

Fresno City Council to tackle bicycle lanes, sidewalks

By George
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Paul Caprioglio

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Fresno City Hall is moving fast on the "active transportation" front — maybe too fast for one City Council member.

The City Council today will consider two proposals to make it easier for Fresnans in parts of town to ride bicycles and walk.

The first proposal is an application to the Fresno Council of Governments for a \$1.3 million grant. The money would fund construction of two stretches of sidewalks, a traffic light and an update to the bicycle/pedestrian master plan.

The second proposal would fund a "road diet" — turning a portion of Millbrook Avenue between Gettysburg and Shields avenues into lanes reserved for bicycles. The four lanes for motorists would be reduced to one lane in each direction plus a center two-way left turn lane.

Road diets have been a hot-button issue at City Hall. Bicyclists and urban planners love them. Motorists think they make travel more difficult while doing little to get people out of their cars.

Council Member Paul Caprioglio, whose district includes most of Millbrook between Gettysburg and Shields, said he'll probably support this road diet. He said the stretch is not heavily used by motorists.

But, Caprioglio said, he's not fond of road diets on major streets such as Gettysburg, First Street and Ashlan Avenue.

Caprioglio said Fresno doesn't have enough bicyclists to justify the threat of slowing the flow of traffic on the busiest streets.

"You'll have to come a long way for me to support a general road diet plan," Caprioglio said.

That means debate on the grant application could get lively.

The city will ask for money to install a traffic signal at Clinton and Thorne avenues near Hamilton School. The city wants to build sidewalks on two streets.

Those projects probably will face little council concern.

The same may not be true for an update of the city's bicycle-pedestrian master plan. It seeks to make Fresno bicycle-and-walker-friendly.

This plan, approved by the council in late 2010, generated some heat from the dais. Some council members worried the plan was a bit utopian.

Council members won't have a say in the crafting of an updated plan. They do, however, have the power of the purse.

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