



CITY OF
**PALO
ALTO**

OFFICE OF THE CITY MANAGER

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November 17, 2023

Dina El-Tawansy
District Director
Caltrans Bay Area
111 Grand Ave
Oakland, CA 94612
dina.el-tawansy@dot.ca.gov

Subject: City of Palo Alto's Response to Proposed SR 82/ El Camino Real Bikeway Project

Dear Ms. El-Tawansy,

Thank you for your letter dated November 3, 2023, regarding the proposed addition of new bikeways along State Route (SR) 82/ El Camino Real. The City of Palo Alto (City) appreciates Caltrans' commitment to improving transportation safety and infrastructure.

We wish to address several aspects of the proposed project to ensure its alignment with the City's safety, data-sharing, and design considerations:

i. Request for Records: The City previously requested incident/collision data to substantiate the case for bike lanes, but this has not been provided. Access to this data and your analysis leading to bike lane proposal is crucial for our independent assessment and community engagement efforts. We kindly request that Caltrans share this documentation at the earliest opportunity.

ii. Intersection Safety and Bicycle Amenities: The City recognizes that intersections along El Camino Real are potential hotspots for vehicle and bicycle conflicts. As such, we are particularly interested in Caltrans' plans for incorporating bicycle design elements at these intersections. This includes, but is not limited to, dedicated bicycle signals, clearly marked bicycle lanes through and across intersections (where appropriate), and any other safety measures that address the unique challenges bicycles face at these critical points. Understanding the specifics of how these intersections will be equipped to safely handle the interaction between vehicular and bicycle traffic is essential. The City believes that addressing intersection safety is as important as the bikeways themselves in reducing incidents and enhancing overall safety for all road users. We look forward to reviewing Caltrans' recommendations and plans in this regard.

iii. Lane vs. Parking Reduction: The City previously requested a review of lane reduction instead of parking reduction, and the alternative design of parking-protected bike lanes. Parking-



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protected bike lanes have the potential to improve cycling safety beyond bike lanes alone, avoid impacts associated with on-street parking loss, and reduce traffic speeds. We request that Caltrans conduct an analysis on this and for Caltrans to explore all potential options that prioritize safety and community needs.

iv. Continuity of Bikeways: Your letter mentions the intention to extend "continuous bikeways on SR 82" as part of a connected network yet specifies two distinct segments in Palo Alto. The City requests clarification on how these segments will integrate to form a truly continuous bikeway along SR 82, ensuring no gaps in the bike path that might compromise cyclist safety and connectivity. Is the intention of Caltrans to extend bike lanes for the entirety of El Camino Real in Palo Alto?

v. Review of Draft Plans: The City requests the opportunity to review the current draft plans of the proposed bikeway project. This review is essential to fully understand and assess the impact on intersections, access for adjacent businesses and residences, and overall traffic flow within our jurisdiction. Access to these plans will enable the City to provide more informed feedback and suggestions, particularly concerning intersection safety.

vi. Bike Lane Design and Safety: Considering the speed limits on SR 82 which will place fast-moving vehicles in proximity to bicycles, we would like to inquire about the specifics of the bike lane design. Specifically, does Caltrans plan to incorporate buffered bike lanes to provide space for bicyclists to pass another bicyclist without encroaching into the adjacent motor vehicle travel lane? Clarity is needed on whether the project includes striping only or will also feature physical buffers is crucial for ensuring the safety and comfort of cyclists alongside vehicular traffic.

vii. Permanent Closure on California Avenue: California Avenue is undergoing a permanent closure, which allows for the removal of the left turn lane from El Camino Real onto Cal Ave. This change should be integrated into the project plan.

viii. Notification, Outreach, and Caltrans Assistance for Parking Removal: The City requests detailed information on Caltrans's policies and procedures for providing outreach and advanced notification regarding parking removal and bike lane installation. This is especially pertinent for un-housed individuals who may be residing in these parking spaces and for local businesses that could be significantly impacted. Specifically, we are interested in learning about any plans or resources that Caltrans may provide to support individuals displaced by this change. Will Caltrans offer alternatives such as safe parking options, shelters, or hotel rooms? How will these supports be communicated and facilitated? Additionally, considering the short timeline necessary for City Council to adopt a parking removal resolution, we would like to know the extent of support Caltrans can offer in this regard. Can Caltrans attend a meeting with the City of Palo Alto RV Dwellers group to discuss this item? Can Caltrans provide a public meeting for businesses and residents to provide feedback? Assistance from Caltrans in engaging with the community, including residents, businesses, and un-housed individuals, would be instrumental



in facilitating a thorough and inclusive communication process. This collaboration is essential to help the City Council make an informed decision about the installation of bike lanes on SR 82 and to ensure that the needs and concerns of all affected parties are adequately addressed.

ix. Adoption of Parking Removal Resolution and Bike Lane Installation: The City seeks guidance on the need for the City to adopt a resolution in order to remove parking on El Camino Real. It is unclear if Caltrans is attempting to comply with specific sections of the Vehicle Code and/or previous Council actions that need to be changed. The City will need to know what specific type of Council resolution is needed, and if it is in reference to a Vehicle Code, as that will determine the procedure that we will need to follow. The City also seeks guidance on potential outcomes if we choose not to adopt a resolution for parking removal. Specifically, we are interested in understanding Caltrans's approach in such a scenario.

Will Caltrans proceed with the installation of bike lanes along SR 82/ El Camino Real in the absence of a resolution from the City Council endorsing parking removal? This information is critical for our planning and decision-making processes, and we hope to navigate this aspect of the project with clear understanding and cooperation.

x. Lead-Time Required for Community Engagement and Decision-making: In view of the approaching Caltrans requested April deadline for a City Council resolution on this project, it is crucial that we receive timely responses to the questions raised in this letter. The City's process for considering and adopting such resolutions demands significant lead time, reflecting our dedication to thorough public engagement and procedural diligence. We intend to hold a public community meeting in January, where we anticipate Caltrans staff will present the plans. This meeting will be instrumental in informing our residents and gathering their feedback.

Subsequently, the project will need to undergo reviews by our Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee (PABAC) and the Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC). We envision Caltrans' involvement in these sessions as well, to provide comprehensive information and address any queries that may arise. Such participation will be crucial in facilitating our committees' understanding and evaluation of the project.

Finally, the proposal will be brought before the City Council for consideration. We would appreciate Caltrans' presence at these Council sessions, especially given the possibility that the nature of the Council's action might require more than one reading or session to reach a decision. Prompt and detailed responses from Caltrans, accompanied by active engagement in these critical stages of our review process, are essential. This approach will ensure that we can adhere to our planned timeline and foster an informed, transparent, and participatory decision-making process.

We are eager to continue collaborative discussions to address these points and to achieve a design that is in the best interest of our community. The City affirms its commitment to enhancing safety and mobility for all travelers and looks forward to a successful partnership on this project.



For further discussions, please feel free to contact the City's primary liaison for this project, Philip Kamhi, Chief Transportation Official at Philip.Kamhi@cityofpaloalto.org.

We appreciate your attention to these matters and await your prompt response. In order to adhere to your proposed timeline, **we must receive your responses to the points above by December 15, 2023**. Please advise as soon as possible if that timeline is infeasible, so that we may collaboratively develop an alternative schedule.

Sincerely,



Ed Shikada
City Manager

cc: Philip Kamhi, Chief Transportation Official
Brad Eggleston, Public Works Director
Meghan Horrigan-Taylor, Chief Communications Office
Melissa McDonough, Assistant to City Manager
Sylvia Star-Lack, Transportation Planning Manager



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