



TOWN OF LOS GATOS
COMPLETE STREETS AND
TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

MEETING DATE: 03/27/2025

ITEM NO.: 3

DATE: March 20, 2025
TO: Complete Streets and Transportation Commission
FROM: Nicolle Burnham, Parks and Public Works Director
SUBJECT: Blossom Hill Road Traffic Safety Project – Phase 1 (Quick Build) Project Update
CIP No. 813-0239

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive an informational report and update on the Blossom Hill Road Traffic Safety Project (CIP No. 813-0239) Phase 1 Concept Plan Implementation.

BACKGROUND:

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 in the Town's General Plan. Along this segment, there are driveways that serve the adjacent residential homes, Blossom Hill Elementary School, and Blossom Hill Park. There is a signalized intersection at Cherry Blossom Lane and Blossom Hill Road. Prior to the lane reduction improvements, the section of Blossom Hill Road was mainly a four-lane divided roadway with two-lanes in each direction.

Traffic safety for the project segment has been an important consideration since 2010 due to two traffic related fatalities, a higher-than-average collision rate, children using the corridor to commute to schools, and residents and Blossom Hill Park patrons actively utilizing sidewalks. Furthermore, traffic counts collected in January 2019 indicated 7,000 to 8,000 daily vehicles for each eastbound and westbound directions. Traffic speed counts on Blossom Hill Road showed that 85th percentile speeds on the project segment were 36 miles per hour (mph) for eastbound traffic and 34 mph for westbound.

PREPARED BY: Mike Vroman
Senior Traffic Engineer

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

In early 2021, a traffic safety feasibility study for the project segment was completed. The recommendations from the study included improvements to the signalized intersection, traffic signal modifications, reducing travel lanes to a single lane each direction, installing curb extensions at all corners and improved bike facilities. The feasibility study and recommendations were presented to the public at a community meeting held via Zoom on January 28, 2021. 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. Comments and concerns were received and addressed.

In March 2022, staff advertised a Request for Proposals (RFP) to hire a consultant to prepare 35% plans and a cost estimate. Hexagon Transportation Consultants was selected to perform the work. On May 12, 2022, there was a kickoff meeting with Hexagon's Design Team. The goal of this feasibility study was to develop alternatives that would improve bicycle and pedestrian connectivity and circulation without adversely disrupting vehicle progression along this study segment. This feasibility study included an analysis of the existing and proposed conditions, a collision analysis, and a level of traffic stress analysis.

In July 2022, staff submitted a \$4.6 million grant application for the One Bay Area Grant Cycle 3 (OBAG 3) Program to fund all safety improvements recommended in the traffic safety feasibility study, plus 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 would not be funded.

In order to implement some of the traffic safety measures, staff and the Town's transportation consultant developed a "Phase 1" concept plan for the Blossom Hill Road Traffic Safety Project. This included travel lane reduction within the project limit and bike lane improvements, largely with striping and non-permanent traffic control measures. The proposed Phase 1 concept plan was scheduled to be constructed as part of the Town's Annual Street Repair and Resurfacing Project in summer 2023, pending Town Council approval.

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

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, AM and PM queuing at the signalized intersection of Blossom Hill Road and Cherry Blossom Lane were significantly higher than findings from the traffic modeling.

The project team believed the Phase 1 Concept Plan would achieve the project goals of enhancing traffic safety and potentially reducing speeds on Blossom Hill Road. It was anticipated the morning commute could prove more challenging after the improvements were implemented, however, staff thought 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 – outweighed and mitigated the potential impacts of additional queuing.

At the October 13, 2022, Complete Streets and Transportation Commission, staff reviewed the Phase 1 Concept Plan, and the feedback received from the second community meeting. CSTC recommended the Phase 1 Concept Plan be approved by Council.

At the November 21, 2022, Town Council meeting, Council approved the Phase 1 Blossom Hill Road Traffic Safety Project (CIP No. 813-0239) for inclusion with the FY 2022/23 Annual Street Repair and Resurfacing Project.

In the Summer of 2023, the Town’s paving contractor implemented Phase 1 of the Blossom Hill Road Safety Project.

DISCUSSION:

The Phase 1 Plan’s lane reduction was anticipated to increase traffic delays and vehicle queuing in the area during peak travel times. Since implementation of the project, staff’s main objective has been to facilitate the movement of traffic along Blossom Hill Road (BHR), especially during the AM and PM peak hours. Staff has focused on enhancing the movement of westbound traffic in the morning and eastbound traffic in the evening. Staff also continues to monitor and adjust the signal timing at the BHR and Cherry Blossom Lane intersection to facilitate these movements.

Staff and the Town’s traffic signal maintenance contractor continue to observe traffic flow, signal operations and working to optimize movement through the area and will continue observations and optimization efforts as needed. There is typically a time after new traffic improvements are implemented for traffic to “normalize” after drivers modify their behavior and staff makes adjustments. We believe traffic has “normalized” and the recent Engineering and Traffic Survey necessitated after the improvements allowed the Town to lower the speed limit along this section of BHR from 35 mph to 30 mph, effective January 3, 2025.

Please see Table 1 (Attachment 1) that summarizes comments received from the community, and the corrective action staff has taken.

CONCLUSION:

Staff recommends that the Complete Streets and Transportation Commission receive the informational report and update on the Blossom Hill Road Traffic Safety Project (CIP No. 813-0239) Phase 1 Concept Plan Implementation. Staff believes the benefits of the Phase 1 Concept Plan - to provide continuous buffered bike lanes, move motorized vehicles farther away from bicyclists and pedestrians, and reduce speeds along Blossom Hill Road to enhance traffic safety along the corridor - outweigh and mitigate the potential impacts of additional queuing and delay. Staff will continue to monitor the Blossom Hill Corridor and continue balancing conflicting demands and providing multimodal support for users of all ages and abilities in the Blossom Hill Road corridor.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – Summary of Comments Received Since Implementation

Attachment 1

TABLE 1: Summary of Community Concerns Received Since Implementation

Community Concerns	Solutions/Staff Response
Motorists using the two-way-left-turn lane as a passing lane.	PD employed targeted enforcement and Town staff installed delineators to educate motorists and to discourage/prevent this while still allowing access for an eastbound motorist to make a left turn into the residential driveways.
Increased congestion and queuing on eastbound BHR in the morning peak and on westbound BHR during the evening peak hour.	Monitored operations, adjusted timing, stopped running time-based coordination plan along BHR during the morning peak hours and revised time-based coordination plan along BHR during the afternoon/evening peak hours. Continue monitoring.
Insufficient green time on northbound Cherry Blossom during the morning drop-off, early Wednesday afternoon pick-up and afternoon school pick-up.	Observed and provided additional green time.
Insufficient green time on southbound Cherry Blossom during the late afternoon/evening.	Observed and provided additional green time.
Motorists using the westbound bike lane as a passing lane during the morning school drop-off.	PD employed targeted enforcement and education. Town staff and design team considered installation of bollard(s) but not feasible due to residential driveways and on-street parking along this section of BHR east of Cherry Blossom Lane.
Motorists not receiving a green indication in a timely manner and/or their movement being skipped at BHR/CBL.	Staff, traffic signal maintenance contractor, and Video Detection Engineer observed, monitored and adjusted or repaired as necessary.
Vehicular Speeding	Speed surveys were conducted after Phase 1 improvements to determine if lowering the speed limit could be justified. January 2025 – speed limits along BHR from Santa Cruz/Winchester to Camino Del Cerro were lowered from 35 to 30 mph.
Insufficient pedestrian clearance time to cross BHR.	Observed and provided additional pedestrian clearance time.
Concerns about pedestrians crossing Cherry Blossom Lane while vehicles can make a permissive (with the green ball indication) left turn.	PD employs targeted enforcement and education. Standard operation at many traffic signals on the minor street.
Request to reinstate the eastbound right turn lane into Blossom Hill Park’s parking area.	Removing the right turn lane reduces the speed of right turning vehicles and removes the weaving area between bicycles and vehicles.