

Council jilts turn lanes for parking

■ Aldermen reject three turn-lane proposals to save potential loss of parking spaces downtown.

By Paulette Tobin
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Downtown parking spots are more important than dedicated turn lanes for motorists,

Rapid City aldermen said Tuesday, in rejecting a plan to install three such turn lanes on Main Street.

The plan called for dedicated left-and right-turn-only lanes for westbound traffic at Fifth and Main, and a dedicated left-turn-only lane at Main and Mount Rushmore Road.

The turn lanes would be built during the reconstruction of Main Street from East Boulevard to West Boulevard. Work on that project is expected to begin Friday at the Fifth Street and Mount Rushmore Road in-

tersections.

But aldermen, meeting Tuesday as the Public Works Committee, said they supported downtown merchants who said they couldn't afford to lose the 13 parking spots the turn lanes would have cost.

The committee's recommendation will go before the full council at its meeting Monday night.

Larry Kostaneski, manager of the city engineering division, said the city staff and state Department of Transportation recommended

putting in the turn lanes because of traffic numbers.

The discussion of turn lanes also turned to a discussion of nodes, those areas at intersections that often include trees, bushes and benches.

Some aldermen and others said they didn't want any more nodes to be built during the Main Street reconstruction. When the designer of the project said the nodes would not take away any parking spaces, at least one merchant said he would not object to them.

But Alderman Larry Blote, operator of a downtown pawn and gun shop, said he objected to the placing of more nodes.

"We didn't like the blasted things when they were first put in," Blote said.

The issue of the nodes will be discussed at a public meeting from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. Thursday in the council chambers. The meeting was scheduled earlier this week to update merchants and others on the status of the Main Street reconstruction project.