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Council gets update on Corliss Drive public safety improvements

By Vera Kochan



Students currently walk in the street or step up onto landscaping on their way to and from school. Photo Courtesy Moraga Public Works Department

Corliss Drive public safety improvements with regards to Safe Routes to School (Los Perales Elementary) has been on the town's radar since 2004, thanks to local residents who are concerned about the hazards pedestrians and cyclists face on a daily basis - specifically, the dangers involving the northern part of Corliss Drive from Warfield Drive to where the street converts to Sullivan Drive stretching to Arroyo Drive.

In 2004, Moraga installed a raised concrete sidewalk on the eastern portion of Corliss Drive between Camino Ricardo and Wakefield Drive. In 2010, the same type of sidewalk was installed on a portion of Corliss Drive from Wakefield Drive north to Warfield Drive.

The current request for improvements by residents has already gone through two phases with the help of professional services from Traffic Engineering Lead Nate Levine of Sandis Engineers, Surveyors and Planners, contracted by the town in December 2022. To date, the project has involved site investigation, survey, and data gathering as well as public outreach to establish community-based public safety improvement options.

Several design options/alternatives were presented during a community Zoom meeting in September 2023. Option 1 - Quick Build Alternative with at pavement grade, delineated shoulder multi-use lane (paint & plastic). Option 2 - At pavement grade, delineated shoulder multi-use lane (with asphalt berm and plastic vertical delineators). Option 3A - Raised concrete sidewalk. Option 3B - Raised concrete sidewalk and buffered bike lane. Option 4 - Separated raised multi-use path. Option 5 - At pavement grade multi-use pathway (one-way vehicle traffic).

According to a Jan. 23 staff report to the town council by Public Works Director/Town Engineer Shawn Knapp, "Based on the community input provided, the most desired public safety measure is Option 3A (construction of a Raised Concrete Sidewalk along the outer radius of the Corliss Drive/Sullivan Drive curve). The next desired public safety measure is Option 2 (installation of an At Pavement Grade, Delineated Shoulder Multi-Use Lane with an Asphalt Berm and Plastic Vertical Delineators along the outer radius of the Corliss Drive/Sullivan Drive curve)." Option 3A carries with it a preliminary construction cost estimate of \$1.4 million and may be implemented within 1.5 to 3 years if funding is available.

The report went on to explain the reasoning behind the residents' choices. "Community members expressed a preference for raised concrete facilities over roadway-grade facilities to provide the desired safety and security for pedestrians and school children. Adjacent property owners expressed a desire to implement an aesthetically pleasing project that maintains on-street vehicle parking and private landscaping. These residents preferred the raised concrete sidewalk or at-grade multi-use lane with an asphalt berm."

During the council meeting, Moraga Police Chief Jon King spoke in favor of Option 3A, stating, "It's the one that would get the kids off the street. Also, while we're impinging upon the neighbors and taking a piece of the right-of-way, we are leaving them their on-street parking, which also actually provides another safety barrier between a moving vehicle and the sidewalk."

Town Manager Scott Mitnick discussed the various construction funding strategies such as the Transportation Development Act (TDA) Grant, gas tax, Measure J, Measure K, Development Impact Fees (LFFA), Reserves, General Fund, and other grants.

The town council decided to have staff explore interim options such as no parking signs, striping and FlexPosts before committing to a specific option later. They also requested that the affected residents be consulted with regards to the interim option.

Council members additionally directed staff to continue to pursue the raised concrete sidewalk within the town's right-of-way along the outer radius of the Corliss Drive/Sullivan Drive curve (Option 3A), as the preferred public safety improvement project; directed the town manager to develop a funding strategy to fund the project; and adopt a proposed resolution authorizing the town engineer to apply for a Fiscal Year 2024-25, TDA improvement grant to fund a portion of the project.

With a vote of 3 (yes) to 2 (no), Vice Mayor Steve Woehleke and Council Member Renata Sos explained that they don't wish to continue to burden staff on a project that may not succeed without additional infusion of the town's funds. However, all members were in agreement when it came to thanking staff for all of the time and work that has thus far been devoted to the project.

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