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## New safety measures for roundabout in Lafayette moving forward

By Lou Fancher



Roundabout at Pleasant Hill Road and Olympic Blvd Photo Sora O'Doherty

Public concern about pedestrian and bicycle safety were at the forefront at the city council meeting March 25, as Engineering Services Manager Matt Luttrupp brought to the council new design modifications related to the reconfiguration of the roundabout at Pleasant Hill Road and Olympic Boulevard. Luttrupp outlined new enhancements added to the plan following considerable input from residents at public outreach open town halls and in comments submitted online or by post, along with a number of meetings held by the Transportation and Circulation Commission (TransCirc) and staff presentations and discussions by city council between 2021 and 2024.

As part of the city's 2024 Surface Seal Program, traffic engineering firm Kimley Horn had been hired during the project's earliest iteration (in 2021) to assist in addressing transportation standard-compliant design changes aimed at increasing safety. In consultation with

TransCirc, residents, bicycle, and pedestrian advocates, including Bike East Bay and the City Manager, focused primarily on modifications designed to reduce vehicular speeds. Suggestions included lane narrowing, a reduction in the number of vehicle lanes on southbound Pleasant Hill Road, a reduction in the length of the right-turn slip lane from westbound Olympic Boulevard, and the installation of rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFB) at one of the crosswalks, speed bumps, and other traffic-calming features.

These preliminary plans were reviewed by staff, slightly modified, and then shared with TransCirc in November 2022. Staff implemented temporary versions of the modifications using paint and delineators in early 2023, and additional changes were made at the council's direction in March 2023. Since that time, traffic speeds and delays have been monitored, and confirm that speeds on southbound Pleasant Hill Road have dropped from 46 to 35 mph, while traffic delays have not increased.

A virtual public meeting held in January this year showed residents evenly split on several modifications, such as lane drops and the amount of signage. Suggestions made included adding speed bumps, moving bike lanes, and adding an RRFB crosswalk to the eastern leg of the roundabout. At a TransCirc meeting Feb. 5, staff received additional enhancement recommendations that Luttrupp reviewed for the council at the meeting. The modifications included installing "sharks teeth" striping yield lines at entrances, "Yield to Pedestrian" signs at the free right turn onto the eastbound highway 24 crosswalk, a new RRFB on the east and west crossings on Olympic Boulevard, and alterations to green backed shared bike lanes at a number of roundabout locations.

In response to the most recent input from the public, staff explored the ramifications of installing a chicane instead of dropping a lane on southbound Pleasant Hill Road. A chicane configuration consists of single lanes leading into a roundabout for each direction of travel and includes no free right lanes. Due to space limitations at the Lafayette roundabout, this would allow for a single lane shift of 12 feet and lane reduction to 6 feet in width. This lane shift would be toward the center median, and could result in vehicles crossing over the median and entering oncoming traffic. He said staff believes based on the science that a chicane could create additional hazards.

The staff also examined matters related to speed bumps and speed tables (humps) and held multiple conversations on the topic with Fire Chief Bachman at Contra Costa Fire. Initially opposed to speed bumps in the project because it could impede fire trucks travel, Bachman came to support bumps if placed farther from the roundabout. Luttrupp said such placement would obscure signage and add "visual clutter" and therefore, moving back and adding more speed bumps was not recommended.

Lastly, a suggestion that informational and wayfinding signs be consolidated resulted in a re-design that provides clear information in a more compact way, according to Luttrupp. Also, a new RRFP sign will be added with council's approval to the east leg of the roundabout and a replacement for the RRFP west leg with upgrades has been ordered and will be installed at the same time.

Council member Susan Candell asked about additional changes and how they might impact timelines for the project. Luttrupp said the project was ready to go out for bids immediately upon approval and addressed the possibility of future amendments. He said, "Nothing that we're doing now precludes us from doing that. The only thing that we're doing now that would be somewhat costly to undue would be the lane drop." He

emphasized that no issues had arisen due to the lane drop; projecting that it would be unlikely to be changed to a chicane or reinstated as a second lane in future.

Sign consolidation and other adjustments, council member John McCormick said, were a notable and positive improvement to "de-cluttering" the roundabout.

Council accepted staff's recommendation to complete design plans, send out a call for project construction bids that include the current modifications, and voted unanimously to approve moving forward with the project.

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