

**CITY OF MERCED
Development Services**

TO: Bicycle Advisory Commission
FROM: Michael Hren, Principal Planner
DATE: December 10, 2019
SUBJECT: Report on Bicycle Ride-Along with Staff

BACKGROUND

On the afternoon of Friday, November 8, Chairperson Hothem and Vice-Chair Friedman of the Merced City Bicycle Advisory Commission and Principal Planner Michael Hren and Director of Development Services Scott McBride of the City of Merced toured Merced by bicycle to note some of the conditions affecting bicycle transportation in the city. The route was roughly six miles in total, and was as follows:

- ✓ 18th Street east from City Hall to Canal Street
- ✓ Canal Street south to Main Street
- ✓ Main Street east to G Street
- ✓ G Street south to Childs Avenue
- ✓ Childs Avenue west to MLK Way
- ✓ MLK Way north to 8th Street
- ✓ 8th Street west to V Street
- ✓ V Street north to 24th Street
- ✓ 24th Street east to U Street
- ✓ U Street north to 25th Street
- ✓ 25th Street west to Bear Creek Bike/Pedestrian Bridge
- ✓ Cross NW Bear Creek Drive
- ✓ Bear Creek bike path west to Olive Avenue
- ✓ Cross Olive Avenue
- ✓ Black Rascal Creek bike path east to M Street
- ✓ M Street south to Rambler Road
- ✓ Rambler Road east to M Street
- ✓ M Street south to downtown

DISCUSSION

The following analysis of the ride was provided by Chairperson Hothem.

A number of conditions drew our attention, and will be the subject of future exploratory rides. A future product of these rides could be a report to the City Council on current conditions and needs by the Commission. This could include participation from additional members of City Staff, and may if possible include video footage of future rides. The items from the November 8th ride that are pertinent to bring before the Commission for discussion at this time include:

1. There were constant reminders en route that Merced is a patchwork of planning. Road specifications and affordances change constantly throughout the city and pose challenges to bicyclists, pedestrians, and motorists alike. These changes are very visible to bicyclists and pedestrians, and are likely so for motorists as well.

2. We were pleased, as always, to see sharrow use as being more or less an accepted part of the Main Street infrastructure downtown. At the same time, we noted hazards that arise when (a) sharrows end and otherwise conventional traffic conditions resume, and (b) sharrows are placed on streets that afford ample room for bicyclists to ride practicably on the right side of the road (such as G Street between 10th and Childs).

3. We were concerned about various heavy-traffic "pinch points" (such as those on V Street north and south of the CA-99 underpass, and on R Street south of Rambler Road) where bicyclists must take the lane. These pose some confusion and safety issues for bicyclists and motorists alike.

4. We noted road conditions and specifications that are hazardous to bicyclists. These include choppy pavement, concrete gutters that double as bicycle lanes, and drainage ditches in neighborhoods south of Bear Creek, west of R Street, and north of 18th Street that abruptly drop 18 inches from level.

5. We were pleased to see the recent work on bike paths west of R Street, and that at the time of riding these areas were relatively free of refuse (which is often produced by homeless camps).

6. We took the lane on M Street and rode with traffic from Rambler Road to 18th Street. En route we noted the difficulties and liabilities posed by signage recommending bicycling on the sidewalk. We also noted dangerous uneven concrete in gutters that double as bicycle lanes.

In general, we agreed that California vehicle law amply provides for transportation protocol for bicyclists as well as motorists, and that signage contradicting or contravening such laws is, to put it nicely, problematic at best. We also discussed the possibility that some "pinch point" areas could have "Share the Road" signage to notify bicyclists and motorists of conditions that are essentially "sharrow-like" in nature.

ACTION

None required.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Route Map

12.04 mi

Distance

9.8 mph

Avg Speed

1:13:49

Time

115 ft

Elev Gain

