Richmond Mayor Fires Back at Marin’s Attempt to Torpedo Bridge Bike Path

It’s called the *Richmond*-San Rafael Bridge, but you wouldn’t know it going by the behavior of Marin officials.

By Roger Rudick | Jan 28, 2019

Note: GJEL Accident Attorneys regularly sponsors coverage on Streetsblog San Francisco and Streetsblog California. Unless noted in the story, GJEL Accident Attorneys is not consulted for
Richmond Mayor Tom Butt has written a scathing letter protesting the Transportation Authority of Marin’s (TAM) unilateral efforts to prevent cyclists from ever using the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge during rush hour.

From the Mayor’s letter, dated Jan. 28, to Stephanie Moulton-Peters, Chair of the TAM Board of Directors:

I am concerned about the action the Transportation Authority of Marin took at its January 24 meeting, regarding the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, especially the reduction of the pilot period for the multi-use bicycle and pedestrian path from four years to six months.

I wish to remind you that the name of the bridge is the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, since it appears you have ignored the fact that this crossing equally serves Richmond and Contra Costa County as well as Marin. Various options have been openly discussed at more than one stakeholders meeting at MTC to provide congestion relief without eliminating the bicycle and pedestrian path, however TAM is taking unilateral action in bad faith to change the agreed-on intent of the upper deck improvements.

I also can't help observing that the root cause of the congestion is the failure of Marin County to provide adequate affordable housing for its workforce, thus creating a massive commute from the more affordable East Bay. This is an unsustainable problem that Marin needs to confront.

Until now, this multi-year and multi-million dollar project has been a collaborative regional effort that included community groups and residents on both sides of the bridge. In anticipation of the multi-use bicycle and pedestrian path scheduled to open this spring, Richmond and Contra Costa have been investing in the infrastructure needed to create safe access and connections for bicyclists and pedestrians. Six months is not an adequate amount of time to determine whether the multi-use path should remain open for bicyclists and pedestrians or be converted into another lane for vehicle traffic, as it appears is TAM’s intended outcome.

The two-way bike and pedestrian path is scheduled to open in April. Under the current plan, five lanes of the bridge would be available for private automobiles, with one lane on the upper level reserved for a two-way bike and ped path, as seen below:
As previously reported, the confessed drunk/hit-and-run driver, Marin Supervisor Damon Connolly, who sits on the governing boards of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and the Transportation Authority of Marin (TAM), is leading a charge to continue to ban cyclists and pedestrians on the bridge.

Under Connolly’s proposal, cyclists would be permitted on the bridge only during off-peak hours, eliminating e-bikes or regular bikes as a commuting option. As those close to the goings-on explained, Marin has also done nothing to improve bike and pedestrian connections on their side.
of the bridge, leaving cyclists with no safe way to get to the path on the western approach and setting up the bike-path pilot for failure.

By reducing the pilot from four years to six months, it virtually assures that the bike lane will be lightly used (since there will be no time to realize better western approaches) justifying its conversion back into a lane for cars.

“There are a lot of solutions that have been discussed in detail that can reduce or end congestion at the east end without opening the third lane to traffic. We should be working together on these, but they don’t want to do that,” added Mayor Butt in an email directly to Streetsblog. “At the end of the day, the root cause is a failure of Marin to provide adequate affordable housing for their workforce. Importing workers that require long commutes is simply exacerbating fossil fuel use and global warming.”

Filed Under: Bicycle Infrastructure, Bicycling, Pedestrian Safety, Richmond, GJEL, Promoted