

TO: Distribution

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SUBJECT: Comments on the One-Way vs Two-Way Streets in Sebastopol

This document discusses the One-Way vs Two-Way choice in Sebastopol. Information was drawn from several sources but the opinion expressed is the author's. The Planning Commission ignored both what the people of Sebastopol wanted and what the consultants Fehr and Peers recommended. Fehr and Peers recommended the Walkable One Way option that kept the current one way traffic circulation with many safety upgrades. The rationale for ignoring the people is basically personal preference, during the Planning Commission meeting the consultants were pushed into endorsing a hybrid two way scheme that is really the unpopular Totally Two Way alternative.

Summary

Survey The consultants Fehr and Peers conducted a survey that showed only 23% of the 646 respondents favored two way circulation. On the other hand 59% favored maintaining the one way circulation. Why was the will of the people ignored when this was landslide in favor of one way? The Council should not adopt the recommendation so disfavored by the people of Sebastopol.

Consultant's Recommendation Fehr and Peers came into the Planning Commission meeting with a carefully justified trade study recommendation for one way circulation with many safety improvements, known as Alternative 3, Walkable One Way which was supported by 34% of the respondents. The Council should not adopt the so called Alternative 4 Hybrid recommendation which is really just one way Alternative 4 with window dressing.

Parking The two-way alternative recommended by the Planning Commission reduces parking in downtown Sebastopol. This will kill the downtown, not enhance it although it may push people into the Barlow that has plenty of on street parking. Without details about parking it is not possible for people or the Council to accept the Commission recommendation.

Traffic Traffic improvements are not addressed by the Planning Commission, the Commission considers traffic insoluble. Traffic is a major issue for many people. The Council should not adopt the recommendation that dismisses traffic issues which concern so many.

Bike Lanes The future of bike lanes in the two-way alternative is not clear. Some bike lanes may be gone, some may stay and some may be improved. Without details about bike lanes it is impossible for people or the Council to make a recommendation.

Detailed Discussions

The Commission recommended Alternative 4 which was the second least popular and it goes against recommendation of Fehr and Peers. Alternative 4 removes parking from downtown, ignores the traffic issue which concerns many and removes bicycle infrastructure that the city and Caltrans paid for a few years ago. For this reason the Council should not go forward with the Alternative 4 which was forced onto Fehr and Peers by the Planning Commission. Instead it should go forward with the unbiased recommendation for Alternative 3, Walkable One Way recommended by Fehr and Peers.

The Sebastopol Times has been diligent in covering this issue in depth very evenhandedly.

These summary points will be expanded in the following sections.

The Survey

The consultants Fehr and Peers should be thanked for considering the comments presented on the One Way vs Two Way street alternatives during the public comment period and listening to the voice of the people who overwhelmingly support One Way streets in Sebastopol. Regrettably, the Sebastopol Planning Commission has not listened to either the people of Sebastopol or the highly paid expert consultants and chose a slightly modified version of the very unpopular Alternative 4, Two Way Street alternative.

The following Table shows the results of the Fehr and Peers survey.

Alternative	Count	Percent
Alt 1: Fine Tune Today	160	25%
Alt 2: Test the Two Way	114	18%
Alt 3: Walkable One Way	221	34%
Alt 4: Totally Two Way	151	23%
	646	100%

The survey results show $25\% + 34\% = 59\%$ in favor of the one way alternatives, and only 23% for the two way alternative. Another 18% wanted to test the two way configuration with the possibility of returning to one way. One way streets won in a landslide which shows the overwhelming sentiment of the voters is to keep the current one way street structure. The council should listen to the people of Sebastopol and keep the one way street configuration, made safer and more walkable, Walkable One Way, Alternative 3.

Planning Commission Vice Chair Jennifer Koelemeijer said in a Sebastopol Times article: “Improving Main Street and engaging in what urban planners call “Placemaking” was important. The Project for Public Spaces defines “placemaking” as “a participatory process for shaping public space that harnesses the ideas and assets of the people who use it.” How can the selection of the second least popular Alternative that totally ignores the inputs from the people who use downtown then be placemaking?

The Recommendation

The original recommendation from Fehr and Peers was for Alternative 3, known as the Walkable One way. Here are the alternatives showing the score for each in the Fehr and Peers trade study, both the Total Score and the score for each category.

	Safety	Access	Vitality	Feasibility/Cost	Community Support	Total
Alternative 1 Fine Tune Today	2.5	2.5	2	2	2	11
Alternative 2 Test the Two Way	3	3.5	2.5	2	3	14
Alternative 3 Walkable One Way	3.5	3.5	3	1.5	3	14.5
Alternative 4 Totally Two Way	3	3	2.5	1	3	12.5

Several things are striking about this table. First, the second lowest scoring Alternative was chosen by the Planning Commission – Totally Two Way. The only lower scoring alternative was Fine Tune Today.

Which features were added in the Commission meeting to Totally Two Way to push it ahead of Walkable One Way?

Some of the scoring of this trade study is doubtful. How can Community Support for Totally Two Way be the same as for Walkable One Way when the difference in the survey was 23% vs 34%, a factor of almost 1.5? Shouldn't Walkable One Way be scored higher in this category? How did Feasibility/Cost score so low for the Walkable One Way when the street configuration remains the same? Although the trade study is bent towards Totally Two Way, it still scores poorer than Walkable One Way.

The big differentiator is the selection of one way vs two way configuration and as Geoff Rubendall stated during the Planning Commission meeting, the other features could be moved from one alternative to another.

Addressing safety, the statement from Architect Lars Langberg, chair of the city's Design Review Board, "The cues that a one-way street give are to drive fast, to go from here to there, not to stop, not to go right or left... So the solution is a two-way alternative. "The Totally Two Way I don't think is the perfect solution but is by far the best solution to achieve a downtown that's focused on pedestrians." This contradicts the evaluation of Fehr and Peers which rated safety for the Walkable Downtown highest. Safety, protecting our families and ourselves should be the most important criteria, far above creating the pretty old timey downtown the Planning Commission wants. Also somebody just smashed into the side of Jasper O'Farrells driving on the Two Way Highway 12. Fortunately nobody was hurt but driver must have missed the Planning Commission comments.

There is no detailed rationale presented for forcing Alternative 4 over Alternative 3. No data, numbers no facts, just an unsubstantiated opinion. No re-analysis of the trade study was done to indicate the modified Alternative 4 Totally Two Way was better than Alternative 3, Walkable One Way. Lars like everyone else is entitled to their opinion but the Sebastopol City Council should not base expensive decisions with such significant impact on an unsupported personal opinion to overturn the clearly expressed will of the people and the recommendations of an expert consultant.

At some point in the meeting Fehr and Peers representative Rubendall folded under pressure from the Planning Commission and backed off from their carefully crafted recommendation and endorsed Alternative 3 with some changes that were not fully detailed. It sure looks like the Two Way solution was forced on them despite public opinion against it and their own trade study that ranked it low.

According to the Sebastopol Times, there is no official description of the Planning Commission's hybrid plan. If this is not accurate please provide the plan with enough time so that the public may study it. According to Fehr & Peers consultant Geoff Rubendall, "The approach we have been asked to follow is to wait until after the city council meeting before we advance this Alt 3/Alt 4 hybrid alternative." The correct approach is for the council to abandon the so called hybrid plan which is not a hybrid and seems like a solution in search of a problem. How can the public comment on the proposal without seeing the proposal? We need to do better.

According to the Sebastopol Times Rubendall from Fehr and Peers suggested focusing only on the downtown section because there are still too many open questions about how the hybrid model would look south of Burnett St. So the only part of town impacted by the plan has lots of pedestrian traffic and pretty full commercial occupancy. It does not seem reasonable that the entire town should be impacted by unspecified changes in downtown.

“So Main Street becomes much more of a small-town Main Street, and Petaluma Avenue/McKinley becomes like a through-way. I just find that super appealing,” Commissioner Fritz said at the meeting. “I just want to have a small-town Main Street.” Downtown looks like that already, doesn’t it? Do the residents of Petaluma Avenue feel it is worth having their residential street become a through-way? It is unlikely Commissioner Fritz lives on the Petaluma Thruway. Also, the few blocks of Main Street are already quite small townish and it’s a purely unsubstantiated personal opinion that one way streets are less small townish than two way.

How does anybody know a small town Main Street appeals to anyone but the Planning Commission? Will people pay more to shop on a small town Main Street and put up with no parking do so? Evidence? Are business owners willing to give up parking for a small-town Main Street that will enhance access to the Barlow, as was pointed out in the Planning Commission meeting? What exactly is a small-town Main Street? Isn’t that in Disneyland? It seems ridiculous to pursue such a subjective undefined goal. What are the cost impacts? Does a small-town Main Street help Sebastopol’s economic condition? Does making Main Street super-appealing in one person’s view make Petaluma Ave. super un-appealing? How do those residents feel about that? Were they consulted? Also keep in mind that the one way part of Main Street is almost 100% occupied, unlike the two way parts of Sebastopol and the Barlow that have many vacancies. Take a stroll and see for yourself and count the vacancies on two way streets vs one way streets.

It was said “The idea is to move a big chunk of traffic away from Sebastopol’s historic Main Street to make walking and shopping there a more pleasant experience.” Isn’t that more subjective aesthetics as well? Do we know that traffic will move from Main Street? Fehr and Peers did extensive traffic simulations, that did not show that happening.

Alternative 4 Two Way is the costliest and least feasible of the Alternatives, scoring only 1 of 4. Yet this is the Alternative endorsed by the Planning Commission. What is the extra cost to the city? How does this impact grant approval? Will Sebastopol have to kick in extra money? Nothing was said in the meeting to indicate the hybrid Alternative 4 would reduce cost, it seems the additions increase cost and reduce feasibility.

Access and vitality of Totally Two Way scores lower than Walkable One Way. The hybrid Alternative 4 reduces parking, this negatively impacts Access and Vitality. Not everyone is willing or able to bicycle or walk in/to Sebastopol, the most dangerous city it’s size in the state for cyclists and pedestrians.

Downtown vitality and sense of place score 2.5 of 4 for the Totally Two Way Alternative, lower than Walkable One Way. How was this number determined? As seen previously, sense of place includes community support and the Two Way street Alternatives have low community support according to the Fehr and Peers survey. Downtown Vitality can actually be measured quantitatively, was this done as part of the study? See

<https://downtown.org/ida-vitality-index/>

It is inexplicable that the Planning Commission could ignore the recommendations of the consultants and the people of Sebastopol and recommend the second least popular, most problematic and most costly of the alternatives.

The Traffic

The most amazing statement about traffic came from Commissioner Fritz who said people would complain about traffic congestion whatever was done. Traffic is one of the leading issues people have with Sebastopol and many avoid town to avoid the traffic. Traffic improvements are not addressed in the two-way alternative. Traffic was dismissed in a very cavalier way. The Planning Commission should plan to improve the current traffic situation and anticipate the increased traffic load of the future.

Several members of the commission said they did not think the alternatives would impact traffic. That contradicts the Fehr and Peers study. Has the Fehr and Peers study found to be in error? Or would some prefer to push their own beliefs ahead of the results of the study?

According to the Sebastopol Times, after the meeting, Rubendall said there were small but potentially significant traffic differences between the alternatives. Exactly what does this mean? Is the opposite of large but potentially insignificant traffic differences?

Two Way Traffic Controls

Let's look at the downtown intersections in detail with signal lights and how cars can potentially go left, right, straight ahead at each one. With one way streets, some turns are impossible so the traffic lights have fewer cycles and pedestrians, cyclists and cars can move safely and more efficiently.

Intersection	Allowed Turns (L = Left, R = Right, S = Straight)
12 and Petaluma (Mimi's Corner)	12 Westbound: S, R 12 Eastbound: S, L Petaluma Northbound: L, R, S Petaluma Southbound: None, it's one way
12 and Main (Empty Theater Corner)	12 Westbound: L, S 12 Eastbound: R, S Main Southbound: L, R, S Main Northbound: None, it's one way
McKinley and N Main (Whole Foods Corner)	McKinley: L, R Main Southbound S Main Northbound: None, it's one way

Why is this important? Traffic moves more more safely and efficiently saving gas and reducing pollution. Cyclists and pedestrians have an easier safer time navigating one way crossings than two way although it is prudent to always look both ways. Cars don't stop traffic making left turns into oncoming traffic. Two way traffic at 12 and Petaluma would require 4 traffic light cycles, not the three we have now. Likewise for the Main St. Bodega intersection. A two-way McKinley and N. Main St. intersection needs to allow for lefts onto McKinley from N. Main. Frustrated drivers in a rush will have even more red lights to run and hit cyclists and pedestrians.

Intersections without lights will become much more complex, less safe and more difficult to navigate as well. These have not been considered in the two way studies, but here they are:

- S. Main at Burnet St. will become a real challenge to cross or make left turn with two way traffic. How about a light there?

- Petaluma Throughway and Burnet St., a left will be another real challenge in a two way universe.

- S. Main at Cedar/Fannen will become another real challenge, with two way traffic and the offset. How about a light there too?

- The new Petaluma Throughway and Fannen will become an adventure to cross or make a left with two way traffic. Traffic Light?

- The same applies to the four intersections of Palm and Walker with Petaluma and S. Main.

We all agree that driving less is the way to go but the way to do it is not to make people uncomfortable and unsafe driving in Sebastopol because they will just stay away from town if they can.

The Y Intersection of Main, Petaluma and 116

The Y intersection where Main St. and Petaluma Ave. fork would require two-way traffic access so traffic coming from these streets can proceed South on 116. Or vice versa for Northbound traffic. This is outside the core area and wasn't addressed at all. It's unchanged any one way schemes but must be addressed in any two way scheme. In order to understand the complete impact to make an informed decision it can't be left blank. The traffic controls, probably lights, at this intersection will have a major negative impact on traffic which currently flows smoothly there. What's the plan for this? It is also a major cost and feasibility issue.

Traffic in Sebastopol has almost doubled in the last 40 years

1986 ~14,000 vehicles/day at busy downtown engineer report

2010s–2020s ~25,000–38,000/day on arterial segments Traffic studies & count summaries

Traffic will not decrease, it will double again before we know it. How responsive to increased traffic flow is the two-way alternative? How much traffic will be driven out of the core into ad hoc bypass routes, Covert to Pleasant Hill or Laguna to McKinley? People say this was the case before one way streets.

The ad hoc two way street recommendation coming out the Planning Commission does not reflect Good Government. It reflects the desires of a few individuals who have based decisions on special interests and doubtful aesthetics. Good Government is based on delivering what the people want using facts, data, and rational thinking free from subjective interpretations in order to make the best decisions.

The Parking

The recommended alternative reduces parking in the downtown core area. Alternative 4, Totally Two Way the basis of the Planning Commission's recommendation will remove about 50 spaces or 8%. This will be a disaster for the small businesses located there. Was the impact on local business of the number of parking spaces impact the local businesses on Main Street considered? Were business owners surveyed about this change? No. Incredibly enough, Geoff Rubendall from Fehr and Peers said the Chamber of Commerce had been contacted about the two-way impacts but not individual businesses on

Main Street. It just does not make sense to reduce parking on these blocks of Main Street that have high business occupancy rates with excellent stores and our favorite restaurants. Go see for yourself how many businesses are empty there vs the two-way parts of town vs the Barlow and you will see the downtown is doing the best of all with one way streets.



If reducing parking is good for Sebastopol downtown, what about the Barlow? Here's what Tripadvisor says about the Barlow, screenshot is shown. "Easy Parking" is the first thing visitors talk about. What will Tripadvisor say about downtown Sebastopol, "Small town feel but without parking." The logical conclusion is that Sebastopol should do more to make parking easier downtown. Maybe lease 20 parking spots in the old Rite Aid lot for free public parking. You may ask what does the Barlow have to do with this? Improved access to the Barlow via McKinley from 116 was mentioned in the 2/11 Planning Commission meeting by Geoff Rubendall at around 2:05 of the video. Access to the Barlow Hotel was also mentioned, that's the hotel with a rooftop bar that excludes dogs and Sebastopol residents. But that's OK, Healdsburg has rooftop bars that welcome people from Sebastopol and their money.

The Bike Lanes

It is not specified where bike lanes are in the plan or if there are any. This is a critical piece of information that is still to be determined. Bike lanes may go to make room for Two Way streets. In the original Fehr and Peers Alternative 4 on which the Planning Commission recommendation was based, bike lanes were totally removed from the Petaluma Thruway. It will not be a strong proposal to Caltrans when they are told the bike lanes on Petaluma they just paid for they are now asked to pay to remove. The status of bike lanes on Main Street are unclear in Totally Two Way. Bicycle infrastructure is very important to Sebastopol and is a complex issue beyond the scope of the two block plan.

Recommendations

If you have made it this far you are to be commended for your persistence and dedication. Surveys conducted by Fehr and Peers showed the people of Sebastopol overwhelmingly prefer the current one way traffic pattern, with safety upgrades. That clear public preference was set aside by the Planning Commission. Fehr and Peers' detailed trade study recommendation was for the Walkable One Way Alternative #3. Yet the Planning Commission pressed them in real time to reverse course — not because of new data, or analysis but because of personal preference. It was difficult to watch and it was not Good Government. Removing parking will hurt our fine local businesses on Main Street. The cavalier attitude towards traffic can be summarized as "Just Let Them Be Stuck in Traffic" and is not sensitive to the most important consideration for many families in town. Bicycle infrastructure is complex and needs to be treated on a regional basis but asking Caltrans to pay to remove bike lanes they just paid for will be a hard sell. My recommendation is for the Council to show independence, put the people of Sebastopol first, tighten their resolve, ignore special interests and reject the flawed Planning Commission recommendation. Reaffirm that the people of Sebastopol, sound analysis, safety and logic come first and endorse the Walkable One Way Alternative 3 which makes the current One Way traffic pattern safer as recommended by Fehr and Peers.