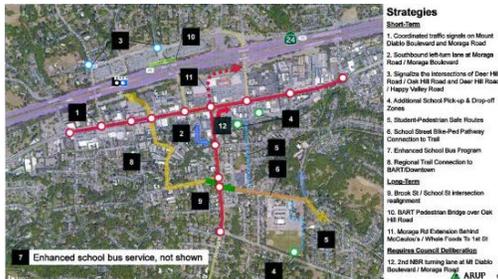


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Traffic relief in downtown inches closer

By Pippa Fisher



Strategies

- Short-Term**
1. Coordinated traffic signals on Mount Diablo Boulevard and Moraga Road
 2. Southbound left turn lane at Moraga Road / Happy Valley Road
 3. Signalize the intersection of Deer Hill Road / Oak Hill Road and Deer Hill Road / Happy Valley Road
 4. Additional School Pick-up & Drop-off Zone
 5. Student-Pedestrian Safe Routes
 6. School Street Bike-Ped Pathway Connection to Trail
 7. Enhanced School Bus Program
 8. Regional Trail Connection to BART Extension
- Long-Term**
9. Brook St / School St intersection realignment
 10. BART Pedestrian Bridge over Oak Hill Road
 11. Moraga Rd Extension Behind McClellan's Fitness Plaza To Mt St
 12. 2nd MBRT turning lane at Mt Diablo Boulevard / Moraga Road
- ARUP

Lafayette is very close to adopting the remaining approved strategies for dealing with downtown congestion as the city council voted unanimously to approve all proposed strategies minus a previous proposal for a BART pedestrian bridge and with certain modifications to wording. To allow city staff time to work on language, the item will be placed on the consent calendar for the next meeting with no further discussion.

The motion was worded to include a pilot test period and barriers put in place should strategy number 12, allowing a second northbound right turn lane from Moraga Road onto Mt. Diablo Boulevard, be implemented. Additionally, strategy number 9 will be worded to give priority to a footbridge (9A) and secondly to the realignment (9B).

The city of Lafayette looks set to keep all remaining options on the table for traffic relief. Image provided

At a prior meeting the council members had discussed and approved the proposal for signal lights on Deer Hill Road at Happy Valley Road and Oak Hill Road (strategy number 3).

Most of the discussion at the March 12 city council meeting centered around by far the most controversial proposal - that of the Brook Street/School Street realignment (strategy number 9), which would involve creating a single sweeping intersection straight from School Street through Brook Street through what is now the Masonic Lodge, which would have to be purchased and demolished.

Consulting firm Arup spokesperson Mike Iswalt explained the benefit of such a strategy, saying that simplifying the junction would reduce travel time by up to 10 percent on Moraga Road and would provide a direct bike and pedestrian connection across Moraga Road to the (proposed) School Street pathway (strategy number 6).

And that is exactly what most of the public comments addressed. Almost all speakers voiced their concern over increased traffic through the narrow residential streets in the Brook Street neighborhood, citing cut-through traffic and danger to pedestrians as well as increased exhaust. Iswalt spoke of possible calming measures but nonetheless almost all favored another option - that of building a pedestrian footbridge.

To that end, Iswalt explained that they had done analysis showing that travel time and delay on Moraga Road would improve by only 5 percent with the footbridge as a result of the removal of the existing scramble phase signals at Brook Street and the crosswalk at School Street, compared to 10 percent with the realignment. However several members of the public expressed that safety of the school children trying to cross should come first.

Mayor Don Tatzin reminded everyone that just because it's on the plan doesn't mean it has to be implemented. "Tonight is not the night to do final design work," he said.

According to city staff, upon plan adoption the city will be better positioned to take advantage of grant funding opportunities for strategy implementation. Furthermore, prior to implementation each project would be subject to a whole new public review process, including potential coordination with external stakeholders such as school districts.

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