



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS  
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 01/21/2020

ITEM NO: 13

---

DATE: January 16, 2020  
TO: Mayor and Town Council  
FROM: Laurel Prevetti, Town Manager  
SUBJECT: Discontinue Efforts Towards a Roundabout Design on South Santa Cruz Avenue at Wood Road

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Discontinue efforts towards a roundabout design on South Santa Cruz Avenue at Wood Road.

**BACKGROUND:**

Over the past several years, the Town of Los Gatos has implemented multiple traffic mitigation measures striving to address the cut-through beach traffic that impacts the Town over warm summer weekends. One of these measures was to close the South Santa Cruz Avenue entrance to Highway 17 at Wood Road with a temporary roundabout. The closure was in place during various weekends in the summers of 2016 and 2017.

Given Caltrans purview over Highway 17, Town staff worked closely with Caltrans on the implementation of the temporary closure at South Santa Cruz Avenue and Wood Road because it prevented access to the Highway 17 on-ramp. Due to this impact, the Council was advised by staff that any permanent infrastructure or ongoing closure at this location would require permits from Caltrans.

At the January 17, 2017 Town Council meeting, Town Council authorized the Town Manager to execute an agreement with a transportation consultant firm (W-Trans) to work with Caltrans on the development of a report and conceptual plan for a permanent roundabout at Wood Road. The final W-Trans report was submitted to Caltrans in November of 2018.

**PREPARED BY:** Lisa Petersen  
Assistant Parks and Public Works Director/Town Engineer

---

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

---

SUBJECT: Discontinue Efforts Towards a Roundabout Design on South Santa Cruz Avenue  
at Wood Road

DATE: January 16, 2020

BACKGROUND (continued):

At the March 6, 2018 Town Council Meeting, the Council directed staff not to implement the temporary closure at Wood Road for the summer of 2018. Reasons included the congestion created by the closure around the Town's downtown corridor which limited consumer access to downtown businesses and changes in Town traffic patterns that resulted in increased traffic congestion on the east side of Highway 17.

DISCUSSION:

The final report submitted to Caltrans, called an Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE), reviewed the option of placing a permanent roundabout at the intersection of South Santa Cruz Avenue and Wood Road. This location takes advantage of both Town and Caltrans right of way to achieve the space necessary for a roundabout, as there is not enough space to install a roundabout on Town right-of-way alone.

The report noted several benefits of building the roundabout, including providing a gateway entrance to downtown, slowing speeds of vehicles exiting Highway 17 northbound, and facilitating a closure of the Highway 17 on-ramp to address freeway cut-through traffic. If constructed, the Town would still need Caltrans approval for any future temporary closures. The consultant report recommended advancing the roundabout concept for further consideration.

Since the submittal of the report to Caltrans in November of 2018, there have been several discussions between Parks and Public Works staff and Caltrans regarding the roundabout design. During these discussions, Caltrans made it clear that any proposed project by the Town would require the addition of metering lights to the southbound ramp to Highway 17 from South Santa Cruz Avenue. With the installation of ramp metering lights, Caltrans requirements additionally stipulate other costly improvements such as building new High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) lanes on Caltrans ramps and widening of the freeway to add short lanes specifically for traffic entering and exiting Los Gatos (called auxiliary lanes). Caltrans noted the Town could request these additional improvements be waived through a Caltrans "Design Exception" process; however, Caltrans staff was not optimistic that a waiver for all of the requirements would be approved.

The additional requirement for ramp metering significantly changes the scope and character of the roundabout project for the Town. Ramp metering increases the project complexity, cost, and time frames beyond what was envisioned by Town staff for the project. The estimated order of magnitude of costs are approximately \$2-3 million. Additionally, the Town's Traffic Engineer is concerned that ramp metering could cause traffic congestion on South Santa Cruz

SUBJECT: Discontinue Efforts Towards a Roundabout Design on South Santa Cruz Avenue at Wood Road

DATE: January 16, 2020

DISCUSSION (continued):

Avenue on weekdays when Caltrans would typically turn on the ramp metering lights. Currently, the Town has no traffic back up problem with the on-ramp during a typical weekday. The Town would have minimal control over when Caltrans would turn on the metering lights and the metering time lengths.

The initial policy rationale of proposing a Wood Road Roundabout was the Council's interest to use the roundabout to address summer cut-through beach traffic by temporarily closing the Highway 17 on-ramp. It is important to note that during project discussions with Caltrans, Caltrans made no commitment to approving future temporary closures to the Highway 17 on-ramp if the roundabout project was ultimately built.

CONCLUSION:

Due to this scope change by Caltrans and the cost and time impacts created by that change, staff recommends not moving forward with the design of the roundabout at the South Santa Cruz Avenue and Wood Road intersection.

ALTERNATIVES:

*Alternative 1:* Should the Town Council desire to move forward with the project with the scope changes required by Caltrans, the Council can direct staff to proceed with next steps, including a traffic study to determine the traffic impacts that would be created by the addition of metering lights to the South Santa Cruz Avenue on-ramp to southbound Highway 17. Metering lights could create back-ups and queuing on South Santa Cruz Avenue. The project budget does include enough funding to complete this task; however, funds have not yet been identified for additional engineering and construction of the full project.

Staff does not recommend this alternative because the Town would have minimal control over the timing of the metering lights and the timing criteria assumed for the traffic study could be changed by Caltrans later, making the study results invalid. Additionally, the cost for the entire project could be substantial, including metering lights, the widening of Highway 17 for auxiliary lanes, and widening the existing South Santa Cruz Avenue freeway ramps for HOV lanes.

*Alternative 2:* There may also be an opportunity to recast this project as a traffic calming and/or gateway project on Town right-of-way only without installing a roundabout. By not impacting the flow of traffic onto the freeway and staying off Caltrans right-of-way, Caltrans would have no control over the scope of the project. A permit from Caltrans would still be

PAGE 4 OF 4

SUBJECT: Discontinue Efforts Towards a Roundabout Design on South Santa Cruz Avenue  
at Wood Road

DATE: January 16, 2020

ALTERNATIVES (continued):

required for closing access to Highway 17. This project could take a number of forms, including narrowing of travel lanes through installation of a center median.

Staff is neutral on this approach. If the Council would like to pursue this option, the Council could decide to allocate the remaining funds in the Cut-Through Traffic/Wood Road Roundabout project towards this purpose during the annual budget process.

FISCAL IMPACT:

During the on-going Town budget process, the Council has maintained funds in the Cut-Through Traffic/Wood Road Roundabout project for use on various cut-through traffic mitigation measures, including the advancement of a design for a permanent roundabout at Wood Road. The total remaining amount in the project budget is \$355,000. Council could choose to leave the funds for future cut-through traffic mitigations, other than the design of a permanent traffic circle at Wood Road, or reallocate these funds during the Town's upcoming budget process.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

This is not a project defined under CEQA, and no further action is required.