



NEWS RELEASE
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JUDGE DENIES CITY'S ATTEMPT TO REMOVE BIKE LANE **Bicyclists Applaud Court's Rejection of Proposal** **to Strip Bicycle Facilities at Market & Octavia Intersection**

(SAN FRANCISCO, CA) — Bicyclists cheered today's decision by Superior Court Judge Peter J. Busch to reject the SF Municipal Transportation Agency (MTA) proposal to remove a bike lane and protective barrier at the notoriously dangerous Market and Octavia intersection.

"We believe the court made a wise decision to reject the MTA's plan to diminish bike facilities at an important intersection along the city's busiest bike commute route," says Leah Shahum, Executive Director of the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition (SFBC), a 10,000-member nonprofit promoting bicycling for everyday transportation. "The proposal would have been a significant step backwards for safety at a critical location, and it would have encouraged more dangerous illegal turns by vehicles."

In a hearing that lasted over an hour, the court expressed concern that the City did not present sufficient evidence that the MTA's proposed change would have a positive effect on bicycle safety at the troubled spot. The court expressed skepticism that the MTA's "shared lane" proposal (which would have replaced a separated bike lane and safety barrier with a single, regular traffic lane shared by motorists and bicyclists) would improve the situation, citing common occurrences in which bicycles and cars move side by side in shared traffic lanes throughout the city. In addition, the court suggested that the MTA proposal might simply move an existing conflict point a few hundred feet up the street to a new conflict point where cars and bicycles would be forced to merge.

"I think the court picked up on the same concerns with the flawed MTA proposal that we in the bicycling community have been voicing," says Shahum, of the SFBC, which rallied more than 200 concerned cyclists and several elected officials at a rally last Friday. "It is simply faulty reasoning to think that giving bicyclists *less* dedicated safe space will somehow make them safer."

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The SFBC acknowledges that the intersection merits legitimate safety improvements, as an unacceptable number of collisions continue to occur there. Bicycling advocates and city leaders are urging implementation of the Planning Department's Upper Market Community Plan, which recommends colored, raised bike lanes and an extension of the concrete safety barrier. More about this plan is available at: www.sfbike.org/octavia.

In the same hearing the court approved the City's request to make minor improvements on existing bike routes, including adding sharrows, or shared lane markings, on streets where they already existed, and some additional markings on existing bike lanes. The SFBC supports these minor requests by the City. But the court denied the City's request for new sharrows on Third Street, a major bike route that has changed significantly since the introduction of light rail transit, and the request for new bike racks at two locations.

The court cited an apparent lack of urgency for these changes, questioning why the City was only now bringing these requests forward, given that the City is close to completing its required Environmental Impact Report (planned for this Spring), at which time the injunction would likely be lifted.

"What took the City so long to bring these requests for improvements forward?" asked the SFBC's Shahum. "We have been living under the cloud of this injunction banning any bike improvements for two and a half years. It's astonishing that the MTA and the City Attorney's Office took this long to get their act together and request some relief from this injunction. This lack of priority and urgency on the City's part is grave reason for concern."

Shahum pointed to the fact that cities such as New York City, Portland, OR, and even South San Francisco have all implemented proven safety innovations such as colored bike lanes, while San Francisco has moved painfully slow on this and other fronts.

"There's no doubt that San Francisco has fallen behind in the last five years as a leader in promoting bicycling, says Shahum. "We hope that our City leaders will step up their commitment to prioritizing healthy, sustainable transportation. They will have a prime opportunity to prove their commitment in moving the Bike Plan forward this spring and implementing the complete, Citywide Bike Network."

For more information on the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition's years of advocacy on this issue, visit <http://www.sfbike.org/octavia>

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