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## School Safety initiatives to start over the summer

By Lou Fancher



Image staff report

School safety is a top priority for the city of Lafayette. According to a report presented by the Safe Routes to Acalanes High School team three cyclists and two pedestrians were struck and killed in Lafayette between 2014 and 2021, and there were 15 bicycle and 10 pedestrian collisions between 2014 and 2020. At its June 13 meeting the city council received a second tranche of recommendations for improving safety near four additional Lafayette schools - Happy Valley Elementary, Burton Valley Elementary, the Meher Schools, and Acalanes High School.

Engineering and Public Works Director Mike Moran along with Toole Design Group (TDG) Senior Planner Drew Parker presented an overview of the projects, an update on one element the council at its April 11 meeting had requested involving the intersection at Pleasant Hill Road and Quant Road near Springhill Elementary, and a summary of TDG, staff and the Transportation and

Circulation Commission recommendations and next steps.

Parker showed images from the Pleasant Hill Road intersection demonstrating how adding K-rail barriers, flex-posts, curb markings and object marker signs would make the island stand out visually and would improve the "pork chop"-shaped island's safety.

Happy Valley Elementary School recommendations centered on traffic control, according to Parker, where speed and sightline problems would be solved by improving the visibility of crosswalks and adding lane delineators at the front of the school and a second crosswalk at the west driveway.

At Burton Valley Elementary School, traffic calming was again a focus. Recommended measures showed that heightened crosswalk visibility would immediately improve pedestrian safety and with minor modifications the school could be better connected to the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail. With a community-generated pilot study ongoing, Parker said TDG limited their recommendations to simple steps, such as removing trail bollards and increasing marker visibility at the trail outlet near Sandalwood Court.

The key issues at the Meher Schools were the downhill grade and tight curves on Leland Drive that have potential to cause drivers to exceed the speed limits and reduce visibility at curves. The solutions, Parker said, are to install speed humps, refresh striping, and add vertical delineators to create more protection, especially on curves in the road.

At Acalanes High School, the streets are designed for speed, access and parking, and not designed for maximum pedestrian and bicycle safety, according to TDG. Missing sidewalks on the south side of Stanley Boulevard and the lack of pedestrian crossings on Stanley Boulevard between Pleasant Hill Road and Camino Diablo had TDG recommending adding two crosswalks, parking lots, and other improvements.

During the discussion period Vice Mayor Carl Anduri asked about a previous recommendation that had been made by the Transportation and Circulation Commission to lower the speed limit near Acalanes High School from 30 to 25 miles per hour. Anduri asked why it was no longer in the report. Moran said speed reductions on city streets throughout Lafayette had become a city-wide focus and the issue would therefore be packaged with other speed mitigation recommendations in a separate report geared to address areas beyond and still including school safety zones.

Council Member Susan Candell asked about the RFP at Acalanes. Moran said the connection to an informal dirt path trail and a 130-foot gap in a sidewalk would be corrected by the recommendations and solve the problems of students crossing "everywhere" along Stanley Boulevard. The idea, he said, is to provide safe, mid-block crossing alternatives. Moran said, "Right now, they're just walking between cars wherever they want to cross."

Written public comment received during the TransCirc process included, among others, a letter from four individuals representing the Burton Valley Safe Streets and 400 Burton Valley residents. The residents encouraged the council to not "force unneeded changes on neighborhoods" or "ignore the rights of senior and people with disabilities." The strongly worded protest advised the council make "a course correction" in response to residents' disapproval. Lafayette resident Stella Wotherspoon participated during the online meeting and spoke in support of the council's actions, expressing appreciation for the work and solutions offered by TransCirc, TDG and the council.

Council unanimously approved directing staff to complete quick-build plans and solicit contractor costs to complete work for the four schools and to authorize release of \$1.3 million from the Palos Colorados impact fees to fund the safety improvements near schools. (The total includes \$612,000 already authorized by the city council on April 11 for work at Lafayette and Springhill elementary schools and Stanley Middle School.)

Work on high-priority items presented to the council will begin over the summer.

Community members can view the proposed work in the agenda packet at [https://lafayette.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view\\_id=&clip\\_id=6236&meta\\_id=152374](https://lafayette.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=&clip_id=6236&meta_id=152374)

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