



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS  
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 11/15/22

ITEM NO: 12

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DATE: November 9, 2022  
TO: Mayor and Town Council  
FROM: Laurel Prevetti, Town Manager  
SUBJECT: Receive an Update on Community Outreach Activities for the Highway 17 Bicycle and Pedestrian Overcrossing Project (CIP Number 818-0803) and Approve the Concrete Box Girder as the Preferred Bridge Type for Final Design

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive an update on community outreach activities for the Highway 17 Bicycle and Pedestrian Overcrossing Project (CIP Number 818-0803) and approve the concrete box girder as the preferred bridge type for final design.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Town of Los Gatos Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan (BPMP), which was originally adopted in 2017 and updated in 2020, provides the Town with a roadmap for enhancing bicycle and pedestrian mobility throughout the Town by identifying and prioritizing projects, policies, and programs that will help make Los Gatos a more comfortable place to bike and walk. Projects prioritized in the BPMP are also included in the Connect Los Gatos Program which provides a holistic framework for moving these prioritized projects forward. The Highway 17 Bicycle and Pedestrian Overcrossing (BPOC) Project was identified in the BPMP and Connect Los Gatos Program as a priority project for the Town.

The current overcrossing of Highway 17 at Blossom Hill Road is heavily travelled by bicyclists and pedestrians, especially by students commuting to schools. However, the overcrossing is constrained by sub-standard bike lane and sidewalk widths that do not meet current and future bicycle and pedestrian demands. More novice and younger bicyclists may feel vulnerable or discouraged to bike on an overcrossing with narrow bike lanes directly next to travel lanes.

**PREPARED BY:** WooJae Kim  
Town Engineer

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Reviewed by: Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, Town Attorney, Finance Director, and Parks and Public Works Director

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BACKGROUND (continued):

The Town commissioned a feasibility study of the Highway 17 BPOC in September 2019. On March 3, 2020, the Town Council approved the following *Project Purpose and Need* from the findings of the feasibility study reflecting the Council's and community's vision and priorities:

**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, 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.

Also at the March 3, 2020 meeting, Council authorized staff to proceed with development of design alternatives for a separate bicycle and pedestrian overcrossing. Various design alternatives were considered as part of the feasibility study. On September 1, 2020, Council approved the feasibility study with a recommendation of the separate bridge structure to be located immediately south of the existing overcrossing at Blossom Hill Road and authorized staff to analyze three bridge type options (concrete, steel truss, and steel arch) for the new structure for the final design with community input. Copies of the past reports and a project history can be found here: <https://www.losgatosca.gov/2556/Hwy-17-Bicycle-Pedestrian-Overcrossing>

On December 1, 2020, the Town Council approved the execution of a 2016 Measure B Funding Agreement with the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) accepting grant funds in the amount of \$2,754,990 for the design phase of the BPOC project. In May 2021, BKF Engineers was hired to prepare necessary design documents for the BPOC. Since then, BKF and staff (the project team) have prepared and presented the required Project Initiation Document to Caltrans, developed preliminary layouts for the three bridge type options, and conducted extensive community outreach to raise awareness of the project and to gain insight into the community's bridge type preference.

Throughout the project, the Complete Streets and Transportation Commission has provided valuable input and has played an integral role in guiding the project development and community engagement process.

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DISCUSSION:

A selection of the preferred bridge type is an important next step at this stage to further develop the bridge design to the next level of detail. To raise project awareness and solicit public input on preferences between the three bridge types, the project team conducted outreach to adjacent neighborhoods, hosted two community workshop meetings (December 2, 2021 and June 29, 2022), participated in various pop-up events (Los Gatos Farmer's Market, Los Gatos Creek Trail, and Spring into Green), met with Los Gatos Unified School District personnel, posted notices in school newsletters, installed project information signs on Blossom Hill Road, and conducted an online survey.

Polls at the community meetings and responses from the online survey revealed that the majority of the participants/respondents live and/or work in Los Gatos and use the existing Blossom Hill Road Overcrossing daily or weekly. Although the largest percentage of respondents indicated that they typically drive on the overcrossing segment of Blossom Hill Road, 53% of the respondents do walk/run, and 43% bike on the overcrossing.

The project team analyzed the feedback and input received from outreach/survey participants in-depth. For the analysis, community participants were categorized into the following eight stakeholder groups for each particular outreach event:

- Online Survey Participants – 266 responses
- Spring into the Green Pop-Up Participants – 100 participants
- Adjacent Neighborhood – Ohlone Court, Serra Court, Los Gatos Oaks residents
- Los Gatos Unified School District
- Complete Streets and Transportation Commission
- Community Meeting participants – approximately 38 participants
- Farmer's Market Pop Up participants – approximately 62 participants
- Los Gatos Creek Trail Pop Up participants – approximately 54 participants

The feedback related to the bridge type preference from the eight stakeholder groups were evaluated and quantified relative to the number of participants for each stakeholder group. For example, the bridge type preference input from the Spring into the Green event and online survey were evaluated with higher weight based on the larger number of participants. The results from all stakeholder groups were then combined to determine the bridge type option with the highest level of support. As a result, the concrete box girder was found to be significantly more supported than the other steel bridge types.

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DISCUSSION (continued):

The project team also evaluated the three bridge type options with seven technical rating elements determined to be critical factors to the Town. The rating elements are listed below in the order of relative importance to the Town:

- Construction Costs
- Maintenance/Inspection
- Architectural Distinction
- Construction Schedule
- Impacts to Highway 17
- Visual Impacts
- Stage Construction/Traffic Impacts

Higher priority elements such as construction costs and maintenance/inspection were given higher weight values for the bridge type preference evaluation. The bridge type evaluation based on the seven technical categories also resulted with the concrete box girder as the highest ranked preferred option.

Based on the evaluation of both the community input and technical categories, the concrete box girder was the clear preference for the BPOC project, and this is the option being recommended by staff to be moved forward into final design. The full evaluation and summary of the community input and technical review are included as Attachment 1.

The preferred alternative is the lowest cost option with a current projected construction cost of \$25.2 million. Staff will seek grant funding for the construction with the Town providing matching funds. The current assumption is that matching funds would be on the order of 25% of the total cost, or \$6,300,000.

Community Comments

From various project outreach efforts, community members who expressed a high level of support for the concrete box girder option provided the following reasoning/comments:

- Lowest estimated cost
- Design is low-profile, simple, clean, sleek, minimalistic, least obtrusive.
- Matches existing car bridge, blends in, and does not detract from the surrounding landscape

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DISCUSSION (continued):

Comments from those community members who cited a high level of support for the steel flat truss option included:

- Design is visually appealing and a compromise between the concrete box girder and steel arch truss type.
- Design is simple, clean, and does not stand out.
- Not the most expensive option
- No median island column is required.

Comments from those who cited the steel arch truss option as highly supported included:

- Design most appealing
- Highly visible design, strikingly beautiful, gorgeous, elegant, distinguished, and unique
- Time to say yes to aspirational projects for bicycles and pedestrians

Additional comments from the online survey both in support of and objecting to the project received during this process included:

- Support for the project, excitement for pedestrian and bicyclist safety improvements, and the Importance of moving this project forward in a timely manner (mentioned in 28 of 95 responses)
- Opposition to the project and concerns that this investment is not responsible (mentioned in 13 of 95 responses)

Additional questions and comments were emailed to Council members by community members regarding the project, which are included in Attachment 2. The project team has compiled answers to these and other frequently asked questions (FAQ's), which will be added to the existing FAQ document currently posted on the project webpage. The updated FAQ's are included as Attachment 3.

Project Schedule

The schedule has four phases. The project design phases are proceeding in compliance with the Caltrans Project Development Procedures Manual. The first phase is the preparation and approval of a Project Initiation Document (PID) with Caltrans. This phase is near completion. The second phase is the Preliminary Engineering and Environmental Assessment (PA/ED) based on the selected bridge type. The third and last design phase is the development of final design and construction documents. All three design phases are fully funded.

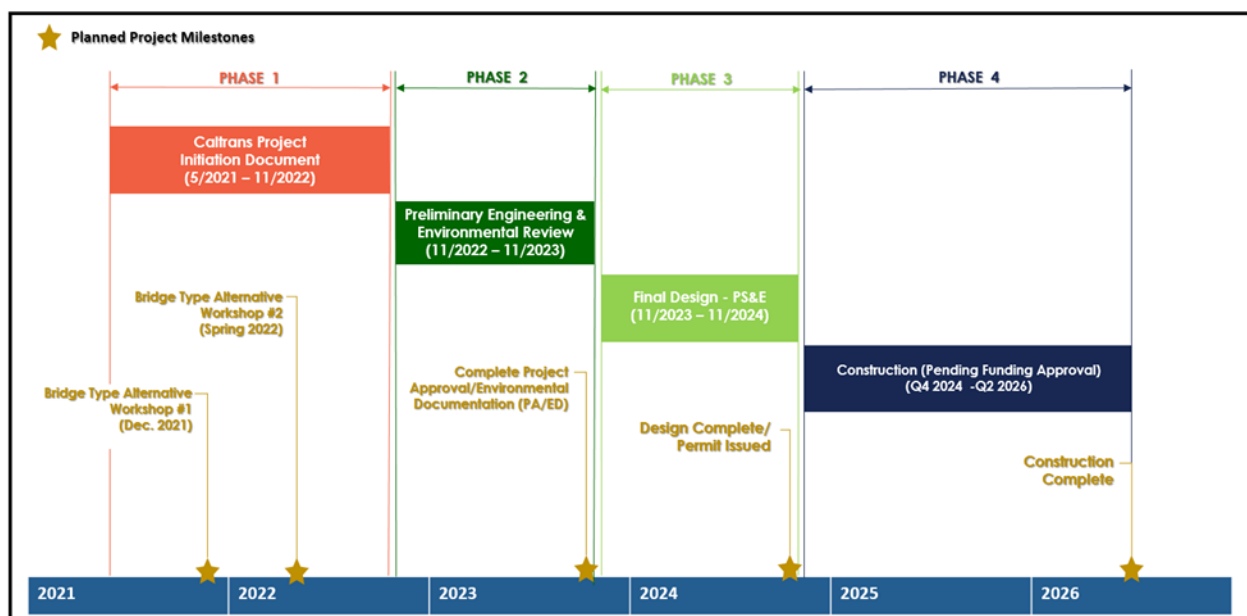
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DISCUSSION (continued):

Continued public engagement throughout the design process will occur to inform the community about the details of the engineering and aesthetic elements based on the selected bridge type and any major changes. The final phase is construction and funding for this phase has not been secured.

The current project schedule reflects these four phases as shown below:



CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS:

Staff is requesting the Town Council to approve the selection of the concrete box girder as the selected bridge type for the Highway 17 Bicycle and Pedestrian Overcrossing Project that will be implemented for all of the remaining design phases.

Next steps include continued efforts to secure construction funding as described in the Fiscal Impact section of this report. Council action will be needed to accept such funding and to identify a match. Once funding is secured, the Council will also be asked to authorize the Town Manager to put the project out to bid.

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COORDINATION:

This report has been coordinated with the Town Attorney and Town Manager's Offices, and the Finance Department. The project design is coordinated with the Complete Streets and Traffic Commission, VTA, and CalTrans.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact with the recommended action at this time since the design phase is fully funded. Below is a summary of current project budget and anticipated costs:

Highway 17 Bicycle and Pedestrian Overcrossing Project		
CIP No. 818-0803		
	Budget	Costs
TDA Article 3 (Feasibility Study)	\$87,451	
Traffic Impact Mitigation Fund (Feasibility Study)	\$147,249	
GFAR (Design Phase)	\$946,210	
2016 Measure B (Design Phase)	\$2,754,534	
GFAR/Development In-Lieu Fee	\$522,314	
<b>Total Budget</b>	<b>\$4,457,758</b>	
BKF Engineers - Feasibility Study		\$234,700
BKF Engineers - Final Design		\$3,000,000
Design Contingency		\$300,000
Independent Structural Review		\$50,000
Caltrans Cooperative Agreement		\$135,000
Part-Time Staff Cost (Design Phase)		\$220,000
<b>Total Expenditures</b>		<b>\$3,939,700</b>
<b>Remaining Budget for Construction Phase</b>		<b>\$518,058</b>

Construction funding for the project has not yet been identified. Town staff will continue to monitor available grant programs and look for funding opportunities for the BPOC construction. Most transportation grant programs require local match funding, which can range from ten to thirty percent of the project cost depending on the grant program. If allowed by the grant program, there are opportunities to fund or supplement local matching portions with other regional or state grants.

In July 2022, Town staff received council authorization to submit a grant application for the One Bay Area Grant program, Cycle 3 (OBAG 3) for the construction phase of the BPOC.

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FISCAL IMPACT (continued):

Unfortunately, staff has been informed that the BPOC project application did not rank high on the grant project list.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

In accordance with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, the project is categorically exempt from the provisions of CEQA based on *Section 15301 - Existing Facilities* as the project involves improving the existing overcrossing; *Section 15303 - New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures* as the project proposes to construct a new small structure; and *Section 15304 - Minor Alterations to Land* as the project proposes minor alterations to land and vegetation and does not involve removal of healthy mature scenic trees.

Also, per Section 21080.25 of the California Public Resources Code, the project is statutorily exempt from the provisions of CEQA because the project is considered a new pedestrian and bicycle facility as defined under Public Resources Code 21080.25(b)(1).

Attachments:

1. Highway 17 BPOC Bridge Type Selection Evaluation
2. Public Comments (including Council Referral TC 22-84)
3. Updated FAQ's