TOWN OF LOS GATOS
COMPLETE STREETS AND
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
REPORT

MEETING DATE: 10/10/2024

ITEM NO: 1.

MINUTES OF THE COMPLETE STREETS AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING
September 12, 2024

The Complete Streets and Transportation Commission of the Town of Los Gatos conducted its Regular Meeting on Thursday, September 12, 2024, at 7:30 a.m.

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER AT 7:30 A.M.

ROLL CALL

Present: Chair Alice Miano, Vice Chair Jeff Suzuki, Commissioners Bill Ehlers, Erik Miller, Jeff Thompson and Youth Commissioner Rushil Sharma.

VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS

-Linda Swenberg commented on Blossom Hill Road traffic calming issues and requested the new safety measures be removed. Commission asked questions of speaker.
-Daniel Snyder commented on a SR2S study and the lack of sidewalks on Roberts Road.

CONSENT ITEMS

1. Approve Complete Streets & Transportation Commission Minutes of July 11, 2024.
   MOTION: Motion by Commissioner Thompson to approve Consent Item 1.
   Seconded by Vice Chair Suzuki.
   VOTE: Motion passed unanimously.

OTHER BUSINESS

2. Youth Commissioner Report - Rushil Sharma (Verbal Report)
   Youth Commissioner Sharma verbally reported on this item and introduced the Youth Commission's two alternate commissioners: Elijah Asheghian and Saketh Chinnakotla.

3. Review and Comment on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Complete Streets Checklist for the Highway 17 Bicycle and Pedestrian Overcrossing Project (Written Report) – Sean Rose
   Special Project Manager Rose presented the staff report. Commission discussed this report.

4. Safe Routes to School (SR2S) Quarterly Update (Verbal Report)
   SR2S Coordinator Riggs verbally reported on this item. Commission discussed this item.

5. June 2024 – June 2025 Ad Hoc Committee Reports (Verbal Reports)
   a. Beach Traffic – Vice Chair Suzuki and Commissioner Miller (Attachment)
      Youth Commissioners left at 8:15 a.m.
      Vice Chair Suzuki verbally reported on this item. Commission discussed this attachment.

MOTION: Motion by Vice Chair Suzuki to send a recommendation to Town Council to approve a Capital Project for a beach traffic study based on the attached memo with an amendment that conceptional exhibits 2 & 3 are mutually exclusive. Commission discussed this motion.
Seconded by Commissioner Thompson.
VOTE: Motion passed 4 in favor, 1 abstain (Miano).

b. VTA Bus Passes – Chair Miano and Vice Chair Suzuki
Chair Miano and Vice Chair Suzuki verbally reported on this item.
c. Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan – Commissioners Thompson and Miller (Attachment)
Commissioner Thompson verbally reported on this item.

6. PPW Department Report
   a. Capital Project Status Updates (Verbal Report)
      i. Trailhead Connector Project
      Special Project Manager Rose verbally reported on this item.
      ii. Shannon Road Bicycle and Pedestrian Project
      Town Engineer Heap verbally reported on this item.
   b. Future Agenda Items (Attachment)
   Recommendation: Receive update and provide information
   Town Engineer Heap verbally reported on this item.

COMMISSIONER REPORTS
Commissioner Ehlers reminded the Commission on the upcoming Screen on the Green Event.
Commissioner Miller verbally reported on the VTA BPAC meeting.
Chair Miano verbally reported on the C.A.C. meeting.
Vice-Chair Suzuki reported meeting with LGUSD regarding public transportation options for students.

ADJOURNMENT - Meeting adjourned at 9:00 a.m.

This is to certify that the foregoing is a true and correct copy of the minutes of the September 12, 2024 Regular Meeting as approved by the Complete Streets & Transportation Commission.

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Nicolle Burnham, PPW Director

Recommendation to Launch a Capital Project to Research and Plan Beach Traffic Mitigation

Beach traffic is possibly the most common complaint among the community members of Los Gatos. The last few months have been no exception. People are eager for the town to take further action on beach traffic.

The Town of Los Gatos has previously implemented a number of congestion mitigation measures with mixed results and sparse data analysis. For this reason, the Beach Traffic Ad Hoc Committee (BTAC) with the approval of the Complete Streets and Transportation Commission, recommends that the Los Gatos Town Council launch a capital project.

This capital project would dedicate resources to study and simulate:

1. Existing beach traffic patterns
2. The impacts of potential mitigation strategies drafted by BTAC included in the exhibits herein.

The Current Challenges of Beach Traffic Management

During weekends, traffic volumes exceed the capacity of Highway 17, leading to congestion that spills over into local roads. Beach traffic is, by its nature, a regional problem. It is the opinion of BTAC that, since Los Gatos does not control the source or the destination of beach traffic, entirely "solving" for beach traffic is not within the Town's authority or capacity.

Car traffic *will* flow through Los Gatos. Even before the proliferation of navigation apps, many long-time residents remember beach traffic— apps and population growth have amplified the problem to the extent that its effects are unbearable.

However, Los Gatos is not wholly powerless in combating the effects of beach traffic.

First, Los Gatos has potential options in determining *where* car traffic flows. Currently, beach traffic cuts through major thoroughfares in town. As our major thoroughfares reach maximum capacity, beach traffic spills into the adjacent neighborhoods (referred to as "spillover" hereafter). Los Gatos has limited capacity and authority to entirely stop beach traffic on major thoroughfares. But it has the ability to limit congestion to those thoroughfares and prevent spillover.

Previous measures to close off certain points of entry into targeted neighborhoods have historically decreased spillover into those neighborhoods while increasing spillover into other neighborhoods, effectively offloading congestion from one neighborhood to another. Additionally, frustrated by congestion, many drivers simply disregard traffic laws; Los Gatos, with its limited resources, often does

not have the capacity to provide traffic enforcement on beach traffic regulations. This has led some to conclude that any effort to curtail beach traffic is futile— drivers will always find a way to circumvent whatever regulation or impediment the town implements.

BTAC observes that the results of previous efforts do not prove the futility of curtailing beach traffic, but instead prove flaws in previous approaches— targeting individual neighborhoods and/or relying on the continual physical presence of police officers are infeasible in the long run. Learning from these previous results, future approaches should therefore be:

1. Holistic, targeting multiple neighborhoods simultaneously
2. Infrastructure-oriented as opposed to enforcement-dependent. If drivers are unable to use *any* of the neighborhoods as shortcuts because of physical barriers (e.g. bollards), then drivers will be compelled to remain in the major thoroughfares in town.

Secondly, Los Gatos may further encourage walking, biking, and public transit through infrastructural improvements that increase safety, accessibility, capacity, and overall pleasantness. Future beach traffic efforts should aim to move people first and foremost with cars being just one of several means to travel.

There are 3 exhibits in this memo. Exhibit 1 describes an approximation of some current beach traffic patterns. Exhibits 2 and 3 describe proposals to curtail spillover, employing bollards and conversions of some two-way streets to one-way streets to prevent traffic from cutting through neighborhoods but allowing neighborhood residents to enter and exit freely.

These proposals are ultimately conceptual— any effective proposal will need trained professionals running traffic simulations to evaluate them.

What about Navigation Apps?

As noted above, before the proliferation of navigation apps, beach traffic was a problem. However, apps seem to have increased the visibility of neighborhood shortcuts, creating spillovers that are particularly disruptive and painful.

There have been proposals for the Town to deceive traffic apps through false reports of traffic, spoofing slow traffic, or even false reports of road closures. The goal of these false reports is to prevent navigation apps from recommending drivers to use certain streets.

Indeed, users have found that false reports can work in the short run in reducing traffic. However, companies do eventually discover false reports, at which point they ignore the false input, and recommend drivers back onto the road. The end result is that traffic resumes as normal.

Los Gatos currently has a good relationship with Waze and Google Maps to report road closures; if the Town starts falsely reporting roads as closed, we run the risk of those companies not trusting our legitimate reports, compromising our ability to coordinate with these firms in the future.

Some people have proposed legislation that bars navigation apps from routing traffic through neighborhood streets. In our opinion, that could be a feasible long-term solution, but successfully lobbying for state-level legislation to compel that is not trivial or quick. In the meantime, measures that the Town can unilaterally implement should be considered.

In the opinion of BTAC, physically changing our streets to more intentionally reflect our desired usage of them is a better long-term solution that will be resilient to changes in algorithms and other corporate black boxes.

Exhibit 1: Current Traffic Patterns

Exhibit 1 visualizes some of the well-known current beach traffic flows through Los Gatos on three of its major thoroughfares: Winchester Boulevard, University Avenue, and Los Gatos Boulevard. Exhibit 1 also shows how traffic spills into neighborhood streets.

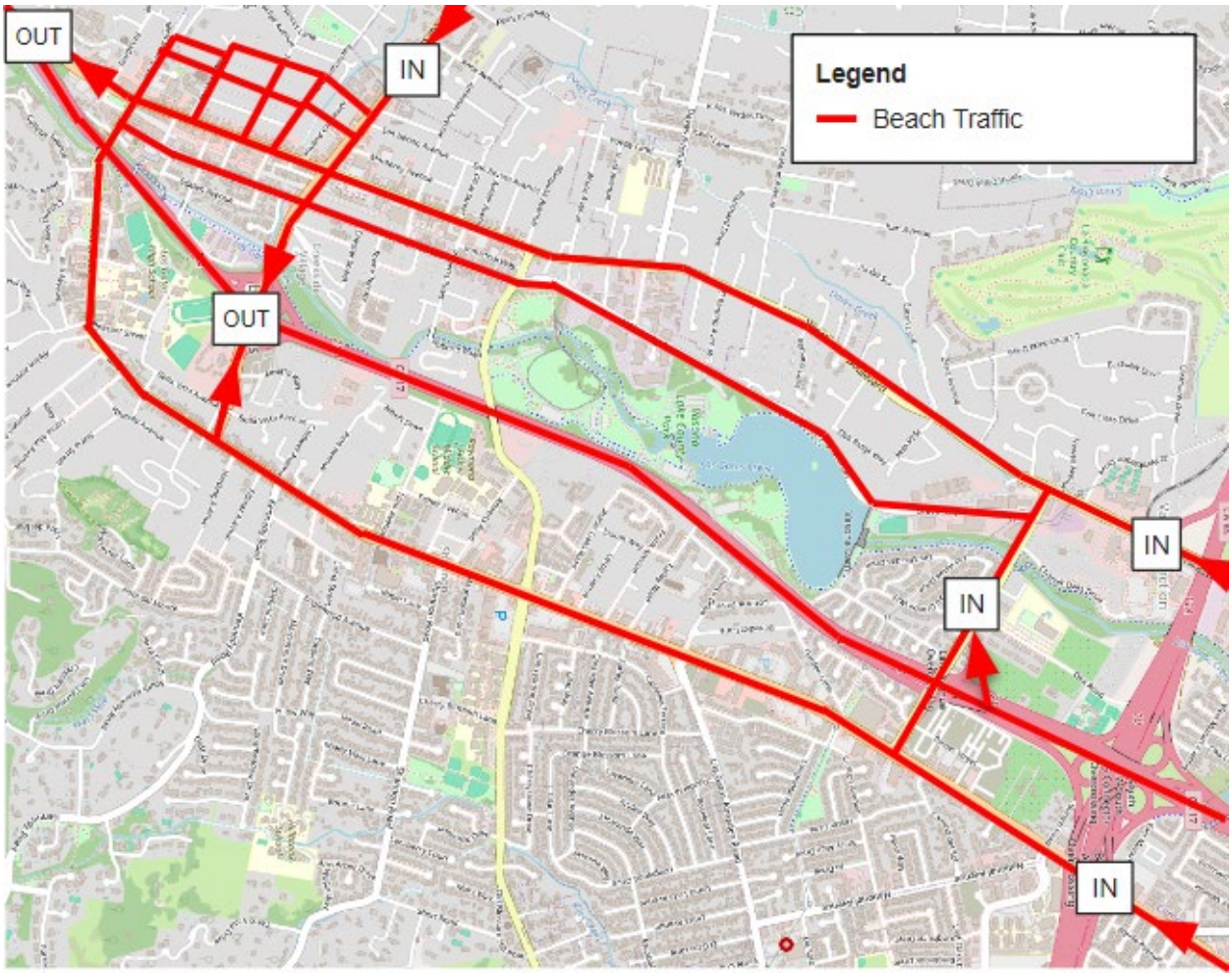

Exhibit 1: Some of the Existing Beach Traffic Patterns

The entry points, labeled "IN" on the map, show the entry points of beach traffic *onto the map*, not Los Gatos in general. These entry points are:

- Highway 17 Exit onto Lark Ave, feeding into all three thoroughfares
- Winchester from south-bound traffic, originating from Highway 17, Highway 85, and Winchester in Campbell
- Los Gatos Blvd, originating from Highway 85 and Bascom Ave in San Jose
- Highway 9, originating from Saratoga and potentially Highway 85 there

The exit points, labeled "OUT" on the map, show our expected egress of beach traffic from the town. Those exit points are:

- Highway 9 feeding Highway 17
- Wood Avenue, feeding Highway 17
- Lark Avenue might feed Highway 17, but given the traffic build up starts there, we don't anticipate this happening all the time

Because this is a concept map, we must acknowledge that this does not exhaustively show every neighborhood that has been impacted by beach traffic. The purpose of the recommended capital project is precisely to better understand existing beach traffic patterns. The Town does not have access to continuous or exhaustive traffic data, historical traffic data from companies like Google is unavailable, and scraping such information goes against their terms of service.

In all of our exhibits, the Almond Grove is used as an example of a neighborhood impacted by our proposals. Beach traffic is also known to impact Union Avenue, Blossom Hill Road, and Shannon Road on especially high-intensity days.

Exhibit 2: University Bike Boulevard Proposal

Exhibit 2 proposes transforming University Boulevard into a calm corridor for cyclists, buses, and pedestrians to traverse town. This plan employs bollards to divert cross-town car traffic from University to Winchester Blvd / N. Santa Cruz. The first primary benefit is the increased capacity for bike traffic through a major thoroughfare in town. The second primary benefit is the ability to establish dedicated bus lanes, increasing the speed, predictability, and, therefore, desirability of using buses. Currently, buses and their passengers are forced to sit through beach traffic. With a University Bike Boulevard, bus passengers would be able to move faster than if they were to traverse by car. With little to no car traffic, this route would also improve access for emergency vehicles.

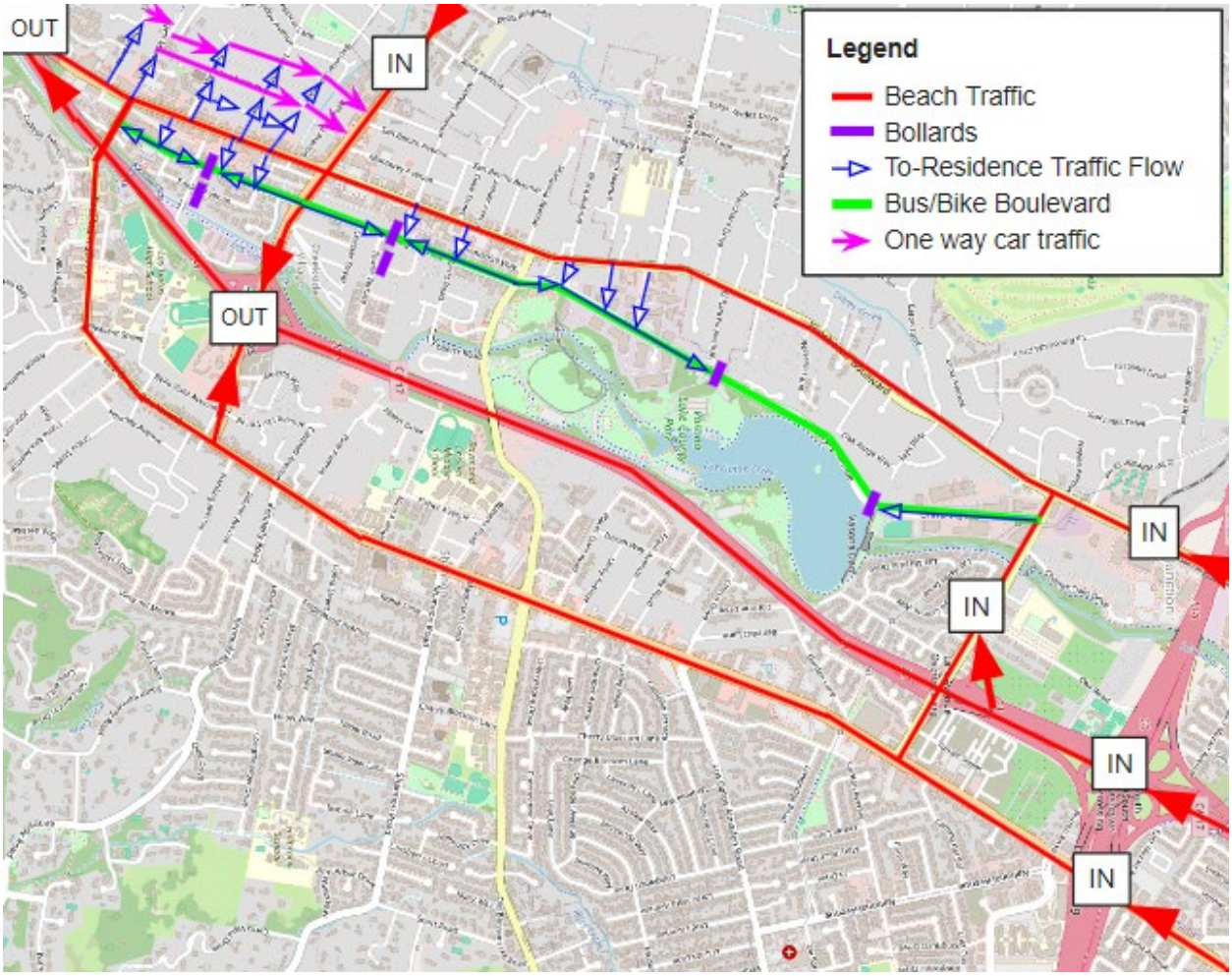

Exhibit 2: University Bike Boulevard Concept

Within the neighborhoods across University, residents would still be able to drive to and from their homes; the route might be slightly more circuitous, but this would eliminate the multi-block line of cars idling in front of their homes during beach traffic.

If implemented correctly, the bollards along this route would be able to be raised and lowered by the town as needed. During beach traffic, a simple key-operated bollard could allow emergency services to drive up, drop the bollard, and proceed to an emergency almost unimpeded by the beach traffic, not to mention more safely than the alternative of driving in the opposing traffic lane. This is the main reason Exhibit 3 extends along Vasona Lake; that would give Fire Trucks from the Winchester Station or Ambulances from Good Sam and further a route straight into Downtown.

If we look further afield to places in Europe and Sunnyvale, we could use automatic bollards that could be lowered by an electronic signal. These automatic bollards would be useful to bus services in town, especially since they have recently altered their routes not to go Downtown because beach traffic delayed them too much. After a bus lowers an automatic bollard, it would encounter little to no traffic, enabling VTA to run nearly unimpeded bus services through town during beach traffic hours.

Regardless of which bollard control system is selected, the town also has the option to lower the bollards as needed for special events (like creating bypasses during the holiday parade) or in the event of an emergency evacuation.

A University Bike Boulevard ensures that residents and visitors have multiple ways to travel quickly across Los Gatos during Beach Traffic, substantially increasing its potential throughput.

Lastly, we believe that, as an infrastructural improvement, a University Bike Boulevard would contribute to the “small town character” of Los Gatos. There would be less pollution from car traffic, families could feel safer biking through town, and the areas that surround this route would be more tranquil and vibrant.

Exhibit 3: Permanent Promenade Proposal

Exhibit 3 proposes establishing the Promenade as a permanent installation, cutting off the Wood Rd entrance to Highway 17, and improving the bike infrastructure on N Santa Cruz Ave from Blossom Hill to the Promenade.

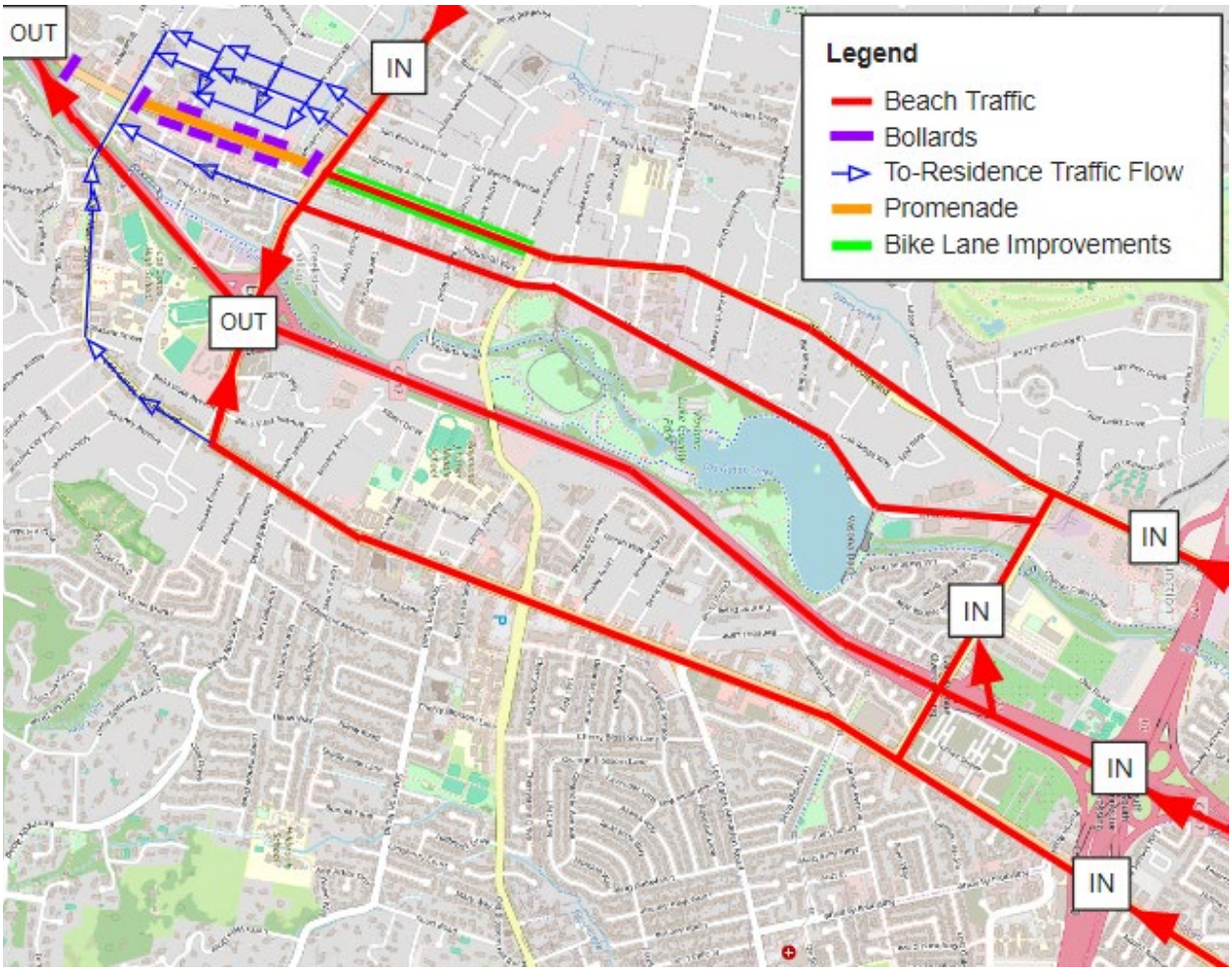

Exhibit 3: Permanent Promenade Concept

During the pandemic, Los Gatos hosted several Promenade Events where N Santa Cruz Ave was closed to car traffic from Highway 9 to W Main St on Thursday night, leaving the space for dining, shopping, mingling, and live music. By and large, residents of the community loved the Promenades, with many requests to bring them back, but the Town cited the expense of closing the street as the reason that more events could not be held. It is our understanding that much of the expense of hosting the events was having town staff set up and tear down the barriers and signage to temporarily close the street, as well as additional police presence to patrol and enforce the road closures.

The Promenades were so loved that a private group paid to hold another event, called the Taste of Los Gatos, with the same road closures.

It is BTAC's assertion that permanently installing the Promenade controls and signage could have a slightly higher upfront cost, but we would eliminate the cost to set up and tear down the previous temporary events.

A Permanent Promenade would create a primarily pedestrianized Downtown with access to cyclists. Without cars taking up most of the public right of way, The Downtown would become more spacious and a more desirable location to walk, bike, shop, and experience life. The Downtown would physically be able to accommodate more people, restaurant seating, greenery, and other aesthetic and functional improvements. This would result in increased capacity for commercial activity.

If implemented, a Permanent Promenade would become a defining feature of Los Gatos, enhancing our small-town character. During Farmer's Markets and the previous Promenades, families and children could be found playing in the streets, something that is only possible if there is no car traffic. A Permanent Promenade would make the Downtown a more appealing space for families and visitors.

Exhibit 3 illustrates how this Permanent Promenade might be implemented conceptually. Where previous attempts at curtailing car traffic in one neighborhood have led other neighborhoods to suffer from spillover, Exhibit 3 shows how cars can be prevented from using neighborhoods as shortcuts— cars may enter neighborhoods on one end, but are prevented from exiting on the other end. Residents of these neighborhoods would still be able to enter and leave their own homes freely.

By blocking every potential shortcut through neighborhoods, drivers will be compelled to remain in the major thoroughfares in town. While the Promenade would be closed to car traffic, the bollards would be collapsible, enabling emergency services and business deliveries to access the downtown as needed, and even allow regular car traffic for extreme circumstances like wildfire evacuation.

With the completion of the quick build protected bike lanes on Winchester Blvd, there was a noticeable increase in the number of people cycling for casual transportation, namely more children and families. However, the bike lane ends abruptly just past Blossom Hill, where Winchester transitions into N Santa Cruz Ave, with no calm alternative route. BTAC observes that the cyclists on N Santa Cruz Ave mostly consist of sport cyclists and e-bike riders.

We need to extend the Winchester Bike lanes to the Promenade to give residents of Los Gatos a safe and calm way to reach the promenade, regardless of how congested car traffic is. Thus the proposed plan would transform Downtown Los Gatos into an even more desirable destination with a permanent pedestrian mall, along with bike lanes on N Santa Cruz Ave to let local residents comfortably travel the full length of Los Gatos regardless of how much car traffic there is.

To better understand how local residents were impacted by beach traffic and how they view the previous promenades, on June 9th, 2024, the BTAC conducted an informal survey by knocking on doors along University Ave adjacent to the downtown and asking residents the following questions:

1. To travel within the town, how often do you walk versus bike versus drive?
2. How does beach traffic affect your transportation choice?
3. What is your opinion on the previous Promenade? Would you like to see more Promenades in the future?

We knocked on dozens of doors and were able to interview 8 residents. Broadly speaking, all of the residents drive to varying extents and all of them stated that beach traffic reduced their tendency to drive. During beach traffic hours, residents opt to either walk to a local establishment (e.g. a restaurant) or just stay indoors, dissuaded from venturing outside. To reach a destination within the town, 7 out of 8 residents walked or cycled more than a third of the time.

All but one of the residents viewed the previously held promenade in a very favorable light; the one who did not was indifferent. We told some 3 of interviewees that we were contemplating making the promenade a permanent feature in town, and, for all 3 interviewees, the response to that proposal was excited and positive.

This survey indicates that previously held promenades had a positive local effect on some residents along University Ave. Residents did not complain of any negative effects. A substantial proportion of residents walk or bike to travel within town, and a Promenade would help further encourage this.

Other Considerations Regarding the Proposals

We considered the possibility that our proposal may potentially worsen traffic on the major thoroughfares in town. However, given that those roads are already at maximum capacity during beach traffic, we believe that congestion will remain the same if some of our proposals are implemented.

Once beach traffic is limited only to the major thoroughfares, it is likely that navigation apps will recommend fewer drivers to cut through Los Gatos because they recognize that there will be less capacity for cars. Intentionally lowering the capacity engenders *reduced demand*, a known phenomenon where reducing the capacity of a roadway results in reduced total traffic, as drivers decide to take alternate routes or change their destination. Our primary concern currently is to manage spillover traffic when both the major thoroughfares and the neighborhoods are at maximum capacity.

Nevertheless, we believe that approving this capital project is the first necessary step for any serious, well-considered solution to combat beach traffic, regardless of whether that solution originates from Exhibit 2, Exhibit 3, or elements of either Exhibit of this memo.

Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan Ad Hoc Report
Sep 12 2024

1. Erik Miller and Jeff Thompson met with Director Burnham and Gary Heap in July and discussed selection criteria and priorities for the BPMP.
    a. The BPMP 2020 Update criteria and priorities are still good as of today. It is great to see that some of the top priority projects are already in progress.
    b. Short and Moderate term/complexity new projects could possibly be funded with town funds.
    c. Longer term/complexity should be considered for next round Measure B funding. First phase Measure B funding is now ending. 2nd phase will be allocated starting in 2026 or after.
    d. We talked about possible next projects to focus on:
        - Pollard Complete Streets
        - Los Gatos Blvd Class 2 or 4 Bike Lane from 85 to Shannon.
2. Erik and Jeff met in Sep to further prioritize projects.
    a. We agreed that Pollart Complete Streets is a high priority. Rolling Hills Middle Schools is on Pollard and should have the safest Ped and Bike facilities possible.
    b. Class 4 on Los Gatos Blvd from Shannon to 85. LG BLVD from Lark to 85 has little to no Ped and Bike facilities. Also consider LG BLVD from Shannon to E Main.
    c. Class 4 Bike Lane on Lark Ave from Winchester to LG BLVD. The bridge over 17 has inadequate bike lane facility.
    d. Projects to watch:
        i. Kennedy Road Ped and Bike facility is similar to the Shannon Road project just starting now.
        ii. Winchester Complete Streets. There are no (or few) sidewalks on Winchester. Peds are using the new bike lane now, but should be on a sidewalk. There are no crosswalks crossing Winchester from Daves Ave to Lark Ave.