



**Independent, locally owned and operated!**

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published December 4th, 2013

## SMC Parking Plan Remains Under Scrutiny

By *Sophie Braccini*

As Saint Mary's College pursues the construction of its new recreation facility, the Alioto Center, it needs to fulfill final requirements identified during the environmental review of the project in order to obtain an occupancy permit when construction is finished. During the initial study it was determined that the parking situation on campus is not optimal, with many lots being filled to, and sometimes over, capacity. The environmental study required that the college propose mitigation measures to improve the situation and make sure that St. Mary's Road is not used for overflow parking. The plan presented to the Moraga Planning Commission in November did not completely satisfy the commissioners; they wanted to see more quantified data to support the good intentions. The college will have to report back in a year and demonstrate progress.

According to the traffic study by Walker Parking Consultants, the lots that are most impacted at this time, with a rate of more than 100 percent occupancy, are those reserved for commuter students (non-residential parking). It appears that resident students use their cars instead of walking or biking to go to classes, because the campus is hilly and also because there is no walking path from some of the residence halls to the core of the campus where classes are held.

The college proposed to reduce the average occupancy of non-residential parking lots during the week from 100 percent to 95 percent by November 2016, with a long term goal of 90 percent. It also vouched to achieve and maintain an average of 1.3 occupants per vehicle during the afternoon peak period.

The means to reach the goals include increasing parking enforcement on campus, promoting free transit programs and reinstating a car-share program for students and employees.

"What about the people from outside who visit the campus to go to the museum or the library during working hours?" asked commissioner Tom Marnane. Tim Farley, SMC's director of community and government relations, replied that the study did not suggest that visitors to the campus have problems finding parking.

Commissioner Teresa Onoda did not find the idea of additional bicycle racks to be enough. "You have a golden opportunity to show leadership in the town of Moraga and promote more bicycle use," she said. "You could implement a bike-sharing program and require that freshmen don't bring a car, as many other universities do." Farley responded that this question would be part of the 10-year master plan that the college has started to work on and that will address the campus' development from 2018 to 2028.

"We still have a problem with students parking along St. Mary's Road because there is no space inside," said Marnane, "and your plan does not provide enough data in the short term. Some of your objectives are set to years from now, but we want to see the beginning of quantifiable improvements sooner."

Commissioner Christine Kuckuk shared those concerns. "The parking plan has objectives until five years from now which is supposed to be when your new master plan will take effect, but what if the plan is not ready in five years?" She added that the parking plan and its intentions are good, but that it is the job of the commission to make sure that it will really work, that certain benchmarks are met.

The commissioners agreed to ask the campus to reduce the occupancy rate of the non-residential parking areas to 95 percent while maintaining residential parking at 90 percent within a year. If the goals are met, the college will not need to come back to the commission on this issue and will just check yearly with staff. If they are not met, the college will have to propose additional mitigation measures.

Reach the reporter at: [sophie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:sophie@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA