



Item No. 18 Town of Atherton

CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT – REGULAR AGENDA

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
GEORGE RODERICKS, CITY MANAGER**

FROM: MICHAEL KASHIWAGI, COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR

DATE: DECEMBER 18, 2013

**SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF TRAFFIC CONTROL DEVICES AND LANE
CONTROL PROJECTS ALONG EL CAMINO REAL (SELBY LANE AND
ISABELLA)**

RECOMMENDATION

Provide direction regarding the potential placement of traffic control devices at Selby Lane, and Isabella on El Camino Real. Staff would also like direction regarding support for reducing the lanes on El Camino Real.

BACKGROUND

At the November 28, 2012 meeting, City Council received a presentation by Caltrans regarding the potential installation of a new traffic signal at the intersection of Selby Lane and El Camino Real. The purpose of the Caltrans presentation was to inform City Council that based upon the evaluation of quantitative data, Caltrans had determined that the intersection of Selby and El Camino Real met the requirements for a traffic signal.

Caltrans also informed City Council that since the Selby portion of this intersection is within the Town of Atherton, the Town would be responsible for 25% of the cost. Caltrans estimated the total cost of the traffic signal would be approximately \$800K. Therefore, the Town's share for the new traffic signal would be \$200K. Due to the financial implications and potential concerns from residents on Selby Lane and vicinity, Caltrans was seeking Council feedback regarding the further development of a traffic signal at this location.

Based upon information presented by Caltrans, City Council asked Caltrans to continue the development of the proposed traffic signal project and come back with funding information. In addition, City Council wanted to engage the Atherton Transportation Committee on the topic.

This item was also discussed at the November 2013 meeting of the Atherton Transportation Committee. The Committee expressed support for traffic safety improvements at Selby Lane/El Camino Real and asked Caltrans to provide traffic collision information for the intersection. Based upon traffic collision information, the Committee expressed the desire to provide input on the appropriate device for the intersection. The Transportation Committee also indicated that the Town may wish to survey local residents and have discussions with San Mateo County regarding the potential installation of a traffic signal.

DISCUSSION

El Camino Real is an existing State Highway (SR 82) which is a major north-south transportation corridor serving the San Francisco Bay Area Peninsula. Through the Town of Atherton, it is a six-lane arterial roadway with an average daily traffic volume of 31,000 vehicles per day.

According to accident information provided by Caltrans, during the 10 year period from 2002 – 2011, a total of 50 accidents were reported at the Selby Lane/El Camino Real intersection. All of the reported accidents were vehicle related. There were no reported pedestrian related accidents. Of the 50 accidents, the primary collision factor for approximately half of the accidents was due to failure to yield and improper turns. Approximately half of the accidents were cars being broadsided.

Selby Lane is one of five locations within the Town of Atherton which currently has a marked crosswalk at an uncontrolled intersection along El Camino Real. The other locations include Stockbridge Avenue, Almendral Avenue, Isabella/Walnut Avenue, and Alejandra Avenue. Due to pedestrian safety concerns, Caltrans has enhanced the visibility of crosswalks at these intersections through the use of high visibility pavement markings and increased signage.

Over the past year, staff has been in discussion with Caltrans to identify additional strategies/improvements which would improve pedestrian safety through the identification and use of traffic control devices. Through this process, Caltrans and Town staff agreed to the use of pedestrian hybrid beacons on El Camino Real.

Pedestrian hybrid beacons are new pedestrian crosswalk devices designed to stop vehicles through a series of flashing and steady yellow and red lights at crosswalks. Unlike in-pavement lights or rapid flashing yellow beacons which bring attention to drivers that pedestrians may be crossing, the pedestrian hybrid beacon provides a controlled crossing for pedestrians since vehicles are required to stop during the red phase of the lighting sequence.

Pedestrians activate the beacon by pushing a post mounted pedestrian button when ready to cross. The beacon is otherwise dark, therefore this device only impacts traffic flow when pedestrians are waiting to cross El Camino Real and the pedestrian button is activated. Although the hybrid beacon operates much like a traffic signal, the cost is approximately one quarter the

cost of a conventional traffic signal.

As a result of successful discussions with Caltrans, the construction of two pedestrian hybrid beacons is included as part of the Caltrans Crosswalk Enhancement Project programmed for San Mateo and Solano County. More specifically, pedestrian hybrid beacons at Isabella and Selby are included in the Caltrans project. All costs associated with the construction of the beacons will be paid by Caltrans. Construction is scheduled to begin in late 2016.

STAFF ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Caltrans has asked the Town for a formal decision regarding the placement of a traffic signal or pedestrian hybrid beacon at the intersection of Selby Lane and El Camino Real. As described in the Background section of this report, Caltrans supports the construction of a traffic signal. This option will require a financial contribution from the Town; the current estimate of the Town's share is \$200K. An alternative to the traffic signal would be the installation of a pedestrian hybrid beacon. Caltrans would install the beacon at their cost, as part of the San Mateo and Solano County crosswalk Enhancement Program.

Based upon the number, type and severity of accidents, staff recommends the installation of a traffic signal at Selby Lane and El Camino Real. The installation of a traffic signal would improve vehicular safety at the intersection and would provide a controlled crossing for pedestrians. Although the pedestrian hybrid beacon would also provide a controlled crossing for pedestrians, it would not be a solution for the vehicular collisions.

Although a traffic signal is the recommended solution to improve overall safety of the intersection, it may not be a popular solution for residents on Selby and in the vicinity due to the possibility of increased traffic on their streets. If it is the Council's desire to move ahead with the traffic signal, it is staff's recommendation that the Transportation Committee engage the surrounding neighborhood in an education outreach effort with respect to its installation. The education outreach effort would could consist of a neighborhood meeting educating the surrounding neighborhood of the traffic incident history, impacts of a signal and timing. Notice of tonight's meeting and potential discussion was provided to residents in the immediate Selby Lane neighborhood.

- 1) Given input from Caltrans regarding the installation of the traffic signal, does the Council wish to formally advise Caltrans that the Town supports the installation of a traffic signal at the Selby Lane and El Camino Real location?
- 2) If not, does the Council wish to formally advise Caltrans that the Town supports the installation of a hybrid beacon at that location and the Isabella location?

Staff also suggests that the Council provide an opinion on the reduction of lanes along El Camino Real and provide that input to Caltrans. Once the final traffic control devices are

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installed along El Camino Real, the Council may wish to consider elimination of any uncontrolled crosswalks along the stretch of road.