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St. Mary's Road on track for multimodal safety improvements

By Vera Kochan



Since 2007, the St. Mary's Road/Bollinger Canyon Road and St. Mary's Road/Rheem Boulevard intersections have been on the town's radar with respect to safety concerns and traffic flow issues. A dangerous S-curve, poor visibility, the difficulty of merging into traffic during rush hour, in addition to pedestrian/bicyclist safety have all combined to make this small stretch of road a commuter's nightmare.

Three separate studies have been conducted to determine possible improvements, the last one coming from an outside engineering consultant firm whose submitted possibilities included: an all-way stop control; a two-way stop control; a traditional traffic signal control; a roundabout traffic control or mini-roundabout traffic control; or leave everything as is.

Photo courtesy of Moraga Public Works Dept.

The Town conducted several public outreach meetings

that included questionnaire feedback, and residents were divided on their opinions with regards to roundabouts versus traffic signals/stop signs. The public did support improvements, especially if the project was primarily grant funded.

According to the Aug. 23 staff report by Public Works Director/Town Engineer Shawn Knapp, roundabouts are no longer part of the project.? While a traffic signal with safety lighting will be installed at the St. Mary's Road/Rheem Boulevard intersection, "at the Bollinger Canyon Road intersection, there are two options being considered for improvements, with both options requiring the widening of the intersection footprint," stated Knapp. "Option 1 includes roadway widening to allow for the addition of a southbound left turn pocket from St. Mary's onto Bollinger Canyon Road, and Option 2 builds upon Option 1 with a traffic signal. In both the north and south approaches to the Bollinger Canyon Road intersection, medians are proposed to channelize and slow traffic."

As a major roadway within town, the project qualifies for State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) grant funding and is the highest-ranked Contra Costa County project with respect to safety and congestion relief scoring criteria. This decision was based on the four applications received by the Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) totaling approximately \$40.3 million in STIP funding requests. Moraga had submitted a \$9.993 million STIP project funding application with a town match of \$1.295 million, and on July 20, the review committee approved to fully fund the grant request. The request funds are expected to become available starting Fiscal Year 2027-28, after the Sept. 20 CCTA Board meeting officially approves the recommendations.

During Knapp's Aug. 23 presentation to the Town Council, he received high praise from its members for his efforts to secure the STIP grant for Moraga, and with a unanimous vote, was authorized the \$25,000 for Initial Administrative Services Funding during FY 2023-24 and another \$25,000 for FY 2024-25 for the project [CIP Project No. 23-417].

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