

Miner: Don't touch bike path money

Dear Publisher:

Bike path maintenance monies should be spent on bike path maintenance, not on construction of ball fields. Personally, I'm all for ball fields, but just not with bike path maintenance monies. If you needed an initiative to allow bike path monies to be spent on other bike paths not covered by Measure S, then you could have worded Measure B to allow that.

But there must have been ball field interest groups in attendance at whatever meeting made that decision, and bicycle advocates were expressly not invited. As Ty Polastri stated in his letter, this is not a tactic that encourages collaboration, inclusiveness and trust. The bicycle community, which has the most to lose, should have been included in the discussions.

When the City was awarded the Bicycle Friendly Community Award a few years ago, Hal Cole remembered that I came before this council back in 2001 (or something like that) to suggest that we work at becoming more Bicycle Friendly. After much hard work and organization on the part of the bicycle community and the City we received that award. We now proudly display those signs on all City entrances. The sign signifies that while we may not be perfect, we are steadily working to improve our town's bicycle amenities. The award is the outwardly manifestation of an inward quality that we as a city care about attracting visitors who cycle and are committed to making commuting to work and play more pleasurable and safer for visitors and locals alike.

But that designation comes with a cost. We have to really pursue bicycle friendliness and make the hard choices to train

our police force in bicycle law enforcement, incorporate bicycle lanes on roads within the city, and yes, keep bicycle maintenance funds for maintaining bicycle paths. Or do you think you can maintain that award in name alone? If you want to make a change in how Measure S funds can be spent, make that change. Ball field advocates should go after their own funding and not steal it from bike paths when there is plenty of bike path maintenance yet to do.

I have 4 points to make about Measure B:

1. Ball field improvements are a good idea. If you have ever flown into Phoenix you can see how from the air how a city plans for its recreation with common facilities at the center of multiple fields. The question is: Where should the money come from?

2. With the award of the Bicycle Friendly Community designation a few years ago, the City has made a commitment to improving bicycle facilities. We all worked hard to get that award and it would be a shame to lose it. Bicycling is how many people get to the ball fields and other recreation opportunities in this town and bicycle facilities and bike paths should be maintained and safe.

3. The writers of Measure B had one thing in mind: Taking unused bike path maintenance monies to fund ball field improvements. They did not seek input from the bicycling community about the money they were taking, they just saw an opportunity to further their goals, and took it. Had they been a little more inclusive they could have written into their measure that some of the money would be used to repair existing bicycle paths which would have made both the ball field advocates and the bicycle advocates happy. But they wanted all the money for themselves. When is the last time any of you have ridden on the Al Tahoe bicycle path by the college? That's the kind of dangerous bike path that Measure S money should have been used to repair.

4. The City Council and the Measure S Committee have a higher standard to uphold. You have to ensure that all members of the community are heard and included when public monies are allocated. Both the Council and the Committee did a poor job of making sure that bicycle advocates were included in the conversation and this is where the main my problem lies. You did not do a good job of representing and hearing from all members of the community on this topic. There is some complaint that bicycle advocates never had a chance to write an opposition response to Measure B on the ballot. This type of partisanship should not be tolerated by City committees or the Council. The end may justify the means to one political group, but the City Council has a higher calling. I think you dropped the ball on this one.

Jeff Miner, South Lake Tahoe