

Capitola City Council

Agenda Report



Meeting: January 12, 2023

From: Public Works Department

Subject: Medical Office Building Project at 5940 Soquel Avenue

Recommended Action: Receive report and provide feedback regarding the proposed project mitigation measures for the Medical Office Building Project within the City limits.

Background: Pacific Medical Builders Santa Cruz, LLC (PMB) has proposed a 160,000-square-foot Medical Office Building Project (Project) at 5940 Soquel Avenue in the unincorporated Live Oak community in Santa Cruz County (County) at the southwest quadrant of the intersection of Soquel Avenue & Mattison Lane, which is approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ miles west of the intersection of 41st Avenue and Soquel Avenue and $\frac{3}{4}$ miles east of the intersection of Soquel Drive and Soquel Avenue.

The project proposes to construct a medical office building, containing approximately 160,000 square feet of gross building floor area, and a 730-vehicle parking garage. The outpatient facility's standard business hours will be from 8:30 AM to 5:30 PM Monday through Friday, except for urgent care, which is anticipated to operate 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. It is proposed that Kaiser Permanente will occupy the completed project if PMD is successful in obtaining project entitlements. The project site will fill a service gap that Kaiser Permanente currently has in the County, which causes many of its members to travel out of the County and to the Kaiser Permanente's facilities in the San Jose Metropolitan Area for health care. In June 2019 the City Council directed the City Manager to submit a letter regarding the traffic studies for the Project (Attachment 1). This letter requested the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) traffic study for the project include an analysis of all feasible measures to mitigate traffic impacts and facilitate regional traffic flow, including evaluating the impacts of opening 40th Avenue to through traffic.

40th Avenue was closed by the County at the County/City boundary at Deanes Lanes in the 1980's. The County of Santa Cruz has completed a Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) including a Transportation Impact and Operational Analysis (TIOA). The TIOA can be found online and the link to the document is listed as Attachment 2. Briefly, the TIOA concluded the impacts of the project could be mitigated by various mitigation measures, however the analysis also concluded that opening 40th would result in increased cut-through traffic and may require the signalization of the Clares Street and 40th Avenue intersection. Staff has reviewed these documents and has been in contact with County staff regarding the proposed Conditions of Approval for this project.

The Project is located outside of the Capitola city limits and is subject to approval by the Santa Cruz County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors. However, there are known traffic impacts from the Project that will impact affect streets and intersections in the City of Capitola. The purpose of this items is to provide the City Council with the opportunity to review and comment on the current proposed project mitigation measures within the City.

Discussion: The TIOA has proposed mitigation measures that require the project sponsor to complete numerous mobility improvements including projects on Soquel Avenue / 40th Avenue & Gross Road, adjacent to the City limits, and 41st Avenue & Gross Road, within the City limits. The installation of all the recommended improvements below would reduce the travel time from the intersection of Soquel Drive and Rodeo Gulch Road to the southbound Highway 1 on-ramp from 8.15 minutes, under existing conditions, to 4.53 minutes.

Soquel Avenue / 40th Avenue & Gross

The project will install a diagonal diverter extending from the northwest corner to the southeast corner at this intersection (Attachment 3, Figure G1). The diverter will prevent cut-through traffic on Gross Road through the residential neighborhood and eliminate the congestion caused by the all-way stop at the intersection. Queues onto Soquel Avenue are expected to shorten with this improvement as traffic flow at the intersection would be governed by the signal at Gross Road & 41st Avenue where additional improvements are recommended.

As requested by the City, the TIOA also included an analysis on the removal of the road barrier on 40th Avenue at Deanes Lane. The analysis found the traffic that would use 40th Avenue instead of 41st Avenue would negligibly reduce the traffic congestion at the intersection of Gross Road and 41st Avenue. Removal of the barrier, with or without the installation of the diverter, would result in increased cut-through traffic from eastbound queues on Soquel Avenue and through the Gross Road neighborhood and make an eastbound right turn at Gross Road/ 40th Avenue. The removal of the barrier may also result in the need to signalize the intersection of Clares Street and 40th Avenue to accommodate the additional traffic demand. The intersection is already congested during peak shopping periods with the current all-way stop configuration.

Staff anticipates the County will include the improvements of the diagonal diverter in the Conditions of Approval for this project. Removal of the road barrier on 40th Avenue at Deanes Lane is not recommended at this time.

41st Avenue & Gross Road

The project will install overhead signs and roadway markings to improve lane selection for southbound Highway 1 and northbound Highway 1 movements and use on the eastbound approach of Gross Road (Attachment 3, Figure G3). The Project will also install a physical barrier between the limit line and the diverge of the Highway 1 southbound on-ramp on 41st Avenue. This barrier will prevent vehicles from jumping the queue for southbound on-ramp traffic and improve bicycle rider safety in the Class II bike lane at the Highway 1 southbound on-ramp at 41st Avenue.

The City recently completed the installation of an adaptive signal system along 41st Avenue, inclusive of the 41st Avenue and Gross Road intersection. The adaptive signal system provides better coordination of traffic flow along the corridor by measuring real time vehicular demand and adjusting signal timing in response. The new free flowing traffic from Gross Road will be detected by this system, reducing queue times.

Upon review of these proposed improvements, Staff submitted comments to the County regarding the proposed physical barrier between the limit line and the diverge of the Highway 1 southbound on-ramp on 41st Avenue. The traffic signal on 41st Avenue north of Gross Road will remain, however, traffic will not be able to change lanes past the intersection (Figure 1). This creates a perceived "free right turn" onto the on-ramp, which may present a hazard to pedestrians in the small crosswalk travelling north on 41st Avenue at the freeway onramp (Figure 2).



Figure 1. Location of physical barrier on 41st Avenue approaching Highway 1 southbound on-ramp



Figure 2. Location of physical barrier on 41st Avenue at Highway 1 southbound on-ramp

Staff anticipates the County will include the improvements of the overhead signs and roadway markings at 41st Avenue and Gross Road and the physical barrier on 41st Avenue in the Conditions of Approval for this Project. Staff has requested that the County also include language to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety in the area of the Highway 1 southbound on-ramp.

The improvements of the overhead signs and roadway markings at 41st Avenue and Gross Road will require an encroachment permit from the City. The barrier installation would also require a Caltrans encroachment permit/approval. It can only be installed if approved by Caltrans. Dependent on the final

configuration of the Caltrans approved barrier, Staff will identify the specific bicycle and pedestrian safety improvements required to be installed by the Project applicant.

Public Hearings

This Project is being considered by the County Planning Commission on January 25, 2023. Staff will provide any updated information regarding County staff-proposed conditions and mitigation measures during the City Council meeting. Any decision made by the County Planning Commission may be appealed to the Board of Supervisors within 14 calendar days of action by the Planning Commission.

Fiscal Impact: Costs of the installation of improvements required by the County will be borne by the Project applicant.

Attachments:

1. Letter Regarding Traffic Studies for a Proposed Medical Office Building on Soquel Avenue (June 27, 2019)
2. Transportation Impact and Operational Analysis for the proposed Medical Office Building:
<https://www.sccoplanning.com/Portals/2/County/Planning/env/Draft%20EIR%20appendix/App%20D%20-%20Transportation%20Analysis.pdf>
3. Diagonal Diverter & Wayfinding Signage Concept Layouts

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Reviewed By: Julia Moss, City Clerk

Approved By: Jamie Goldstein, City Manager