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*~ James Mazzotta,  
owner of the Enjoy Store,  
Redding, California*



# Road Diet Feeds Bike and Ped

When all was said and done, downtown Redding had a smoother street for motorists, a safer street for cyclists, and more foot traffic for local merchants.

And it all started with a bike ride.

What came to be known as “The Downtown Redding Pavement Preservation and Bike Lane Project” was originally dubbed the somewhat less inspiring “Downtown Redding Thin Blanket Overlay Pavement Resurfacing Project.”

The idea was to resurface and restripe State Route 273, which cuts right through the heart of downtown Redding. Pretty standard stuff.

But then came the bike ride and plans began to change.

It was a “May is Bike Month” event. Community members and local officials pedaled their way along a predetermined course.

Caltrans District 2 Director John Bulinski participated. So did City of Redding Public Works Director Brian Crane. As they rode in a friendly peloton of business owners, health advocates, and members of various cycling groups, they heard a lot of ideas about how downtown Redding could be a safer, more accommodating place for cyclists and pedestrians.



Bulinski and Crane got the message. Caltrans and Public Works engineers began weighing the potential of putting California Street on a “road diet,” the phrase used to describe the reallocation of roadway space to make way for active transportation and pedestrian safety. Some subtle changes would have to be made to Pine Street as well.

Caltrans and city officials reached out to Redding residents to see if they wanted those kinds of changes to their downtown thoroughfare. At the same time, Anne Thomas, director of the local advocacy group Shasta Living Streets, started an intense social media campaign to gain support for the road diet and the bike lanes. Thomas took to Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and several other social media platforms, asking the public to weigh in on the issue and send their thoughts to Caltrans.

As the emails started pouring in, the Caltrans Public Affairs Office organized its own campaign. A new email address, D2PIO@dot.ca.gov, was established to track the responses. Soon the bike lane campaign was in the papers and on the local news. Caltrans invited interested parties to an open house to present the new plan.

Some people opposed the plan, worried that a reduction in traffic lanes would mean more time sitting in traffic. But the majority of attendees wanted safer travel for bicyclists through the downtown area.

Shortly after the open house, engineers determined that a reduction in lanes from three to two would have only minimal impacts to traffic on California Street. On Pine Street, the new proposal included reducing lane widths to accommodate the addition of a bike lane, with just a few changes to striping.

As crews began the striping, another round of emails landed in the Caltrans inbox. This time, they were messages praising Caltrans and the City of Redding for the adjustments to the pavement project. Along with them, came a new digital orange “Keep Calm and Trust Caltrans District 2” image created by Shasta Living Streets, which soon started appearing all over social media.

It’s been more than six months since the final stripe was put down, and now every type of traffic continues to move smoothly through the downtown area. The \$3.2 million project has provided safe and convenient nonmotorized transportation options. It’s also improved the quality of life for Redding residents by providing active transportation alternatives, and it has sparked an increase in business at many downtown shops. James Mazzotta, owner of the Enjoy Store, a fine gifts and gourmet food shop in Redding, said, “I was initially concerned and not happy about the idea to go from three lanes to two on California Street. But, now I love it!” he said. “The foot traffic at our business has increased threefold. It’s fantastic!”

Crown Camera Manager Frank Tona said, “More people are coming downtown to shop and spend money. You are all headed in the right direction with these kinds of projects.”

Not only was the project well received by business owners, but by bicycle enthusiasts from all across the state. The California Bicycle Coalition voted the project “Best Caltrans District Decision” in its All of the Best of 2014 issue.

The project created vital transportation links between modes, such as bicycle, pedestrian, transit, and passenger rail. It also connects two highly traveled river trails with a single, safe, multimodal corridor. This corridor improvement ties together complimentary uses for residents and visitors alike.

“We want everyone, pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists to be able to enjoy what this beautiful area has to offer,” said District 2 Director John Bulinski. “We will definitely use this as a model for future projects and work with our partners to make improvements benefitting all modes of transportation in Northern California.”

*Source: Caltrans District 2*