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The IJ's editorial board meets weekly to talk about the paper's editorial positions. The board has five members, including two rotating members from the public.

EDITORIAL

Bicycle access on bridge makes sense

Marin IJ 4/15/08

CALTRANS NEEDS to embrace the future and stop fighting efforts to allow bicycle and pedestrian access to the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.

Marin bicycle advocates, who have been pushing for such access for a decade, received some welcome support recently. The Bay Conservation and Development Commission voted 14-2 to support the concept. The Metropolitan Transportation Commission also has expressed support.

We hope Caltrans is getting the message.

There is talk of adding a third lane on the bridge in each direction to handle increasing traffic. Bike advocates and their allies have proposed a movable barrier on the upper deck that would create an 8-foot-wide lane for pedestrians and cyclists during nonpeak commute hours. The cost is estimated at more than \$50 million.

The California Department of Transportation contends that mixing bicyclists and pedestrians with vehicles on the span is too dangerous. It says the number of accidents would jump by 200 percent.

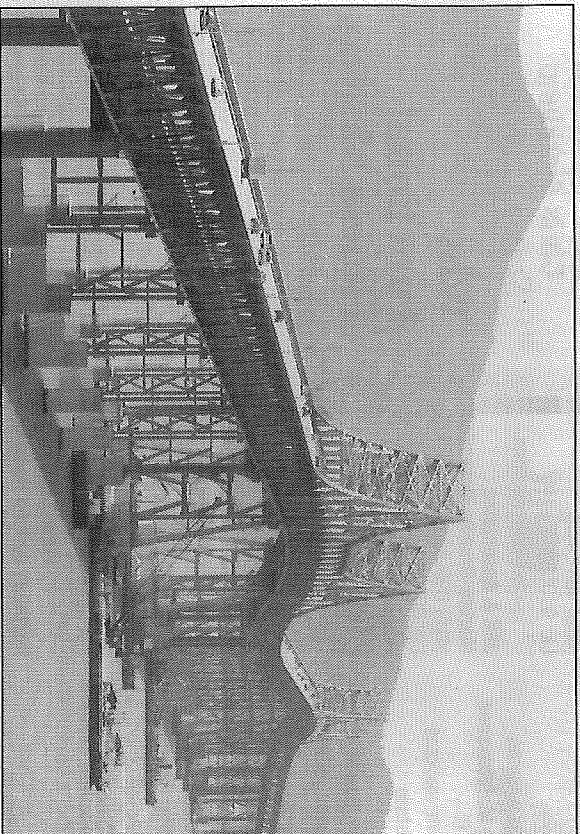
Safety needs to play an important role in this discussion, but it shouldn't end the debate. We need to find

more ways to make it easier to travel via bicycle. Developing comprehensive networks of bike trails and lanes are of limited use if bridges are off limits. The good news is that bike and pedestrian access has been incorporated into new bridges in the Bay Area. The Golden Gate Bridge, which is the local gold standard for such access, is used by hundreds of bicyclists hourly during peak periods, with up to 5,000 cyclists crossing the bridge on some days.

The Marin County Bicycle Coalition points out that there is legal bike access approaching both sides of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge and that there is limited space for cyclists and their bikes on buses crossing the bridge. Bike commuters say buses often are full or don't stop for waiting bike riders.

The 4.5-mile bridge also has been part of the San Francisco Bay Trail project for years. Adding a third lane solely for cars and trucks flies in the face of climate change concerns and the need to encourage forms of transportation that don't require getting behind the wheel of a car.

We urge Caltrans to come up with a way to allow bicyclists and pedestrians to safely use the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.



A view of the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge from the east. Bicycle advocates have sought for years to gain access to the bridge, which is 4.5 miles long.

IJ archive/Robert Tong

READERS' FORUM

Bike commuters need access

Congratulations to Supervisor Charles McGlashan and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission for their vote to support bicycle and pedestrian access on the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.

Completing this long overdue, vital link will close a major gap in the scenic bay trail, but more than that, will become a much needed opportunity for an alternative form of transportation.

I work for a green company in Richmond and a minimum of 30 of my East Bay colleagues commute by bicycle to work daily (rain or shine). I, on the other hand, struggle to get across this missing link that is the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge. At the San Quentin bus stop, more than once I had my bicycle (and me) refused access to the bus because the exterior bike racks were already full and the wheelchair securement area either had additional bicycles or a wheelchair passenger. Other times, the Golden Gate Transit bus operators had no knowledge of the district policy that allows cycles on board. This means that I am very late for work.

Those of us who commute on this route would use it more often if it worked better. We would welcome an access lane to get across the span. I'm sure there are "green thinking" alternative transit commuters living in the East Bay who feel the same way.

Magali Salomon, MILL VALLEY

Letters

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