



**SANTA CRUZ COUNTY GROUP**  
**Of the Ventana Chapter**  
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Feb 14, 2021

Dear City Manager and City Council,

This is a request from the Santa Cruz Group of the Sierra Club regarding the hiring process of a new traffic engineer for the City of Santa Cruz.

We understand that this position is usually hired by the City Manager and Public Works Director based on the relative experience of the applicants. This would certainly be the right process for many important staff positions in the City. But our City's Traffic Engineer needs to be innovative and to work with activated constituents, requirements that go beyond competence and expertise.

This position of City Traffic Engineer is critical one in the process of street design that prioritizes the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. The urgency to hire someone who understands and puts in place the needed infrastructure to keep residents and tourists safe cannot be overstated. Just yesterday afternoon, Wednesday, 2/10, a woman was killed in an accident at Water and River streets by an eighteen-wheel semi-truck. She was pronounced dead at the scene. This accident didn't happen at night, not on a day when Santa Cruz is flooded with tourists, but in broad daylight in a tourist-free February. Our best hope to reduce these kinds of tragedies is via innovative street design.

Our City has a proud history of using innovative designs to effect transitions away from auto-centric design and towards a city that is more usable by human beings. Many of these designs did not follow usual standards and ended up garnering awards for the City due to their innovation including the designs for the Beach Street bike lanes and the Soquel bike lanes. If the City had a different traffic engineer at the time, these facilities may have never been built. As best practices move away from auto-centric design and towards human centered planning, engineers are trained to make different design decisions. A newly trained engineer, or an engineer from a City known for innovation is probably a better fit for our City than an engineer from a City without a lot of bicycle or pedestrian transportation.

The City Traffic Engineer, however, also ends up designing facilities not just based on professional standards but based on urban planning beliefs. Will Santa Cruz end up feeling more like Portland or Houston? Will it focus on bicycles and trains or will it expedite the passage of the automobile? How will the designs of the traffic engineer support or oppose our City's commitment to climate action?

Part of the impetus for our innovative projects came from the strong public support for them. Successful City Traffic Engineers listen to the engaged public and attempt to translate their priorities into on the ground designs. The city of Santa Cruz has made retaining its bicycle and pedestrian accessibility a priority, particularly in vital tourist areas. Continuing and expanding this is important to residents who value the ability to navigate their city without relying on cars. Reducing auto traffic and increasing safe cycling and walkability benefits even those who don't live in the city, such as tourists and county residents. So, an effective Traffic Engineer needs to be innovative and open to dialogue with a broad group of citizens.

We think the best way to ensure that a new Traffic Engineer is a good fit for our City would be to have a temporary group of citizens give input into the hiring process. The Sierra Club, with 1000 members in the City, would be happy to participate in this kind of process.

Thank you for your consideration of these suggestions and for your work in finding the best Traffic Engineer for the City of Santa Cruz,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Micah Posner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Micah" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Posner".

Micah Posner. Chair

Santa Cruz County Group, Ventana Chapter, Sierra Club