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### Happy trails

By Randy Rhody,

A hundred years ago, people decried the appearance of the horseless carriage for spooking their horse-and-buggies and bringing mayhem to their quiet streets. Fifty years ago, the automobile was an object of worship, streets evolved into expressways and roads became freeways. We now live in a city with streets that were laid out during that era.

But today we've come full circle and traffic is viewed as a menace and a contributor to climate change, and we fearfully check the gas prices each time we drive by the service station. The No. 1 issue that is certain to crowd Los Altos City Council meetings is an agenda item perceived as a contributor to Traffic with a capital T: school parking, housing development, speed limits, even a neighborhood ice cream shop.

Los Altos has recently adopted some green building standards and signed up to the "Cool Cities" movement. I'd like to see a third approach taken, toward developing "green traffic," and by this I mean not only searching for traffic mitigation and traffic calming, but outright traffic inconveniencing where it is appropriate. I may be pushing the envelope here, but I fail to

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see why we should make streets like San Antonio Road so convenient for traffic as to put the rest of us in a defensive posture. It's obvious to me that our streets have lost their connection to the human scale when a man crossing San Antonio Road is killed and we now are installing special flashing crosswalks.

To this end, I joined as a volunteer our Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee. Whenever possible, I have advocated more thoughtful bicycle/pedestrian routes and facilities. I really don't find comfort in a white stripe painted along the shoulder of the roadway. That's not much in the way of physical protection. It's extremely saddening to read about a bicyclist being struck by a drunk or inattentive driver. I'm appalled at the stories I hear of cyclists being screamed at by drivers who haven't read the California Vehicle Code in decades and erroneously think bicycles don't have a share of the road. Bike routes, separated from vehicle traffic, are badly needed as ways to get to work and school and as recreational resources.

This year a feasibility study will be completed for a Los Altos portion of Stevens Creek Trail. The most picturesque parts of the trail extend from Shoreline Park in Mountain View and are being developed now in Cupertino. Los Altos is trying to devise a compromise route for its leg of the trail that avoids private property but links the other segments so that everyone can enjoy the route. Separate bike routes like this – what are known as Class 1 bike routes – are needed to help with the greening of our mobile way of life. Here, where the weather is mild and the terrain is flat, there's no excuse not to use them.

I think a city like Los Altos should start taking back its streets before we become so gridlocked it is too late to back out.

Randy Rhody is a Los Altos resident and member of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee.

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### In Our Opinion

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### Residents applaud fire department

We want to publicly register praise for our wonderful fire department. Our house caught fire Feb. 9, and they responded (in force) very quickly, saved a ton of things from being burned and put out the fire with a minimum of smoke and water damage.

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