



Highway 17 Bicycle and Pedestrian Overcrossing Community Engagement Plan

Revised Draft
November 18, 2020

Connect Los Gatos

Connect Los Gatos is a program of bicycle and pedestrian projects that promote connectivity and improve the multimodal network throughout the Town. The program will expand access and improve safety for key community destination points. Connect Los Gatos is aimed at making it easier and safer for all to bike and walk in Los Gatos. The Highway 17 Bicycle and Pedestrian Overcrossing projects is one of the Connect Los Gatos projects.

In the *Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (BPMP)* Update, adopted by the Town Council in September 2020, Prioritized Bicycle and Pedestrian Improvement Projects Table 4.2 are branded as Connect Los Gatos Projects. These projects will improve the Town’s multimodal network by providing safe and lower stress facilities, closing connectivity gaps, and providing safe crossings. As these prioritized projects are advanced, they will be supported under the Connect Los Gatos Community Engagement Program.

Community Engagement Goals

This document builds upon the original *Connect Los Gatos Community Engagement Plan* adopted by Town Council on March 3rd, 2020. In comparison to the program-level plan, this project-level plan establishes a framework, describes specific outreach approach and tools, while still allows flexibility in applying the tools. The purpose of this Community Engagement Plan is to maximize the opportunities for all stakeholders to provide meaningful feedback.

The plan provides a “toolbox” of options for outreach to the community. Outreach tools will be tailored to the specific project phase. The Town of Los Gatos is committed to creating bike and pedestrian connectivity projects that aligns with local needs and mobility priorities. Community input will be integral to each phase of the Highway 17 Bicycle and Pedestrian Overcrossing project process.

Key community engagement goals include:

1. Increasing community awareness of the mobility, safety and design challenges and opportunities for the Highway 17 Bike and Ped Overcrossing (BPOC) Project;
2. Providing access to project information and opportunities for meaningful participation;
3. Offering a range of communication and engagement tools to match interest and preferences;
4. Ensuring the Project reflects community priorities; and
5. Obtaining community support for the Project design and funding



Project Background, Purpose and Goals

Highway 17 is a barrier for bicyclists and pedestrians wanting to cross from one side of Los Gatos to the other. Within the Town limits, there are five crossings from north to south, Lark Avenue, Blossom Hill Road, Highway 9, an existing pedestrian bridge, and Main Street. The existing Blossom Hill Road bridge is situated near the middle among the five crossings. It provides suboptimal access for a variety of trips: school, work, shopping and recreation. This is a suggested route included in the Los Gatos-Monte Sereno Safe Routes to School “Walk & Roll” program.

At the March 3, 2020 meeting, the Town Council approved the project purpose and need, and authorized staff to proceed with design alternatives for a separate bicycle and pedestrian overcrossing. Establishing the purpose and need at the onset of the project development phase helps to ensure the project reflects the Council’s and community’s vision and priorities. The approved project purpose and need are:

Purpose: The project would improve bicycle and pedestrian mobility across Highway 17 in the vicinity of the Blossom Hill Road overcrossing. The project includes a focus on improving safety for all modes of travel and creating a safe route to schools while promoting active transportation. Additionally, the project would result in reduced traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions by providing comfortable mobility alternatives.

Need: With two travel lanes in each direction, carrying upwards of 63,000 vehicles per day, Highway 17 creates both a physical and psychological barrier for both pedestrians and bicyclists as it divides the Town in two. Blossom Hill Road is one of only a few roadways that provide east-west connectivity across the highway.

Stakeholders

This is a project that would benefit the immediate neighborhoods, the entire Los Gatos community, and a sub-region near Los Gatos. Identifying the key stakeholders will help ensure the community engagement efforts are comprehensive, focused, and effective. The community engagement efforts include engaging with the following stakeholders for project awareness, initial feedback, and alternatives and concept design input:

- Town Council
- Complete Street & Transportation Commission (CSTC)
- Schools and school community
 - Los Gatos Union School District and schools
 - Los Gatos-Saratoga Joint Union High School District and Los Gatos High School
 - Los Gatos-Monte Sereno Safe Routes to School (SR2S)



- Students and parents
- Residents, visitors and workers in Los Gatos
- Specific and under-represented populations:
 - Seniors
 - Disabled people and people with mobility limitations
 - Low-income households
 - People with limited English proficiency
- Residents in Monte Sereno
- Immediately Adjacent Neighborhoods: Ohlone Court, Serra Court
- Caltrans
- Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority
- Utility companies:
 - San Jose Water
 - PG&E Electrical
 - Comcast

Complete Street & Transportation Commission

The Complete Streets & Transportation Commission (CSTC) is a key stakeholder in communicating with the community, advising the Council, and providing feedback to staff. They are advisory to the Town Council in matters pertaining to current trends and experiences in enhancing all modes of travel. They review Town transportation infrastructure, including bike and pedestrian pathways, with neighboring jurisdictions. They also review relevant grant applications, particularly transportation projects around schools. This includes enhancing safe routes to schools efforts. The CSTC also reviews and updates Town master plans, such as the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan.

The CSTC and the former Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission have been actively engaged since the beginning of this project, including conducting a field meeting, leading a Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition - Town infrastructure bike ride, conducting bicycle and pedestrian counts, and providing input at public and Commission meetings. In the next phase of the project design, the CSTC will play an even more vital role in representing the community, providing input to the project team, and advising the Town Council in key decisions. The project team will provide updates to the CSTC regularly at its monthly meetings and hold special workshops and field visits if necessary. At the monthly meetings, the CSTC will provide feedback to the project team on all aspects of project design, especially in the topics of user experience, environmental analysis, and neighborhood impacts.

The CSTC meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month at 7:30am and they are open to the public. The agenda center for the CSTC is available on the Town's website. Community members who are interested in project updates are encouraged to participate in the commission meetings.



Project Milestones

In early 2021, the Town will start the engineering and design phases of this Project. A significant amount of work needs to be done before reaching any final conclusions on the design of the Project. There will be many opportunities for the community to continue to be involved in this project moving forward. The Town is committed to open communication about this Project and its impact on the community. Following are key milestones and tasks involving community input and Council Direction.

Project Phase	Schedule
Begin Preliminary Design	April 2021
Decision on bridge architecture type	July - October 2021
Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Approval	April 2021 – April 2023
Development of plans, specifications, and cost estimates	February 2023 - Late 2023
Complete final design	Early 2024
Construction (pending funding availability)	2024 – December 2025

Outreach Approach and Tools

The outreach tools are based on the experience with the Connect Los Gatos program engagement. The tools that have shown to be most effective include the project webpage, social media, virtual meetings, and notification tools such as doorhangers. Not all tools outlined in the plan will be used at any given time. Outreach tools listed here will be tailored to the specific project phase and overall project goals.

TOOLS	DESCRIPTION	EVENTS
<u>Stakeholders Engagement</u>	Identifying the key stakeholders, including Town Council, community partners, and commissioners, that have a greater understanding of local active transportation issues in the community. Engagement with key stakeholders for project awareness, initial feedback, input from community workshops, alternatives and concept design.	Public meetings: Town Council – key decisions Complete Streets & Transportation Commission – regular updates Parks Commission – periodic updates Monte Sereno Better Streets Commission – periodic updates Safe Routes to Schools – periodic updates and discussions



<p><u>Community Meetings and Workshops</u></p>	<p>Meetings and workshops to engage a broad segment of the public with proposed project awareness, input, feedback, and opportunities for engaged participation. Notifications by mail via social media, and the “Notify Me” email list, as well as door hangers and postcards are important tools to use to advertise these meetings.</p>	<p>Public meetings and workshops at key milestones.</p> <p>Formats: online and in-person community meetings, group meetings with target audience, such as schools and neighborhoods.</p>
<p><u>Pop-Up Events and Messages</u></p>	<p>Pop-ups are an informal approach used to increase community participation and awareness by setting up booths or posters at community wide events. Informal outreach provides an opportunity to engage a diverse set of community members otherwise missed by traditional meetings.</p>	<p>Pop-Up Events: Back-to-School events Los Gatos Holiday Parade Farmer’s market Spring Into Green event</p> <p>Traditional ways of messaging may include posters at public locations, businesses, and movable message signs.</p>
<p><u>Online Engagement and Social Media</u></p>	<p>Online and social media engagement will deliver project information to the community at large. The project webpage will be the central place for information. This allows for consistent, accessible information for all stakeholders. Webpages will include community meetings, photos, graphics, maps, and reports.</p>	<p>Project Webpage: https://www.losgatosca.gov/2556/Hwy-17-Bicycle-Pedestrian-Overcrossing NotifyMe Emails & Text Messages</p> <p>Project Email Address</p> <p>Social media: Twitter Facebook What’s New Town website front page NextDoor Town Instagram</p>



<p><u>Targeted Outreach</u></p>	<p>Focused outreach in areas where under-represented residents will be reached. Provide contact information in multiple languages, special outreach efforts to seniors, disabled people, low-income households, and the youth.</p>	<p>Youth Commission Community & Senior Services Commission Emails and e-newsletter to schools and Safe Routes to School (SR2S) Contact information in Russian, Mandarin Chinese, Spanish, and Vietnamese Information included in LGS Recreation and other community partner information materials</p>
<p><u>Data Collection</u></p>	<p>Data collection provides baseline data and an assessment of existing conditions of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure for the BPOC project.</p>	<p>Bicycle and Pedestrian Counts User interviews and surveys</p>

Information Sharing and Transparency

The project webpage will be the central place for information, including project updates, meetings announcements, documents, and reports. Providing one central place for information allows for consistent and accessible information for all stakeholders. This is a key component to achieving fair and equal transparency for all community members. The webpage also provides contact information for anyone who wants to communicate with the project team directly.

NotifyMe is a useful tool embedded in the project webpage. Interested individuals may sign up for this noticing service to receive either a text message or e-mail each time there is new information posted to the project webpage.

Information posted on social media shall be available on the project webpage, per the Town’s Social Media Policy.

Engagement Plan Updates

The Plan will need to be updated periodically to ensure the proper tools are being utilized to maximize public awareness and participation at the BPOC project specific level and to add tools as needed. Town staff will periodically update the Plan and adjust engagement activities as needed to continue to maximize authentic participation by residents and workers representing a diverse background.

