

# Capitola City Council

## Agenda Report



**Meeting:** February 22, 2024

**From:** Public Works Department

**Subject:** Bay Avenue and Hill Street Traffic Safety Update

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**Recommended Action:** Authorize construction of the proposed Bay Avenue/Hill Street intersection quick-build project.

**Background:** The Bay Avenue and Hill Street (Bay/Hill) intersection is an all-way stop-controlled intersection that provides connectivity to Highway 1 and Capitola Village. The section of Bay Avenue at this location is a four-lane wide roadway with a center left turn lane. The City has received community feedback regarding concerns about pedestrian safety at the crosswalks. During peak hours, the intersection experiences congestion from heavy vehicle and pedestrian cross traffic due to access to the Nob Hill Plaza, the Rispin Bridge crossing, and the surrounding residential and commercial land uses. The adopted FY 2023-24 budget includes \$50,000 to make improvements to this intersection.

During the September 28, 2023, City Council meeting, staff presented various options for the Hill/Bay intersection. In response, an ad-hoc subcommittee, comprised of Council Members Clarke and Pedersen, was formed to collaborate with staff, gather input from adjacent businesses, and solicit public feedback. The subcommittee's primary goal is to explore short-term solutions and present a comprehensive report to the City Council.

In November 2023, the City amended its contract with Kimley Horn to develop options for a short-term (quick build) traffic safety improvement project, incorporating the outcomes of the ad-hoc subcommittee. The contract also includes an updated traffic analysis for long-term design improvements at the Bay Avenue/Hill Street and Bay Avenue/Capitola Avenue intersections. During a community meeting held on November 29, community members expressed concerns not only about the Bay/Hill intersection but also about safety and maneuverability along the entire Bay Avenue corridor from the Highway 1 off-ramp to the Capitola Avenue intersection.

During the December 14, 2023, City Council meeting, staff was directed to purchase lighted/flashing stop signs and pole reflectors before implementation of the quick-build project, and re-stripe the Hill Street Corridor with reflective paint. Signs arrived ahead of the reflectors and were immediately installed, reflectors will be installed soon. The crosswalk has been re-striped with reflective paint.

Staff has initiated the assessment of long-term options for Bay Avenue. The scope of the traffic analysis has been broadened to encompass Bay Avenue to the Highway 1 off-ramp and the Monterey Avenue intersection, taking into account safety improvements for active transportation along the corridor. The initial analysis is anticipated to be completed in late summer or early fall of 2024.

**Discussion:** Following direction from the subcommittee, staff conducted meetings with all relevant property owners and organized a community meeting at the Bay Avenue Senior Center on January 31, 2024. Additionally, staff actively communicated with the Capitola representative on the Santa Cruz County Regional Transportation Commission's Elderly and Disabled Transportation Advisory Committee. The feedback obtained from these interactions is summarized below and included as Attachment 1.

Property Owners:

Concerns	Responses
Worries about potential traffic congestion and extended queues, especially with Crossroad Loop becoming a shortcut for impatient vehicles	City willing to assist with traffic calming measures, such as striping and speed humps, on private-owned Crossroads Loop street to discourage cut-through vehicle trips. Private right-of-way improvements funded by property owner.
Expressions of concern regarding the permanence of quick-build solutions, emphasizing the need for sustainable and lasting traffic management measures	City plans a corridor study for long-term improvements. Acknowledgment of the need for sustainable and lasting traffic management measures in long-term solutions.
<b>Specific to Red Tree (Nob Hill Shopping Center):</b>	
Primary concern is the reduction of lanes exiting the center at the intersection, potentially causing queues that extend in front of the grocery store and impact pedestrians entering from the parking lot. The proposed striping for the quick-build project is on the property outside the City's right-of-way and will require permission from the owner for modification	City modified proposed egress from center that balances improving intersection safety while maintaining traffic operations and access to the property.
A secondary concern is the reduction of lanes approaching the intersection from the freeway, diverting traffic into the secondary entrance near the carwash	Traffic analysis considered and found to be adequate within the existing drive aisle. Anticipation that some traffic may divert from the Bay/Hill intersection and use the secondary entrance at Crossroads Loop with the proposed quick-build improvements.

Bay Avenue Senior Center:

Concern	Response
Night Visibility	Acknowledged concerns. Street lighting will be considered as a long-term future improvement due to funding limitations of the quick-build design.
Pedestrian Safety	Acknowledged concerns. Offered to explore more permanent options for enhanced pedestrian protection.
Bulb-Out Areas	Inquired about measures for pedestrian safety in bulb-out areas. Assured that the design will confirm sufficient sight distance to maximize pedestrian visibility.
Hardscape Features	Emphasized the importance of ensuring hardscape features are not too high. Reiterated commitment to maintaining sight distance with hardscape features.
Road Layout Preference	Expressed a general preference for a road layout that improves safety. Highlighted that the road layout will be evaluated after construction and can be modified.

After considering feedback from stakeholder groups, the preferred option is the road diet in Figure 1. In collaboration with the subcommittee, a quick build project is proposed, reducing lanes at Bay Avenue approaches to simplify driver navigation. Bulb outs, delineated with paint and bollards, aim to shorten pedestrian crossing distances.

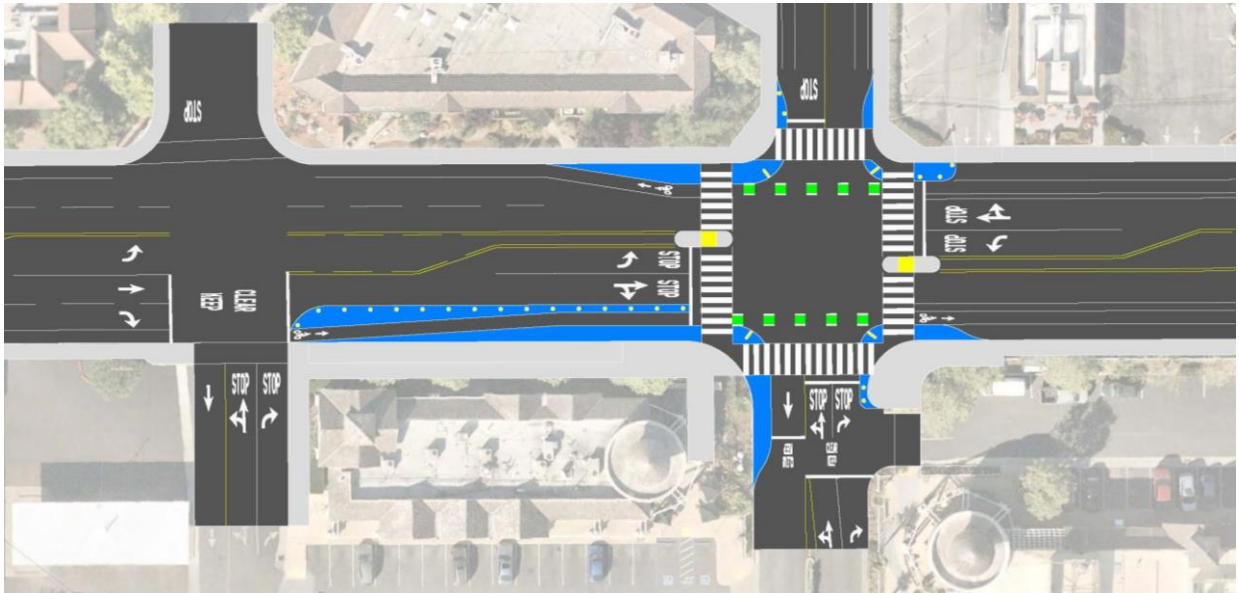


Figure 1: Quick Build Road Diet Layout

This resembles the road diet option presented to the City Council in September 2023, featuring additional striping and a wider buffer area for bikes. The proposal includes a right-turn-only lane into the carwash entrance at the Nob Hill shopping center, potentially reducing the number of lanes if permitted. The quick-build utilizes temporary materials and paint; however, speed tables are not part of this project.

The paint design for the bulb-outs is recommended to go beyond a solid color for prominence. Staff suggests consulting with a member of the Art and Cultural Commission designated by the Chair for paint selection on the project.

The implementation of quick-build options at the Bay Avenue/Hill Street intersection is expected to impact traffic, potentially leading to longer queues and negatively affecting Level of Service (LOS). However, these modifications are designed to be reversible, serving as temporary measures to assess their effectiveness. Safety considerations are paramount, with all parties emphasizing the importance of prioritizing safety in the evaluation of these temporary traffic interventions.

Staff proposes scheduling the construction of the quick build project during the period when schools are not in session, specifically aiming for the tentative timeframe of the last week of May or the first week of June, just before the peak summer season.

**Fiscal Impact:** The current \$50,000 allocation for the short-term quick-build project is sufficient for construction and subsequent evaluation of its effectiveness. Future funding needs for construction on Bay Avenue will be determined based on the outcomes of the quick-build project and the identification of the specific long-term project.

**CEQA:** This project is categorically exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301(c), which applies to minor alterations of existing highways and streets involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that which presently exists.

**Attachments:**

1. Conceptual Design Feedback
2. Final Quick Build Layout

**Report Prepared By:** Jessica Kahn, Public Works Director;

**Reviewed By:** Julia Gautho, City Clerk; Samantha Zutler, City Attorney

**Approved By:** Jamie Goldstein, City Manager

