Capitola City Council

Agenda Report

Meeting: August 27, 2026

From: Public Works Department

Subject: Bay Avenue Corridor Safety Improvements

Recommended Action: Direct staff to proceed with the proposed safety improvements at Bay Avenue/Hill Street and Bay Avenue/Center Street.

Background: Bay Avenue is one of Capitola's primary transportation corridors, providing regional access between State Route 1, Capitola Village, adjacent commercial areas, and surrounding residential neighborhoods. The corridor accommodates high volumes of vehicle, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic and has been the focus of several recent transportation planning efforts. It has been identified as a priority corridor in the City's Local Roadway Safety Plan.

On May 14, 2026, following additional community outreach and public input, the City Council directed staff not to proceed with the previously proposed roundabouts at the Bay Avenue/Hill Street and Bay Avenue/Capitola Avenue intersections. Instead, Council directed staff to return with a package of alternative safety improvements, including enhanced lighting, improved pedestrian visibility, upgraded pavement markings, and evaluation of a new pedestrian crossing near Center Street.

On July 23, 2026, Council reviewed conceptual improvements for the Bay Avenue corridor. Council directed staff to implement lighting at Bay Avenue and Hill Street, provide information or examples of existing solar-lighting installations, and return in August with additional traffic information concerning the proposed Bay Avenue and Center Street crossing. Council also expressed its intent to complete a raised crossing at Center Street with safety lighting, subject to review of the traffic information.

Discussion: The City Council will be considering Rule 20A undergrounding as a separate item on the August 27th meeting agenda. This report is limited to the Bay Avenue safety improvements directed by Council at its July 23rd meeting.

Bay Avenue & Hill Street: The Bay Avenue and Hill Street intersection remains a high-priority location because of its proximity to Highway 1, Nob Hill Foods, the Rispin Bridge, the Bay Avenue Senior Apartments, and Capitola Village. Existing safety features include reflective pavement markings, flashing stop signs, delineation improvements, and pedestrian crossing flag stations.

Consistent with Council direction, staff recommends proceeding with the following permanent improvements:

- Replacement of the existing temporary flashing stop signs with permanent flashing stop-sign assemblies; and
- Installation of two solar-powered overhead lights within the existing pedestrian refuge medians.

The permanent assemblies would improve long-term reliability and reduce maintenance, while the proposed lighting would improve nighttime pedestrian visibility without requiring new PG&E service, trenching, or underground electrical conduit. The planning-level cost remains approximately $15,000 to $20,000 for permanent flashing stop signs and $30,000 to $40,000 for two solar lights, for a total of $45,000 to $60,000.

To date, no solar light manufacturer has provided a free sample light to the City. The closest installed example of the light that staff is proposing to utilize is located in Monterey County. Attached to the staff report are example photos of the proposed light.

Bay Avenue & Center Street Pedestrian Crossing: Center Street forms a T-intersection with Bay Avenue. Vehicles exiting Center Street may turn left or right onto Bay Avenue. Northbound Bay Avenue vehicles may turn left into Center Street, while southbound vehicles may turn right. The proposed project would provide a new marked crossing of Bay Avenue and a raised crossing across the Center Street approach.

The proposed improvements include:

- A high-visibility raised pedestrian crossing across Bay Avenue;
- A high-visibility marked crossing across the Center Street approach;
- ADA-compliant curb ramps and curb extensions;
- A hardscape pedestrian refuge median;
- Rectangular rapid flashing beacons;
- Solar overhead lighting;
- Enhanced warning signs and pavement markings;
- Removal of the existing channelized right-turn lane; and
- Associated drainage and roadway improvements.

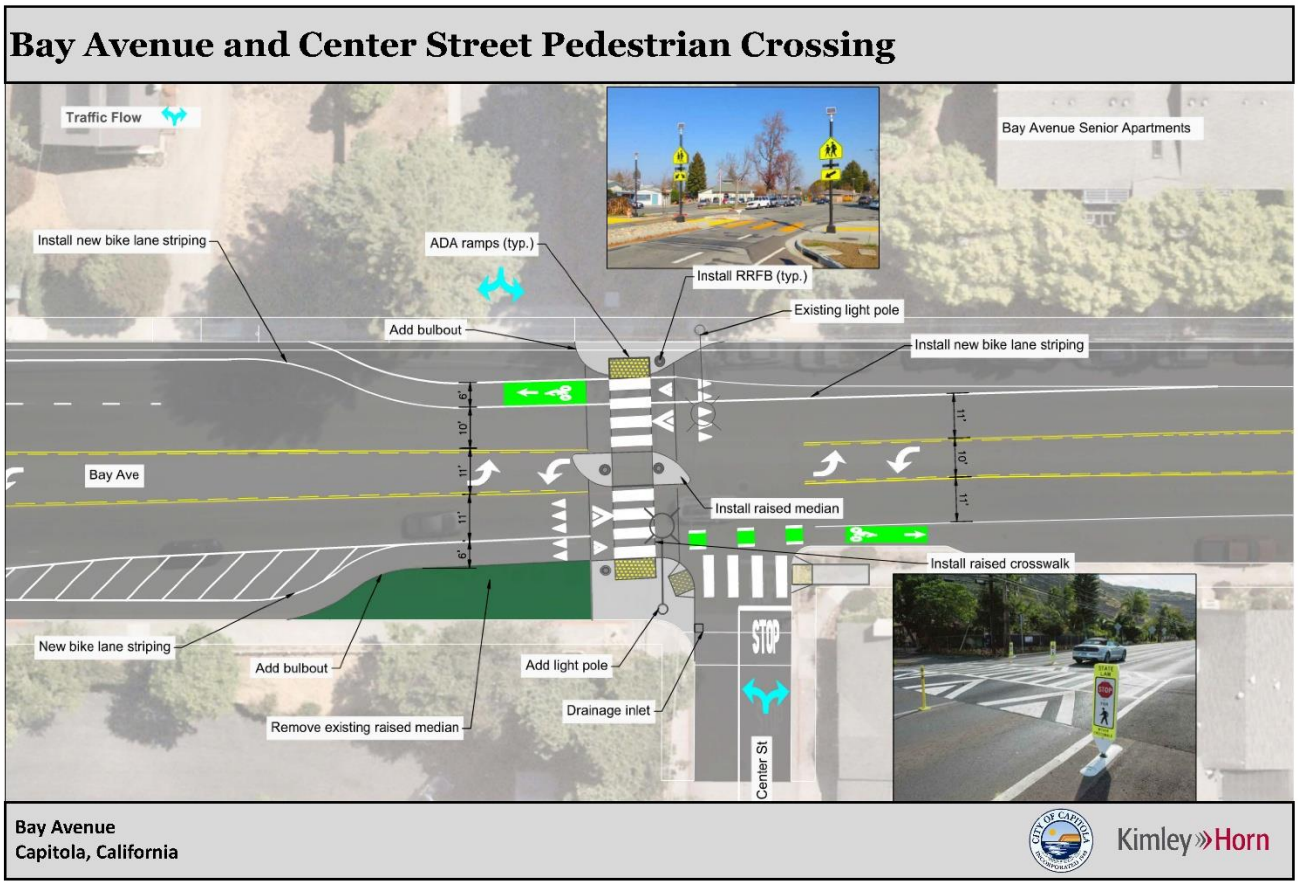


Figure 1. Conceptual Bay Avenue & Center Street Pedestrian Crossing

Traffic Volume and Stop-Control Review: Bay Avenue carries approximately 10,216 vehicles over an entire day between Hill Street and Capitola Avenue. Its highest recorded hourly volume was approximately 855 vehicles. Center Street carries approximately 900 vehicles over an entire day, with an average of 38 vehicles per hour. The highest reported average hourly volume for any day and time period was 57 vehicles per hour.

Roadway	Daily Volume	Average Hourly	Highest Hour/Period	CA MUTCD Criterion
Bay Avenue, Hill Street to Capitola Avenue	10,216	426*	855	300/hour major street
Center Street	900	38	57	200/hour minor street**

** Daily volume divided by 24 hours; shown only for context.*
*** Minor-street threshold includes vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles and must be met during the same time period as the major-street threshold is met.*

The California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices' volume-based criteria for multiway stop control generally require at least 300 vehicles per hour on the major street and at least 200 vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles per hour on the minor-street approaches during the same time period. Although Bay Avenue exceeds the major-street threshold during portions of the day, Center Street does not approach the corresponding minor-street threshold. Its highest reported volume is 57 vehicles per hour (less than 30 percent of the 200-per-hour criteria), and that figure includes vehicles traveling both toward and away from Bay Avenue.

Because only a portion of those 57 vehicles would be approaching the intersection, the actual minor-street approach volume is lower still. Based on the available traffic data, the intersection does not satisfy the volume-based criteria for installing stop signs on Bay Avenue.

Turning Movements and Median Clearance: During the July 23rd discussion, Council raised concerns regarding whether the proposed Bay Avenue crossing and pedestrian refuge could make the left turn from Center Street more difficult or create an additional safety concern. The available Center Street data combines traffic traveling in both directions and does not separately identify vehicles entering Center Street, turning right onto Bay Avenue, or turning left onto Bay Avenue.

Assuming traffic entering and exiting Center Street is approximately balanced, about half of the reported Center Street traffic would be outbound. This represents approximately 19 outbound vehicles during an average hour and approximately 29 outbound vehicles per hour during the busiest reported time period. Left turns would represent only a portion of those outbound movements. Accordingly, the number of vehicles making the left turn affected by the proposed Bay Avenue crossing is expected to be relatively low.

As a conservative design check, the project engineer prepared a swept-path analysis using a fire truck, which is substantially larger than the passenger vehicles that would typically make this movement. Although fire apparatus would not ordinarily be expected to use this particular turn, the analysis demonstrates that a large vehicle can turn left from Center Street onto Bay Avenue and maneuver around the proposed hard median refuge without mounting it. Final design will confirm the precise median geometry, visibility, equipment placement, and turning clearances.

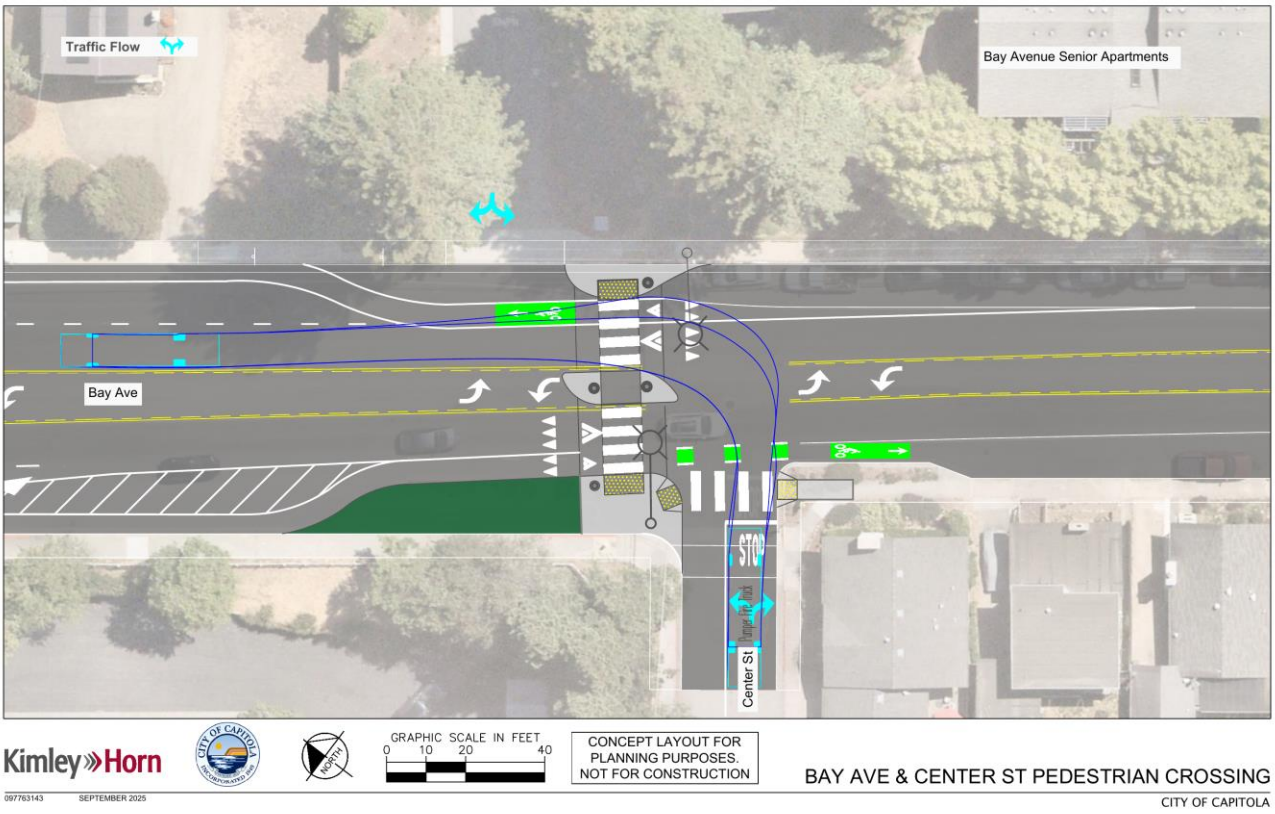


Figure 2. Fire-truck swept-path analysis for a left turn from Center Street onto Bay Avenue.

Crossing Location Alternatives: Staff evaluated whether the Bay Avenue crossing should instead be located on the south side of the Center Street intersection. Although this alternative has not been advanced as an engineered concept, staff considered its potential effects on parking, vehicle operations, pedestrian travel, and adjacent properties.

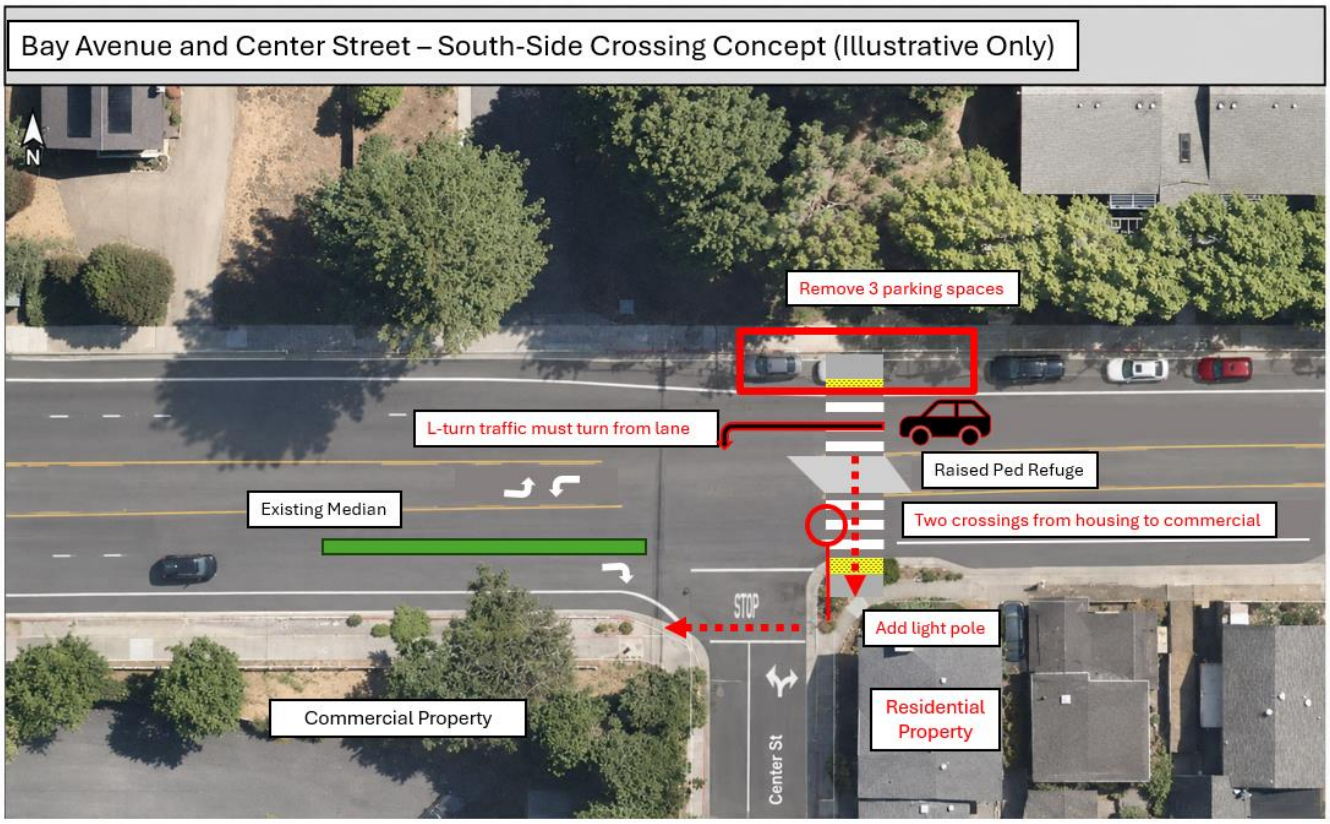
The south-side alternative would remove approximately two additional on-street parking spaces and eliminate the existing northbound Bay Avenue left-turn storage area. A vehicle waiting for a gap to turn left into Center Street would therefore remain in the northbound through lane and would stop traffic on Bay Avenue until the vehicle was able to complete the left turn. This location would also require pedestrians traveling between the Bay Avenue Senior Apartments and commercial destinations at the shopping center to cross both Bay Avenue and Center Street. In addition, more crossing infrastructure would be placed adjacent to residential rather than commercial frontage.

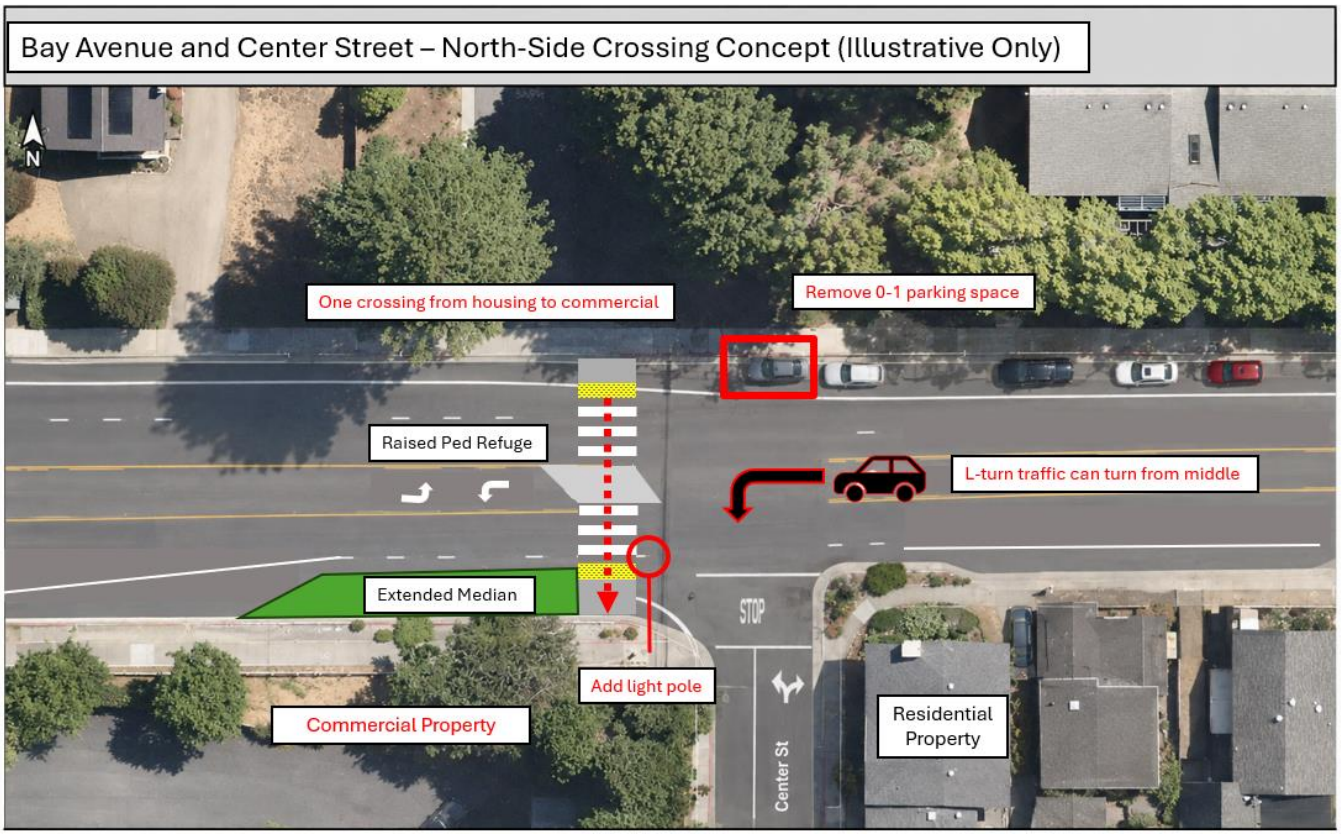
At the proposed location, drivers turning left from Center Street would be required to yield to pedestrians within the Bay Avenue crossing. The raised crossing, high-visibility markings, pedestrian refuge, lighting, and RRFBs would improve pedestrian visibility. Available traffic data indicates that left-turn volumes are expected to be low, and the swept-path analysis demonstrates that an oversized vehicle can complete the turn around the proposed refuge.

The proposed design would also remove the channelized right-turn lane from Center Street. Vehicles would instead approach Bay Avenue from a defined stop-controlled position. The tighter geometry would reduce turning speeds, shorten the pedestrian crossing distance, and improve visibility between drivers and pedestrians. The downstream merge area would be shortened, potentially helping to reduce overall vehicle speeds at the crossing.

The proposed crossing location preserves two additional parking spaces, avoids interference with the northbound left-turn pocket, accommodates the pedestrian refuge, and provides a more direct connection

between the senior apartments, transit, and commercial destinations. Staff therefore recommends retaining the location shown in Figure 1.





Staff has reached out to Redtree and Crossroads commercial centers, and they did not express concerns with the proposed project.

Fiscal Impact: The planning-level cost estimate is approximately $45,000 to $60,000 for the Bay Avenue and Hill Street improvements and $300,000 to $350,000 for the Bay Avenue and Center Street crossing, for a combined estimated cost of $345,000 to $410,000.

On August 7, 2026, City staff met with Congressman Jimmy Panetta to discuss the proposed Bay Avenue and Center Street pedestrian crossing and the intended use of the $250,000 Community Project Funding award.

The City has been awarded $250,000 in Community Project Funding, secured through Congressman Panetta's office, to support construction of Bay Avenue improvements. Staff is currently awaiting completion of the federal grant administration process before those funds can be obligated. The award requires an approximately $65,000 non-federal match.

The City also has approximately $350,000 in Regional Transportation Improvement Program funding programmed for Bay Avenue improvements. Staff anticipates using a portion of these funds to satisfy the Community Project Funding match, with the remaining balance available for the recommended Bay Avenue improvements or as local match for other grant funding.

In addition, the City submitted an application under the FY 2026 Safe Streets and Roads for All Implementation Grant Program seeking funding for safety improvements at Bay Avenue and Hill Street, Bay Avenue and Capitola Avenue, Bay Avenue and Center Street, and other corridor improvements. Award announcements are anticipated in fall 2026.

The recommended improvements may be implemented in phases based on final design, grant requirements, and funding availability. Subject to Council direction and completion of the Community Project Funding documentation, staff anticipates completing final design and procurement during fall and winter 2026 and constructing the Bay Avenue and Hill Street and Bay Avenue and Center Street improvements in spring 2027.

Depending on grant outcomes, remaining RTIP funds may be used for Bay Avenue construction, required local matching funds, or other eligible transportation projects as authorized by the City Council. Individual construction contracts and any necessary budget amendments will return to the City Council for consideration as the projects advance.

Attachments:

1. Lighting Examples
2. Public Comment Received Before Agenda Packet Printed

Alignment with 2025-2029 Strategic Plan Priority: Community Safety; Healthy Families, Community, and Environment; Sustainable Infrastructure

Report Prepared By: Jessica Kahn, Public Works Director

Reviewed By: Julia Gautho, City Clerk; Marc Tran, City Attorney

Approved By: Jamie Goldstein, City Manager