

City set to scrap back-in parking

The much-reviled reverse-angle parking on Main Avenue should be gone by the time Sisters Rodeo rides into town — assuming everything goes according to schedule.

Reversing the unpopular parking mode is not as simple as sanding off old striping and painting new lines. It requires an amendment to the City's comprehensive plan and Transportation System Plan (TSP), which in turn requires notifying the State of Oregon and holding hearings before the planning commission.

The decision process that resulted in back-in parking started with the requirements of the Cascade Avenue Project. In order to complete the Cascade Avenue Project as designed, the City applied for and received a variance from the state (approved by the freight lobby) to reduce the width of Cascade Avenue to 14 feet from the normally required 16 feet.

The narrower Cascade roadway did not allow adequate space for the TSP-required bike lanes. Through

aggressive grant-writing, the City and ODOT were able to get grants to upgrade the roadway, parking and sidewalks on Main Avenue which would allow sufficient width for the requisite bike lanes while at the same time significantly improving the parking, sidewalks, curbs and landscaping on Main.

Although it was not a requirement of the Main Avenue grants, there was a strong indication that grant applications that included bike lanes with back-in parking would be given preference. The understanding is that Sisters won the grant based in part on back-in parking along the bike route.

Back-in parking was completed in summer 2012. It was never popular and is regarded by an overwhelming percentage of locals as a bizarre boondoggle. Many visitors do not understand what is required, and the directional parking stalls make it look like Main Avenue is a one-way street, which has occasionally led to people driving down the

wrong traffic lane.

It's questionable as to whether the bike safety the innovation was supposed to support ever materialized. Several people have said they believe that the back-in parking makes the bike-lane much less safe. They report that when they bike on Hood Avenue — with head-in diagonal parking — cars backing out are easier to spot because their back up lights are on, and, because they can't see the traffic, they are backing out very slowly and cautiously.

By contrast, merchants and cyclists alike reported that most legal back-in parkers exit their space quickly and have on a number of occasions "scattered" cyclists in the bike lane. The drivers are apparently looking for cars, and do not see the bicycles moving quickly and close-in to the parking lane, where the bike lane is located.

In any case, it appears that the three-year experiment in parking innovation will soon be consigned to the ash heap of history.

A day at the capitol...



PHOTO PROVIDED

Maddie Busick, Christopher Lundgren, Skylar Wilkins and Sydney Wilkins of Black Butte School visited the state capitol March 2 and were sworn in as honorary pages in the House of Representatives. They worked on the House floor, attended hearings, and met with Rep. Huffman (pictured) and Sen. Ferrioli.

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