



DATE: January 23, 2019

AGENDA ITEM # 3

TO: Complete Streets Commission

FROM: Aruna Bodduna, Staff Liaison

SUBJECT: Los Altos and Portola Avenue Intersection Improvement Projects

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend time-of-day flashing LED Stop sign at Los Altos Avenue and West Portola Avenue intersection

BACKGROUND

In 2011, the City initiated a substantial effort to update its bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure starting with the development of a Bicycle Transportation Plan (BTP), later adopted in July 2012. The plan identifies a strong dependence on bicycle and pedestrian activity and preferred modes for school commute activities in Los Altos. Following BTP adoption, the City initiated development of a Pedestrian Master Plan (PMP) and Safe Routes to School planning process. Staff presented updates on the PMP at various meetings to the Complete Streets Commission (CSC, then Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Commission) and City Council.

Extensive community and stakeholder outreach was conducted during the master plan development. In addition to holding traditional community outreach meetings, the City solicited input during local events, such as Farmer's Markets, via online survey, conducting walk audits and advertisement in local publications and city mailers. For Safe Routes to School planning efforts, the City directly involved students and parents through partnerships with the Los Altos Unified School District with project stations made available during school drop-off periods. The project stations allowed parents and students to learn about active projects and provide input on the design of projects. Utilizing public input, key components of the Plan were developed including project prioritization, priority programmatic recommendations and concept plans for the Community Priority Projects.

On May 12, 2015, Council reviewed the high priority and school improvement projects lists of the draft PMP and unanimously supported the projects for consideration for the Active Transportation (ATP) Grant-Cycle 2. The projects for the ATP grant included a total of twelve (12) infrastructure improvement projects that serve high-priority Walk and Roll Routes to schools. The proposed improvements, among others, included the use of flashing red stop signs at school crossings to build compliance with intersection stop controls along Walk and Roll Routes to School.

After the City was notified that ATP grant was not awarded, staff provided an update to Council on April 26, 2016 and requested that the City budget funds to be appropriated for completing the projects. Installation of flashing stop signs at Los Altos/Portola Avenues was identified in the project description shown on Attachment 1 of the Agenda Item 11. This project, along with other school routes projects, was included in the Council adopted Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). The CIP project description for Los Altos/Portola intersection (TS-01042) includes flashing Light Emitting Diodes (LED) stop sign installation.

The intersection of Los Altos Avenue and Portola Avenue is all-way stop controlled with standard parallel crosswalk markings. Motorist compliance to safely yielding to pedestrians is a consistent concern of the community. The improvements proposed at this intersection, including flashing LED stop signs, address the community's desires to improve motorist's compliance with yielding at the intersection. Per MUTCD, based on engineering judgement, LED units may be used on regulatory signs, such as a Stop sign, to improve the visibility of the sign.

DISCUSSION

The Los Altos Avenue/Portola Avenue (TS-01042) project is on the current Council adopted Capital Improvement Plan to provide ADA compliant curb ramps, high visibility crosswalk markings and flashing stop signs. This location experiences high traffic of school-aged children and parents accessing Santa Rita Elementary, Egan Jr. High and Bullis Charter schools. This project was combined with other similar school route improvement projects for design and construction.

On October 20, 2017, the City released a request for proposals for engineering design services for various school route projects, including the Los Altos Avenue/Portola Avenue (TS-01042) project. At the January 9, 2018 City Council meeting, Council approved execution of design professional services award to CSG Consultants, following which the City entered into contract with the consultant. The Consultant developed preliminary concepts and the project team presented the same at the Special Complete Streets Commission meeting on Monday, February 12, 2018 at Grant Park Community Center. A public open house was held prior to the Commission meeting to allow the project team to provide details about the projects to the public and gather input. Staff gathered input at the open house and commission meeting, and also during the public comment period (that ended on February 28), in which the public was invited to provide comments directly to staff via email, phone or in person. Based on the feedback received, advanced design was developed and presented at the April 25, 2018 Complete Streets Commission meeting. The Commission supported moving forward with the projects. Outreach for CSC meetings included notification letters to properties within 500' of the project locations, emails to schools, project flyers posted at various schools (with CSC members help), Town Crier notification for February 12 meeting, Next Door notifications and City Manager weekly updates.

On May 30, 2018, the City released a construction bid notice inviting contractors to bid on the projects. At the July 10, 2018 City Council meeting, Council authorized the construction budget and approved award of the contract to Sposeto Engineering.

Prior to beginning construction activities, notification regarding upcoming construction work were again sent to properties within 500' of project locations, emails to schools and included in the City Manager weekly updates. Construction is currently underway. It is delayed due to weather and unforeseen conditions with utility conflicts.

In December 2018 while construction was underway at the Los Altos/Portola intersection, residents in the vicinity of the intersection reached out to the City expressing concern over installation of flashing stop signs. The original proposal was to have the flashing stop signs operate 24/7, however, because of the concern raised, staff is recommending implementation of time of day flashing stop signs. Based on the school bell schedules for the schools in the vicinity (Attachment), Staff recommends flashing lights to be activated between 7:30-9:30am and 1-4pm, Monday through Friday. Flashing would be off for the rest of the day and during weekends.

Attachment(s):

- City Council April 26, 2016, Agenda Item #11, Attachment 1
- February 12, 2018 Special CSC meeting notification letter
- School Schedules