitious entrepreneur will have the capital, courage and concept to fulfill it. I'd love to see Fairfax shift part of its economy toward the recreational market, so Fairfax could be a stopover on a bicycle-tourist type of model."

The main victory for the town in its approval of BPMP, according to Bragman, is that the plan incorporates safety and accessibility for cyclists and pedestrians in ways that it hasn't done before.

"I think it's one of those 'If you build it, they will come' situations," Bragman said. "When you create safe infrastructure, it encourages people to use it."

**Photo caption: The new Fairfax Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan was approved unanimously by the Fairfax Town Council on Feb. 20. One of the plan's aims is to connect communities using alternative transportation routes.**

*Photo courtesy of Marin County Bicycle Coalition*

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