



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 12/6/2022

ITEM NO: 13

DATE: November 21, 2022
TO: Mayor and Town Council
FROM: Laurel Prevetti, Town Manager
SUBJECT: Receive a Project Update and Approve the Phase 1 Concept Plan for the Blossom Hill Road Traffic Safety Project (CIP No. 813-0239) for Final Design

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive a project update and approve the Phase 1 Concept Plan for the Blossom Hill Road Traffic Safety Project (CIP No. 813-0239) for final design.

BACKGROUND:

The adopted Fiscal Year (FY) 2022/23-2026/27 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Budget designates funding for the Blossom Hill Road Traffic Safety Project (CIP No. 813-0239). The project segment of Blossom Hill Road between Camelia Terrace and Hillbrook Drive/Cherrystone Drive is approximately 0.5 miles long and is classified as an arterial roadway.

Along this segment, there are driveways that serve the adjacent residential homes, Blossom Hill Elementary School, and Blossom Hill Park. Blossom Hill Road intersections at Cherry Blossom Lane and Camellia Terrace are signalized. The project section of Blossom Hill Road is mainly a four-lane divided roadway with two-lanes in each direction. The current speed limit is 35 miles per hour and 25 miles per hour during school hours.

Traffic safety for the project segment has been an important consideration for residents for a number of years. The corridor is heavily traveled by students commuting to Blossom Hill Elementary School, Raymond J Fisher Middle School, and other nearby uses. Traffic counts collected in January 2019 indicated 7,000 to 8,000 vehicles travel through the project area each day in eastbound and westbound directions.

PREPARED BY: WooJae Kim
Town Engineer

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

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BACKGROUND (continued):

In early 2021, a traffic safety feasibility study for the project segment was completed. The feasibility study recommended reducing travel lanes from two in each direction to one lane in each direction, improvements to the Blossom Hill Road and Cherry Blossom Lane signalized intersection (e.g., eliminating the “free” right turn from eastbound Blossom Hill Road onto Cherry Blossom Lane), traffic signal modifications, and installing improved bike facilities. The feasibility study and recommendations were presented to the public at a community meeting held on January 28, 2021. The cost of improvements was estimated to be in excess of \$4.6 million dollars. The residents expressed desires for the traffic safety improvements to be implemented expeditiously.

DISCUSSION:

In July 2022, staff submitted a \$4.6 million grant application for the One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) Program – Cycle 3 to fund all safety improvements recommended in the 2021 traffic safety feasibility study, pavement resurfacing, and permanent separators for Class IV bikeways along the project corridor. Soon after the submittal, staff was informed by Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) that the project application did not rank high on the program and would not be funded.

Given the denial by VTA, and in order to implement traffic safety measures as early as next year, staff developed a “Phase 1” Concept Plan for the project involving travel lane reductions and bike lane and pedestrian safety enhancements largely with striping and non-permanent “quick-build” traffic control measures (Attachment 1). The concept plan is also available on the Town’s project website at <https://www.losgatosca.gov/2650/Blossom-Hill-Road-Traffic-Safety>.

If approved, the proposed Phase 1 Concept Plan would be constructed as part of the Town’s Annual Street Repair and Resurfacing Project in summer 2023. The proposed improvements include:

- Reduction from two lanes in each direction to a single lane in each direction on Blossom Hill Road;
- Class II bike lanes for the westbound cyclists along the residential properties; and
- Class IV buffered bike lanes for the eastbound cyclists.

Community Outreach

The Phase 1 Concept Plan was presented at a community meeting held on September 22, 2022. The meeting was advertised through postcards mailed to neighbors within 500 feet of the project site, Town website Notify Me messaging, and various Town social media outlets.

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DISCUSSION (continued):

Community members who attended the meeting reiterated their safety concerns regarding traffic conditions along the corridor, vehicles speeding on Blossom Hill Road, and past traffic incidents. Attendees preferred to see more robust and permanent safety enhancements along Blossom Hill Road. Comments from the community meeting are summarized in Attachment 2. Public comments received via email outside of the meeting are included in Attachment 3.

For some of the community concerns received, staff considered solutions that may be suitable for the Phase 1 implementation next year and other long-term solutions to be considered when funding becomes available. Table 1 in Attachment 2 summarizes what staff heard from the community and how it may be addressed (or why it cannot be addressed). Staff will continue to evaluate community comments for potential improvements to the concept design.

Traffic Analysis Study - Field Simulation

The intent of the proposed Phase 1 Concept Plan is to enhance safety for pedestrians and bicyclists and potentially reduce vehicle speeds along this Blossom Hill Road corridor. However, the lane reduction proposal would likely increase traffic delays and vehicle queuing in the area during peak travel times. The initial traffic modeling studies indicated a modest manageable increase in queuing/traffic delays at the signalized intersection of Blossom Hill Road and Cherry Blossom Lane.

To reaffirm the traffic model results, the project team conducted an on-site field simulation of the proposed lane reduction using traffic cones, signs, and changeable message boards between 7:00 a.m. and 7:00 p.m. on Thursday, October 13. During the field simulation, queuing at the signalized intersection of Blossom Hill Road and Cherry Blossom Lane were significantly higher than findings from the traffic modeling. The following results are from the field simulation:

- Morning westbound traffic (toward Los Gatos Boulevard) queued as far back as Linda Avenue from Cherry Blossom Lane between 8:00 a.m. and 8:20 a.m. The long queuing can be attributed to the commute and school traffic, and the “walk” signal activated at every cycle at the signalized intersection, which requires that all vehicles stop when pedestrians and bicyclists cross Blossom Hill Road.
- Afternoon eastbound traffic (toward San José) queued as far back as Los Gatos Boulevard. After further review, Town staff determined that the additional queuing was due to signal timing being off-sync at the Blossom Hill Road and Cherry Blossom Lane intersection. With the signal timing issue addressed, additional queuing in the afternoon is expected to extend no further than Camellia Terrace.

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DISCUSSION (continued):

The results of the field simulation suggest that queuing for the westbound traffic on Blossom Hill Road will not meet the Town's performance standard during the morning commute. The Level of Service (LOS) of the signalized intersection at Blossom Hill Road and Cherry Blossom Lane is initially anticipated to drop from Level of Service (LOS) C to F during the morning peak hour. However, the proposed design for the project is consistent with the Town's transportation goals to enhance bicycle and pedestrian safety and the Town's multimodal network.

The project team believes that the Phase 1 Concept Plan will achieve the project goals of enhancing traffic safety and potentially reducing speeds on Blossom Hill Road. While the morning commute may prove more challenging after the improvements are implemented, drivers may choose to avoid the area and find alternate routes to Los Gatos, such as Highway 85 thereby reducing vehicle volumes and enhancing safety further. Staff believes that the benefits of the Phase 1 Concept Plan - to provide continuous buffered bike lanes, move motorized vehicles farther away from bicyclists and pedestrians, and potentially reduce speeds along Blossom Hill Road to enhance traffic safety along the corridor - outweigh and mitigate the potential impacts of additional queuing.

CONCLUSION:

Staff recommends that the Town Council receive the project update and approve the Phase 1 Concept Plan for the Blossom Hill Road Traffic Safety Project (CIP No. 813-0239) for final design.

COORDINATION:

This report has been coordinated with the Town Manager's Office and Town Attorney's Office.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Staff costs are tracked for all projects. Tracking of staff costs allows for accountability in the costs of the project, recovery of costs for grant funded projects, and identification of future staffing needs. This project will utilize both full-time budgeted and part-time staff. The costs for full-time staff are generally accounted for in the Department's Operating Budget.

With the approval of the Phase 1 Concept Plan by Council, construction for the project will be delivered with the FY 2022/23 Annual Street Repair and Resurfacing Project. Construction budget for the project shall be applied to the street repair project.

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FISCAL IMPACT (continued):

Blossom Hill Road Traffic Safety Project		
CIP No. 813-0239		
	Budget	Costs
GFAR	\$300,000	
Total Budget	\$300,000	
Hexagon Transportation Consultant - Traffic Safety Feasibility Study (completed)		\$48,410
Hexagon Transportation Consultant - Design		\$80,000
Design Contingency		\$8,000
Construction		\$158,590
Part-Time Staff Cost		\$5,000
Total Expenditures		\$300,000
Remaining Balance		\$0

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

This is a project defined under CEQA as being Categorically Exempt [Section 15301(c) Existing streets, sidewalks, trails and similar facilities]. A Notice of Exemption will be filed with the County.

Attachments:

1. Phase I Concept Plan
2. Community Comments Summary
3. Public Comments