



DISCUSSION ITEMS

Agenda Item # 8

AGENDA REPORT SUMMARY

Meeting Date: February 14, 2017

Subject: Traffic and Transportation Updates – School Areas

Prepared by: Cedric Novenario, Transportation Services Manager

Reviewed by: Susanna Chan, Public Works Director

Approved by: Chris Jordan, City Manager

Attachment:

None

Initiated by:

City Council

Fiscal Impact:

None

Environmental Review:

Not applicable

Policy Question(s) for Council Consideration:

Not applicable

Summary:

- Staff continues to design and implement school related projects identified in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and various school traffic related studies
- Engineering and traffic enforcement staff collaborate on addressing school related traffic and transportation issues

Staff Recommendation:

Receive an update regarding traffic and transportation around Los Altos public school areas and direct staff accordingly



Subject: Traffic and Transportation Updates – School Areas

Purpose

To provide a comprehensive review and update of improvements, concerns and initiatives the City has undertaken regarding school area traffic and transportation

Background

Traffic safety around schools remains a high priority for the City Council. The student population and increased traffic in the general area have further drawn concern from parents of school aged children. Addressing these concerns also remains a priority for City staff. There are three main pillars in addressing traffic safety; engineering, enforcement, and education. In general, engineering is addressed through the capital improvement process or through City Council directed studies. Less involved issues are handled through improvements by the engineering and maintenance division. Enforcement is handled by the Los Altos traffic enforcement team. In collaboration with engineering, the traffic enforcement team identifies locations around the city to enforce state and city traffic laws where concerns are raised internally or by residents. Staff has also involved the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC) as the primary venue to provide educational information to the public regarding traffic safety.

Discussion/Analysis

Below is a summary of staff activity by school or topic relating to traffic and transportation projects, concerns, and issues related to school commutes:

Citywide Efforts

- 15 MPH School Speed Zones
 - In the Spring of 2016, the City implemented 15 MPH School Speed Zones at Los Altos Public Schools and in front of St. Simon School on Grant Road in 2016. The 15 MPH School Speed Zones apply along streets where the school property lies and extends 500 feet from the school boundaries. The speed zones are in effect when children are traveling to and from school. Radar and lidar (laser detection) enforcement can be performed on these streets. School speed zones are marked with signage.
- Monthly Traffic Enforcement -Engineering Meeting
 - Traffic enforcement and engineering staff have instituted monthly meetings in 2016 to discuss traffic and transportation issues developed internally and those received from Los Altos residents, including school related issues. At these meetings, strategic and tactical engineering and enforcement improvements are coordinated to address resident and school concerns. Some requests include observing traffic behavior during school commute times, signal timing change requests, requests for safety warning signage, and request for the portable radar sign.



Subject: Traffic and Transportation Updates – School Areas

- On-Going BPAC Involvement
 - As mentioned, the BPAC has and continues to be the primary venue in spear heading bicycle and pedestrian educational efforts. The BPAC and staff have utilized the Farmer’s Market during the development of the Pedestrian Master Plan and as a brainstorming venue to gather information from the public regarding their concerns related to bicycle and pedestrian safety.
 - As a result of Farmers Market outreach regarding public concerns relating to bicycle and pedestrian safety in the Summer of 2016, the BPAC has partnered with GreenTown Los Altos to host a community conversation regarding Complete Streets in November 2016. City staff, Valley Transportation Authority staff and transportation consulting staff from Fehr and Peers provided an overview and application of Complete Streets at a local and regional level. The event was deemed successful and informative to those in attendance. A similar event will be developed for Spring 2017.
- Crossing guards
 - The Los Altos Police Department in partnership with the Los Altos School District and now with Cupertino Union School District, identify and evaluate locations for crossing guards. Crossing guard evaluations are conducted by the engineering staff and recommendations are made to the Chief of Police. The crossing guards are an added safety measure to guide children to and from school. Crossing guard identification and assessments are conducted on a request basis.

Egan Junior High School

- Berkeley ITS Study
 - In 2011, the City and Egan Junior High participated in a free pedestrian safety assessment conducted by the Institute of Transportation Studies at University of California, Berkeley
 - Completed items identified from that study include:
 - Restriped eastbound W. Portola between the Bullis Charter School exit driveway and San Antonio Road to include one through lane and one right turn lane
 - To improve the pedestrian capacity on W. Portola Avenue, No Parking sign poles were removed and a painted red curb was added on the east side of W. Portola Avenue between the Bullis Charter School exit driveway and San Antonio Road
 - Tree limbs or branches that encroach on to the sidewalk were trimmed/removed. This is an on-going activity
 - Keep Clear legends were installed at the entrance and exit driveways at Bullis Charter School



Subject: Traffic and Transportation Updates – School Areas

- Right turn and left turn lanes were marked at the exit driveway for Bullis Charter School
- Replace asphalt walkway between Egan Junior High and Westminster Lane, See W. Portola Sidewalk Improvements below
- Red curbs along W. Portola Avenue
 - At the request of Egan Junior High and Los Altos School District, various segments of curb were painted red along the east side (school side) of W. Portola Avenue
 - The red curbs allowed improved pedestrian capacity along the sidewalk and removed the concern about vehicle doors encroaching into the walkable area of the sidewalk and hitting pedestrians/cyclists
- Raised Crosswalks on W. Portola Avenue
 - In 2012, two raised crosswalks were constructed along W. Portola Avenue as part of a Safe Route to School Grant. These sidewalks provide improved safety access to both Bullis Charter School and Egan Junior High School
- W. Portola Sidewalk Improvements
 - In 2014 the City completed construction of the W. Portola Sidewalk Improvements between the east end of Egan Junior High and approximately Westminster Lane
 - The project completed a sidewalk gap along W. Portola Avenue and now provides a continuous sidewalk on the east side of W. Portola Avenue between San Antonio Road and Los Altos Avenue
- San Antonio Road/W. Portola Improvements, Project TS-01037
 - City Council approved project
 - Identified improvement on Berkeley ITS Study
 - Will expand sidewalk between San Antonio Road and Egan Junior High School
 - Upgrade traffic signal to incorporate all-way pedestrian crossing and electronic extinguishable No Right Turn sign for eastbound W. Portola Avenue
 - City Council directed staff to begin design when LASD makes a decision about their tenth site

Blach Intermediate School

- Blach Neighborhood Traffic Study
 - In 2011, the City and Fehr and Peers completed the Blach School Neighborhood Traffic Study, the following projects were identified as a Tier 1 project and are either complete, ready for bid or in the design process.
 - Miramonte Avenue and Covington Road Intersection Improvements, Project No. 09-33
 - This project was completed in 2014. The work consisted of concrete pedestrian refuge areas at all four corners of the intersection. Continental crosswalks were also added to improve crosswalk visibility.



Subject: Traffic and Transportation Updates – School Areas

- Covington Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvements, Project No. CF – 01015
 - This project will upgrade the existing concrete sidewalk on the south side of Covington Road and install time-limited bicycle lanes in both directions of Covington Road between Eastwood Drive and Miramonte Avenue. It is anticipated work will begin this summer.
- Miramonte Avenue Pathway Improvements, Project No. TS-01033
 - This project is currently funded for design.
 - Staff presented a concept design with three alternatives to the BPAC in August 2016. Residents along Miramonte Avenue were invited to the meeting to voice their concerns.
 - In general, the BPAC supports walkway improvements and bicycle lanes as suppose to a Class I facility as originally planned. The BPAC requested staff to conduct further investigation based on resident concerns including parking impacts, ingress/egress for residential driveways, maintenance impacts, landscaping impacts, maintain bicycle infrastructure continuity throughout the project.
 - Staff will report back to the commission.
- Carmel Terrace Improvements
 - Staff presented three conceptual designs in 2016 with the aim of improving bicycle and pedestrian safety accessing the rear entrance of Blach Intermediate school.
 - Based on BPAC and resident feedback, the most feasible option is to address the existing sidewalk gap on the east side of Carmel Terrace and install bicycle sharrows to guide cyclists and warn motorists.
- Traffic Signal at the intersection of Grant Road and Covington Road
 - In 2015, City staff upgraded the traffic signal phasing and equipment to separate vehicle movements on Covington Road from Levin Avenue. This work helps improve the after school flow of traffic from Covington Road to Grant Road.
- Concerns regarding school impacts from Bullis Charter School
 - Engineering and traffic enforcement staff are currently observing traffic behavior at the end of the school day. Vehicle queues are spilling over onto Covington Road, therefore blocking through traffic. The vehicle queue, however, does dissipate within 20-30 minutes of the school release times, which is not unusual for any school setting. Staff will be investigating a mix engineering and traffic enforcements solutions that may mitigate the vehicle queueing issue.



Subject: Traffic and Transportation Updates – School Areas

Montclair Elementary School – Cupertino Union School District (CUSD)

- In late 2016, City staff, the Montclair Elementary School Principal and the CUSD Chief of Family and Community Engagement established quarterly meetings to discuss traffic issues regarding school routes. The next meeting is on March 3, 2017.
- Crossing Guard Contract
 - In January 2017, CUSD entered into an agreement with the City of Los Altos for crossing guard services. Staff will conduct a crossing guard assessment once the locations are provided by CUSD.
- Montclair Elementary School Area Walkabout
 - City staff has participated in two walkabouts with representatives from the Montclair Parent Teacher Organization (MPTO), concerned parents and the principal of Montclair Elementary. At the walkabouts, the school community discussed and provided real-time issues that affect their route to school. City staff discussed engineering measures that could address their concerns, as well as, any impacts that could arise from those engineering measures. A summary map is being drafted, which will serve as a history of the walkabout discussion and will be presented to the BPAC for discussion
- Walk Audits and Routes to School Map for Homestead High School (Los Altos portion)
 - School officials and concerned parents are developing school route maps to Homestead High School. Since the school serves multiple cities, City staff from each jurisdiction participated in identifying school routes within their respective boundaries.
 - City staff and school route coordinators from Sunnyvale and Cupertino participated in walk audits to Homestead High School. The walk audit provided each of the city staff's the experience walking to school during the commute period. In regards to Los Altos, Homestead Road has a Class I facility and still maintained bicycle lanes. City staff is partnering with Sunnyvale and Cupertino on developing educational materials that will be distributed to the school community. These materials could also be tailored for the Montclair Elementary School Community.

Other School Related Activity

- W. Edith Avenue/University Avenue Crosswalk Improvements, Project No. TS-01034
 - 100% engineering design is complete for this project. The improvements for this project include new accessible curb ramps, new continental crosswalk, in-pavement illuminated crosswalk devices, advanced pedestrian signage, new striping and lane delineation devices. The BPAC and residents were provided an opportunity to comment on this project at the October 2016 BPAC meeting. Staff is currently pursuing a permit from Santa Clara County, as some of the work is in the County Right-of-Way. The project will be advertised for construction bids once the permit is secured. It is anticipated construction work will begin in late Spring or early Summer 2017.



Subject: Traffic and Transportation Updates – School Areas

- University Avenue/Lincoln Avenue Crosswalk Improvements, Project No. TS-01035
 - Staff presented a 35% engineering design to the BPAC at their January 2017 meeting. The proposed improvements consist of a raised crosswalk, new accessible curb ramps, rectangular rapid flashing beacons, advanced pedestrian and motorist signage and new storm drain facilities. The BPAC and members of the public in attendance were supportive of the design and provided no major concerns. Staff is proceeding with the design and anticipates construction in Summer 2017.
- El Monte Avenue Walkway Gap Closure Project No. TS-01038
 - Staff is preparing a 35% engineering design for a walkway gap closure project on El Monte Avenue between the back entrance of Almond Elementary School and Almond Avenue. The proposed improvements consist of a decomposed granite walkway, pedestrian refuge improvements and crosswalk at the intersection of Almond Avenue and El Monte Avenue, an improved raised crosswalk at El Monte Avenue at N. Clark Avenue and rectangular rapid flashing beacons. Staff anticipates presenting this design to the BPAC either at their February or March 2017 meeting. Residents within 500' of the project location will also be invited to the BPAC meeting.
- Miramonte Avenue/Berry Avenue Crosswalk Improvements, Project No. TS-01036
 - Staff is preparing a 35% engineering design for crosswalk improvements at the intersection of Miramonte Avenue and Berry Avenue. The proposed improvements consist of a raised crosswalk, rectangular rapid flashing beacons, improved storm drain facilities and advanced pedestrian warnings signs. Staff will present the 35% design to the BPAC at their February 2017 meeting for comments. Residents within 500' of the project location will also be invited to the BPAC meeting.
- Annual Pathway Rehabilitation, Project No. CF-01009
 - Staff is preparing a pathway rehabilitation project that will improve the walking surface at three neighborhood pathways at Fallen Leaf Lane; S. Clark Avenue; and Hawthorne Avenue/San Martin Place. These pathways not only provided intra-connection of neighborhoods, but also provide shorter connections to schools in the area.
- Illuminated Crosswalk Improvement Project, Project TS-01031
 - Construction bids were recently received for a replacement of failed illuminated crosswalks at school locations on Almond Avenue (Almond Elementary), Fremont Avenue (St. Simon), and Springer Road (Springer Elementary). Staff anticipates awarding the construction contract at the February 28, 2017 City Council meeting.
- Grant Road Bicycle Lane, Project No. TS-01012
 - In the summer of 2016, a buffered bicycle lane was installed on Grant Road (frontage) between Grant Road and Homestead Road. This is the first buffered bicycle lane in Los Altos. The buffer is 2' wide adjacent to a 4' wide bicycle lane, making the entire bicycle facility 6' wide. The buffered bicycle lane has improved the comfort and safety of cyclists to and from schools in the area



Subject: Traffic and Transportation Updates – School Areas

-
- Santa Rita Road Sharrows and No U-Turn Sign
 - In the summer of 2016, bicycle sharrows were installed on Santa Rita Road between Los Altos Avenue and Van Buren Street. Many cyclists and pedestrians use Santa Rita Road to access a side entrance into Santa Rita Elementary School. The sharrows provide visible queues to both cyclists and motorists that the road is to be shared. No U-Turn signs were also installed at the intersection of Van Buren Street and Santa Rita Road to prevent motorists from blindly turning onto oncoming pedestrians, cyclists, and motorist.

Next Steps

Engineering staff will continue to proceed with school route improvement projects identified in the Capital Improvement Program, strengthen the relationship between traffic enforcement and engineering, and continue to work with the BPAC and enforcement to develop educational material or programs targeted toward traffic safety around schools.