

From: [Richard Heinberg](#)
To: [BPAB Comments](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Jennings Crossing
Date: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 9:50:46 AM

Greetings:

Santa Rosa's Northwest community was split, disconnected, and disempowered by the opening of SMART, which closed the Jennings pedestrian walking route, formerly connecting east and west. Now bicyclists, shoppers, and schoolchildren must take a much longer and more dangerous route via either College Avenue or Guerneville Road. SMART and the City have yet to come to an agreement on a CPUC-approved at-grade crossing with the appropriate safety systems. This pedestrian/bike crossing is long, long overdue. Please expedite the construction of an at-grade rail crossing at Jennings Avenue.

Thank you,
Richard Heinberg



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From: [Alexa Forrester](#)
To: [BPAB Comments](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Public Comment non-agenda item, Jennings's railroad crossing
Date: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 11:32:50 AM
Attachments: [SMART Board re Jennings - Jan 2024 \(2\).pdf](#)

Hello,

Bikeable Santa Rosa strongly supports an at-grade crossing over the railroad tracks at Jennings avenue. We would like the attached letter, which we wrote to the SMART board expressing our reasoning, to be distributed to the members of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Board so they are aware of the issue.

Thank you for facilitating this public engagement,
Alexa Forrester
Bikeable Santa Rosa co-lead



January 16, 2024

Board of Directors, Sonoma Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART)
5401 Old Redwood Highway, Suite 200
Petaluma, CA 94954

Dear SMART Board Members,

We are writing on behalf of [Bikeable Santa Rosa](#), a grassroots, all-volunteer campaign aimed at catalyzing safe, low-stress, convenient bike routes in a connected network for riders of all ages and abilities. We have been organizing for just under 2 years and we are growing every month. We currently have hundreds of active supporters.

We are writing today to express that an at-grade crossing over the SMART tracks on Jennings Avenue is absolutely essential to our vision of a connected, multimodal transportation future for our community. We have been patiently monitoring what public information has been made available about the crossing and are growing increasingly frustrated with the delay on this project. We know the City of Santa Rosa and SMART have been trying to work out the details for a while now. Unfortunately, the growing public perception is that SMART – who we like to believe would be a natural ally of our campaign – is undermining our efforts to create mobility justice and climate-safe transportation options for Santa Rosa’s residents.

We write today to stress 4 points:

- 1. The active transportation community in Santa Rosa strongly supports an at-grade crossing.** This crossing has been in our city’s bike/ped plan for years. Further, there was an understanding in the community that this crossing, heavily used before SMART service began, would continue to be open after SMART service began. Neighbors in the area, many who were early advocates for bringing SMART to the county, now feel duped for advocating for SMART under false pretenses.
- 2. The active transportation community in Santa Rosa strongly opposes SMART’s proposed ‘solution’ of a raised bike/ped bridge over the tracks.** Representatives of our campaign attended the public presentation of SMART’s proposed solution last year (March 2nd, 2023), and we consider the proposed bridge idea dead on arrival, for three reasons. First, many vulnerable users do not feel safe using such crossings alone, especially at night, meaning this is not actually a solution for a certain segment of the population. Second, even people who do not feel threatened using such infrastructure will feel like the addition of a climb and extra mileage to their journey is inconvenient enough to discourage use. But even aside from the above facts, the major downfall of the project is its price tag. There is no plausible future in which SMART, the City, or the County will be able to procure the funds for such a project, especially given how unpopular it is with those who need to cross the tracks. It simply does not make sense to build an expensive, unpopular, not-very-useful piece of infrastructure when a much cheaper, more popular, more useful option is available.

3. **This approximately 1-mile stretch of the SMART tracks is currently serving as a barrier, dividing our community, and driving up Vehicle Miles Traveled.** We want to stress that this is not just a question of how this impacts our future. The SMART tracks are currently forcing people to drive, rather than walk or ride, for trips that could easily be done without a car if the crossing were open. Those who cannot drive (teens, elderly, those who can't afford a car) are simply being denied transportation justice. For this reason, the need to create safe passage across the tracks somewhere between Guerneville Road and College Ave is urgent. We hope you will treat it as such.

4. **The public deserves a transparent, clear, and well-supported communication regarding this project.** Our campaign tries at all times to work as good-faith partners to all government agencies, and to support your efforts to serve our communities. We would like you to extend the same courtesy to us. We realize that some governmental discussions involve confidential, sensitive matters and it is not always possible to share all the details of a given decision. But with this project, it seems that no one in the government is taking responsibility for providing reliable progress updates to the public, leading to rumor mills and disempowerment.

Charles Marohn, former traffic engineer and founder of the Strong Towns movement, has popularized the following [4-Step Approach to Public Investment](#):

1. Humbly observe where people in the community struggle.
2. Ask the question: What is the next smallest thing we can do right now to address that struggle?
3. Do that thing. Do it right now.
4. Repeat.

Opening the Jennings at-grade crossing is the next small thing that SMART and the City can do to alleviate Santa Rosans' struggles and improve our lives. We call on all members of the SMART Board to do whatever is in your power to get the at-grade crossing at Jennings built as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,



Alexa Forrester
Co-Lead, Bikeable Santa Rosa



Chris Guenther
Co-Lead, Bikeable Santa Rosa

From: [Lisa](#)
To: [BPAB Comments](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] Jennings crossing
Date: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 1:20:03 PM

Jennings Ave. railroad pedestrian and bike crossing.

Before the train became active I would cross at Jennings Ave. to walk to the library and post office. Most of the time I would have my dog with me. Since the train has become active and this route has been closed I have had to walk along Guernville Road. I do not feel as safe walking along this street with the amount of traffic and the way people drive these days. I have seen people drive across the median instead of going to the signal. It is also much louder. A pedestrian crossing at the end of Jennings Ave. would be greatly appreciated. I live on Jennings Ave., where cars continually speed down the road and don't stop at stop signs, A quieter route would be nice.

Thank You, Lisa Querin

From: [Janet Barocco](#)
To: [BPAB Comments](#)
Subject: [EXTERNAL] re: Jennings Crossing
Date: Tuesday, January 16, 2024 3:29:21 PM
Attachments: [Jennings letter to BPAB Jan2024.docx](#)

To: BPAB members:

I've lived on Jennings Avenue in Northwest Santa Rosa for 23 years, and in Sonoma County for 31 years. For 8 years I've advocated for building an at-grade rail crossing at Jennings Avenue.

Building a crossing at Jennings is important to me, my neighbors and the community for many reasons, not the least of which is that it would provide a safe, convenient way for people to get essential needs met without driving.

An at-grade rail crossing at Jennings is safer than the current detour which routes people onto heavily-trafficked N. Dutton Avenue and Guerneville Road, or W. College which adds a half mile or 30 minutes to a pedestrian round trip.

We need this crossing because the current detour requires cyclists coming from the west/southwest going to east Santa Rosa, to use dangerous W. College to reach the rail pathway that eventually connects with the proposed HWY 101 Bike Bridge. A crossing at Jennings would allow a more direct and safer route down Jennings connecting to the 101 Bike Bridge.

A crossing at Jennings is a vital west- east component of Santa Rosa's general plan for Jennings Bicycle Boulevard and the Hwy 101 Bridge.

We need this crossing as the effects of climate chaos intensify. Improving and creating car-free infrastructure for human-powered transportation to vital services should be a priority for Santa Rosa in this era of climate change.

An at-grade crossing at Jennings benefits citizens and builds community by connecting us face to face. Knowing our neighbors makes a healthy, strong community.

Thank you to the BPAB for your interest and support for building an official at-grade crossing at Jennings.

Janet Barocco
Santa Rosa, CA