

# Capitola City Council

## Agenda Report

**Meeting:** February 26, 2026

**From:** Public Works Department

**Subject:** No Right Turn on Red Restrictions: Clares Street/Capitola Road



**Recommended Action:** Receive a report regarding the “No Right Turn on Red” restrictions for westbound Clares Street to northbound 41st Avenue and westbound Capitola Road to northbound 41st Avenue.

**Background:** The intersections of Clares Street and Capitola Road with 41st Avenue function as key access points along a high-volume commercial corridor with substantial turning activity, pedestrian crossings, and bicycle use.

Historical crash data summarized in a 2012 staff report documented elevated collision frequency at the Clares Street intersection between approximately 2007 and 2012. In response, the City implemented lane reconfiguration and turn control modifications around 2012 to improve intersection safety and operations.

Subsequent City projects have further influenced intersection operations, including:

- 41st Avenue Adaptive Signal Coordination Project (2021–2023): Implementation of adaptive signal timing to improve corridor progression, reduce delay and emissions, and coordinate operations across multiple intersections, including Clares Street and Capitola Road.
- Clares Street Traffic Calming and Multimodal Improvements (2022): Operational refinements addressing turning activity and ongoing conflicts associated with southbound-to-northbound U-turn movements on 41st Avenue, which are commonly used to access destinations and freeway on-ramps north of the intersection.
- Capitola Road Pavement Rehabilitation and Bicycle Safety Improvements (2023): Installation of bicycle positioning treatments, including a bike box and crossbike-style markings, intended to improve cyclist visibility and reduce turning conflicts at the intersection.

As a result of these projects and observed operational conditions, No Right Turn on Red (NTOR) restrictions were implemented at the westbound Clares Street and westbound Capitola Road approaches to address identifiable turning conflicts.

On February 12, City Council requested an update regarding the purpose of these restrictions.

**Discussion:**

### **Authority and Purpose of No Right Turn on Red Restrictions**

California Vehicle Code Section 21453 permits right turns on red, unless prohibited by posted signage. The California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD Section 2B.60) allows agencies to implement NTOR restrictions where engineering judgment indicates permissive right turns would create safety or operational concerns.

Common conditions supporting NTOR restrictions include:

- conflicting turning movements
- bicycle and pedestrian interaction
- complex geometry or limited right-of-way
- high driver workload
- unpredictable signal timing or traffic gaps

The restrictions at both intersections reflect these standard traffic engineering considerations.

### **Westbound Clares Street to Northbound 41st Avenue (Time-Limited Restriction)**

The Clares Street NTOR restriction was implemented following earlier intersection modifications to address a recurring conflict between:

- vehicles making permissive right turns on red from westbound Clares Street, and
- vehicles performing southbound-to-northbound U-turn movements on 41st Avenue.

Drivers turning right on red must primarily scan for through traffic from the left, while U-turning vehicles approach from outside the driver's primary expectation area, increasing angle conflict potential. Further, due to intersection geometry drivers turning right from westbound Clares have reduced view of the pedestrian crosswalk.

Because this conflict is most pronounced during daytime traffic periods with higher turning volumes and multimodal activity, the restriction is applied on a time-limited basis (10 AM-6 PM).

### **Westbound Capitola Road to Northbound 41st Avenue (Full-Time Restriction)**

Unlike the Clares Street condition, the Capitola Road restriction addresses a permanent geometric and bicycle safety condition associated with Council-approved roadway improvements. The Capitola Road NTOR restriction was implemented as part of the 2023 pavement rehabilitation and bicycle safety improvements project.

The westbound approach includes a bike box and bicycle crossing markings intended to position bicyclists ahead of vehicles at the stop line and improve intersection visibility.

Permissive right turns on red introduce right-hook collision risk because:

- bicyclists are positioned directly in the path of turning vehicles,
- drivers turning right on red focus primarily on left-turn gaps, and
- limited right-of-way prevents installation of a protected right-turn lane or offset bicycle transition.

The 2023 staff report notes the bike box configuration required modification of right-turn operations and established a NTOR condition because available roadway width does not allow installation of a dedicated right-turn lane on the westbound Capitola Road approach.

Several striping and operational alternatives were evaluated during project development with the primary objective of improving bicycle visibility and reducing turning conflicts. However, available roadway width and driveway/access constraints limited the ability to separate right-turning vehicles from bicyclists or provide a dedicated right-turn lane. The adopted configuration improves bicycle visibility and reduces turning conflicts while working within these geometric constraints, although it may increase perceived delay for the westbound right-turn movement.

Because the bicycle positioning and turning conflict exists regardless of traffic volume, the Capitola Road NTOR restriction is implemented full-time.

Staff recognizes the full-time restriction may contribute to delays for right-turning vehicles and queue formation during congested periods. However, the constrained geometry limits operational flexibility, and the current configuration reflects a tradeoff between minimizing delay and maintaining bicycle visibility and safety.

### **41st Avenue Adaptive Signals**

The 41st Avenue Adaptive Signal Coordination Project implemented dynamic signal control along the corridor, including the Clares Street and Capitola Road intersections. The project was intended to reduce travel time, improve progression, and reduce emissions by improving coordination between signals.

While adaptive coordination improves overall corridor operations, it can reduce predictable turning gaps that drivers rely on for permissive turning decisions. This increases the importance of targeted turn controls at locations with known conflicts.

## **Crash History Context**

Crash data indicates that both intersections have experienced collision activity over time, with higher crash frequency documented at Clares Street before the 2012 lane reconfiguration.

Injury crash data since that time shows reduced but persistent collision occurrence. Statewide TIMS data reflects injury crashes only and does not capture minor collisions or near misses; therefore, crash data was considered alongside operational observations and conflict analysis.

Recent crash data does not indicate an increase in injury crashes following implementation of corridor signal coordination, traffic calming, or bicycle safety improvements.

## **Summary**

The Clares Street restriction addresses time-of-day operational conflicts associated with U-turn interactions and adaptive signal timing, and the Capitola Road restriction addresses a permanent geometric and bicycle safety condition associated with the bike box treatment. Both restrictions are consistent with California traffic engineering practice and represent targeted measures to reduce turning conflict risk while maintaining corridor mobility.

Fiscal Impact: None associated with maintaining the existing restrictions. Costs could occur if Council directs changes to signage, striping, or signal operations.

## Attachments:

1. Clares Street Configuration Changes
2. Capitola Road Configuration Changes
3. Excerpts from prior staff reports and project approvals

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

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