

City of Lafayette Staff Report

For: City Council

By: Moraga Road Transportation Advisory Committee (MORTRAC)
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Date Written: October 8, 2003

Meeting Date: October 14, 2003

Subject: Recommendations regarding circulation improvements within the Moraga Road corridor

Introduction

The City Council approved the Moraga Road planning process in 2001. The purpose of the process is to study and make recommendations regarding circulation and related quality of life issues within the Moraga Road corridor. The intent of the process is to address community concerns about the level of vehicular traffic and its impact on the quality of life, especially pedestrian and bicycle safety, neighborhood character and traffic congestion. The Council appointed the Moraga Road Transportation Advisory Committee (MORTRAC), a committee made up of volunteer representatives of the Council, Planning Commission, Circulation Commission, small and large businesses, school interests, senior interests and at-large citizens, to undertake this effort.

The process is divided into three phases. Phase 1 can be characterized as “The Problems”. It included identifying conditions and expectations, understanding the problems, developing an information base, gathering public input, and completing a problem statement. The Preliminary Problem Statement was approved by the City Council in November 2002. Phase 2 of the process can be characterized as “The Solutions”, and it includes developing, evaluating (efficacies and impacts) and recommending solutions to the identified problems. This is where the process is with this staff report. Phase 3 is the implementation of the approved recommendations.

This staff report briefly summarizes the findings of the Preliminary Problem Statement to establish the context for the solutions. The focus of the report is on the solution options to mitigate the significant problems of congestion and safety. The report concludes with recommendations for solutions.

Discussion

The Problems

MORTRAC's first task was to identify the circulation problems within the Moraga Road corridor. The Committee undertook this task in a variety of ways: reviewing past traffic and circulation documents; holding well-advertised public workshops; and doing public and school surveys.

Background Documents

All the relevant historical documents regarding traffic and circulation in the Moraga Road corridor were compiled for MORTRAC's review. These eleven documents date from approximately 1988 to 2000. They include traffic capacity studies, traffic studies and improvement programs, planning and feasibility studies and technical data. MORTRAC reviewed these documents with staff to determine what information is still relevant to the current conditions and which recommendations from the various studies have been implemented.

Public Input

The first workshop was held on October 25, 2001. Its purpose was to solicit input from the public regarding the perceptions about "traffic and circulation" in the Moraga Road corridor (with "traffic and circulation" meaning anything related to cars, bicycles, pedestrians, school buses, public transit, trucks and getting to and from destinations).

The workshop was held at Stanley Middle School. Approximately 80 people attended. The City also received 45 responses via a mailed survey, phone calls and e-mails. The 16 most common perceptions derived through this public outreach process are summarized in the following statements (not listed in any order of significance):

- There is too much truck traffic.
- It is unsafe to turn off and/or onto Moraga Road from side streets and private driveways due to speeding.
- It is not safe for pedestrians and bicyclists – particularly for children going to and from school – due to the lack of paths.
- There is a significant speeding problem on Moraga Road.
- Growth in Moraga has made traffic worse, and new growth will continue to increase congestion.
- The schools contribute a significant amount to the traffic congestion.
- There is a lack of traffic controls – signals, signs – and traffic signage.
- It is easier to shop in Moraga or Walnut Creek than downtown Lafayette because of traffic.
- There is not enough enforcement of speed limits.
- It is difficult to turn off and/or onto Moraga Road – particularly left turns across traffic – because of morning and afternoon traffic.
- New downtown improvements, like the four parking spaces on Moraga Road by Squirrels, have made traffic conditions worse.
- Road conditions are unsafe – poor lighting, limited visibility, rough pavement, poor drainage and rough shoulders.
- Speeding contributes to the many accidents.
- Traffic controls, such as signal synchronizing and traffic signage, do not alleviate congestion.
- Inadequate street signage results in missed turns and unsafe turns into side streets.
- The attitude of drivers – rudeness, impatience – makes Moraga Road unsafe and contributes to accidents.

The second workshop was held on February 27, 2002. Its purposes were: review the most common perceptions about traffic and circulation; discuss and vote on the most significant perceptions; and begin initial brainstorming on solutions. The workshop was held at the Community Center and approximately 30 people attended. The 16 most common perceptions listed above were posted around the meeting room. After reviewing these perceptions to ensure no others were omitted, the workshop participants identified which of the perceptions were the most significant. The following are the identified problems listed in order of priority:

- Problem #1: The schools contribute a significant amount to the traffic congestion.
- Problem #2: Growth in Moraga has made traffic worse, and new growth will continue to increase congestion.
- Problems #3 (tie):
 - It is unsafe to turn off and/or onto Moraga Road from side streets and private driveways due to speeding.
 - There is not enough enforcement of speed limits.
- Problems #4 (tie):
 - There is a significant speeding problem on Moraga Road.
 - New downtown improvements, like the four parking spaces on Moraga Road by Squirrels, have made traffic conditions worse.
- Problem #5: It is not safe for pedestrians and bicyclists – particularly for children going to and from school – due to the lack of paths.
- Problems #6 (tie):
 - Road conditions are unsafe – poor lighting, limited visibility, rough pavement, poor drainage and rough shoulders.
 - It is difficult to turn off and/or onto Moraga Road – particularly left turns across traffic – because of morning and afternoon traffic.
- Problem #7: The attitude of drivers – rudeness, impatience – makes Moraga Road unsafe and contributes to accidents.
- Problem #8: Speeding contributes to the many accidents.
- Problem #9: Traffic controls, such as signal synchronizing and traffic signage, do not alleviate congestion.
- Problem #10: It is easier to shop in Moraga or Walnut Creek than downtown Lafayette because of traffic.
- Problem #11: Inadequate street signage results in missed turns and unsafe turns into side streets.
- Problem #12: There is too much truck traffic.
- Problem #13: There is a lack of traffic controls – signals, signs – and traffic signage.

Lafayette School Survey

Early in the planning process, MORTRAC determined that, since schools do play a significant role in traffic and circulation in the Moraga Road corridor, parent surveys would be a useful tool to solicit public input. A survey was implemented at Lafayette School. There was a return of surveys by 44 percent of the school's families. Generally, the results showed that most respondents drove their children to and from school primarily for safety reasons but also for convenience.

Preliminary Problem Statement

Taking the results of the public workshops and the surveys and considering the information in background documents, the two major problems were identified: congestion and safety. The

Statement was prepared with descriptions of the three main issues that were perceived as contributing to congestion and the two issues contributing to the lack of safety:

- Congestion
 - Heavy traffic congestion in the mornings and afternoons make it difficult to turn off of and/or onto Moraga Road, particularly left turns across traffic. Traffic congestion and long backups also are the result of people making left turns off of Moraga Road.
 - Local schools contribute a significant amount to traffic congestion.
 - Growth in Moraga has made traffic conditions worse, and new growth will continue to increase congestion.
- Safety
 - There is significant speeding and a lack of enforcement of speed limits resulting in accidents and unsafe turning movements off of and/or onto Moraga Road from side streets and private driveways.
 - Moraga Road is unsafe because of a lack of pedestrian and bicycle facilities, particularly for children, and because of road conditions, such as poor lighting, limited visibility, rough surfaces and poor drainage.

The Preliminary Problem Statement was approved by the City Council in November 2002.

Solution Options

Once the problems were understood, MORTRAC brainstormed solutions. A range of options was considered – from simple maintenance programs to significant physical improvements. MORTRAC spent several meetings debating the costs and benefits of each option and reaching consensus on which options could be most effective in terms of mitigating congestion and safety problems. Committee representatives also met with Lafayette and Stanley School administrators to discuss ideas that could be employed at the schools to mitigate congestion issues.

To solicit public input on solution options, a third public workshop was held on June 18, 2003. Its primary purpose was to present a list of solution options for discussion. The workshop was held at the Community Center, and approximately 30 people attended. While the goal of the workshop was to discuss the solution options, most of the attendees remained focused on discussing problems within the Moraga Road corridor. All the problems that were identified at the workshop were raised previously.

After the workshop, MORTRAC developed two lists. The first was a list of solution options that were considered but for which no consensus could be achieved. The following table identifies these options as well as the reasons that no consensus was reached:

No.	Solution Option Considered	Reason for No Consensus Being Achieved
1	Park empty police cars along Moraga Road.	Past experience suggests significant vandalism problems.
2	Build turnouts to facilitate speed enforcement in the curvy section of Moraga Road.	The area topography makes this proposal environmentally unfriendly and cost prohibitive.
3	Install signs to advertise the number of speeding tickets issued as a way to warn motorists that speeding is rigorously enforced on Moraga Road.	The number of tickets may not be sufficiently high to affect motorist behavior. May result in sign litter.

No.	Solution Option Considered	Reason for No Consensus Being Achieved
4	Limit truck route hours on Moraga Road and/or rotate truck route designation with St. Mary's Road.	It is illegal to limit hours on a designated truck route. Rotation of designation will be confusing to users.
5	City of Lafayette to install signal(s) to meter traffic at city limit and/or to create traffic gaps for driveway ingress/egress.	Previous analysis by Fehr & Peers indicated that long distance to the downtown negates any potential congestion relief benefit. Moreover, the further away from the signal location a driveway is, the less benefit it will receive in terms of traffic gaps resulting from the signal. Beyond a distance equal to 1 or 2 city blocks, it is questionable whether driveway traffic would see any real change in available gaps created by a signal.
6	Signalize Silver Springs, Hamlin, or Old Jonas Hill intersection(s).	May result in increased potential for rear-end accidents. The proposed paths on both sides of the street mitigate some need for safe pedestrian crossing at these intersections.
7	Install signals actuated by driveway traffic.	Same as above.
8	Install a signal at the city limit to create gaps for driveway egress.	Same as #5.
9	Change First Street to two-way.	May result in incursion of through traffic into a residential neighborhood.
10	Use First Street as a by-pass of Moraga Road.	Same as #8.
11	(Re)Move 4 parking spaces by the Squirrel Restaurant.	Parking is not allowed during the worst traffic peaks (morning and evening commutes). There is a high cost to replace these spaces, and current alternatives with acceptable proximity to the businesses served are not available. Economic impacts on businesses resulting from loss of these spaces are deemed not acceptable. Location should be monitored for any accident trends, and this issue should be revisited as future parking replacement opportunities arise.
12	Restrict left turns onto Brook Street.	Restrictions already in place between 7 a.m. to 4 p.m. There is no community and political support to change this restriction.
13	Restrict left turns into driveways between Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Brook Street by using signage and/or building a center median.	Between Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Moraga Boulevard, impacts to business access resulting from turn restrictions are deemed not acceptable. The resulting diversion of traffic to other busy intersection may simply move the problems instead of solving them. South of Moraga Boulevard to Brook Street, the turn restrictions were analyzed and found to have negligible benefit in terms of reducing traffic congestion. The alternative of providing a left-turn lane in this section was also analyzed and found to have negligible benefit.
14	Restrict left turns to/from Wilkinson Lane and La Fiesta Square driveways.	Same as #13.
15	Change the flow direction of certain driveways to minimize congestion impacts on Moraga Road.	Same as #13.
16	Install stop signs to slow traffic.	Stop signs typically should not be used as traffic calming. Unwarranted stop signs may lead to more unsafe behavior.
17	Use speed bumps on Moraga Road.	This would have major safety and emergency response implications.

No.	Solution Option Considered	Reason for No Consensus Being Achieved
18	Implement traffic calming methods on Moraga Road.	The constraints of Moraga Road limit the type of traffic calming device that would be appropriate.
19	Restrict parking between Brook Street and O'Connor Drive.	Parking is prohibited today.
20	Create more parking on Plaza Way adjacent to the plaza.	It is questionable whether standard parking spaces could be achieved. May make the plaza "feel" significantly smaller. This idea was considered and discarded during the plaza design public review process.
21	Enhance center street divider to prevent illegal southbound left turns into Plaza Way.	The low number of occurrences does not appear to justify the proposal.
22	Build a toll lane on Moraga Road.	There are major legal, financial, environmental, and engineering challenges.
23	Stop the Palos Colorados development.	Through litigation, the City has reached a settlement agreement with the developer and Town of Moraga.
24	Realign Brook Street with School Street.	May require costly relocation of a private building. May result in incursion of through traffic into a residential neighborhood.
25	Consolidate pedestrian crossings at Brook Street and School Street to one location at School Street.	The inconvenience and safety implications are not acceptable.
26	Operate two signal controllers at Brook Street and School Street.	Preliminary study did not show any significant benefit.
27	Install a street divider between the southbound left-turn and through lanes on Moraga Road at St. Mary's Road to prevent motorists from using the left-turn lane as a passing lane.	The low number of occurrences does not appear to justify the proposal. Access to the property at the southeast corner of the intersection may be impeded.
28	Revise signal timing at Moraga Boulevard to reduce wait time for pedestrian crossing.	There is no consensus that the current wait time is sufficiently long to justify a change and the potential impacts of increased congestion on Moraga Road.
29	Explore changes in signal phasing to de-couple the pedestrian crossing movements at Brook Street and School Street in order to expedite side-street traffic movements, which affect mainline congestion.	No option is viable without changing the current pedestrian crosswalk configuration and signal phasing. Initial analyses also indicate that northbound queuing at Mt. Diablo Boulevard and Moraga Road would also have to be resolved in conjunction with any improvement at Brook-School Streets.

The second list included those solution options on which the MORTRAC members reached consensus and recommended for implementation. The table on the following page summarizes these options:

No.	Recommendations	Concepts	Implementation Next Steps(s)	Order-of-Magnitude Cost
A	Request the Lafayette School District to consider program(s) to modify locations, habits, and patterns of school drop-off/pick-up activities for both Stanley and Lafayette School.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Deploy a facilitator to keep traffic moving through and minimize blockages of the driveway opening at Moraga Road; ii. Eliminate double parking in the drop-off/pick-up zone; iii. Restore signage to prohibit left turns from Lafayette School driveway at Moraga Road; iv. Create new and/or satellite drop-off/pick-up locations, such as adjacent to the Stanley School sports field off St. Mary's Road, or the Library; v. Create and encourage parents to use appropriate locations of short-term parking; vi. Implement a "walking school bus" with designated stops along routes used by parents going to/from schools; vii. Stagger school bell times and/or buses; viii. Educate parents and students about best traffic practices, DOs and DONTs; ix. Provide incentives for school children to ride bikes or walk to/from school, and implement disincentives for parents driving school children to/from school (Consider providing incentives as an independent transportation demand management program); x. Develop a civics curriculum with ties to Moraga Road traffic issues; xi. Investigate the operation of a school bus line on Moraga Road. 	<p>The City Council appoints a subcommittee of itself to begin discussions with the Lafayette School District regarding feasibility, schedule, and funding.</p> <p>Funding for capital improvements may be eligible for Measure C reimbursements under certain conditions.</p>	<p>Unknown costs for transportation management measures.</p> <p>Capital improvements could cost from \$250 for a sign to hundreds of thousands of dollars to create a satellite parking area.</p>

No.	Recommendations	Concepts	Implementation Next Steps(s)	Order-of-Magnitude Cost
B	Facilitate and increase enforcement of speed laws.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Install electronic speed display device at strategic location(s) as an on-going advisory for motorists. Explore and consider camera enforcement in conjunction with the display. ii. Consider increasing on-going enforcement by augmenting enforcement resources. 	The City Council authorizes the purchase and installation of the device(s) and/or augmenting of enforcement resources for Moraga Road. The Council authorizes staff to research and report on the feasibility and costs of photo camera enforcement.	\$25,000 per display device; unknown costs for Photo cameras and additional enforcement resources.
C	Construct pedestrian paths along both sides of Moraga Road.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Improve (such as widening and/or resurfacing) the existing path on the east side between Rosedale Avenue to Old Jonas Hill Road; ii. Construct a new path on the west side between St. Mary's Road and Tanglewood Drive; iii. Project would include associated installations of drainage, retaining wall, pavement resurfacing; iv. Incorporate a flashing warning beacon for northbound Moraga Road traffic south of Old Jonas Hill to advise motorists (and pedestrian crossings) of congestion ahead; v. Incorporate measures to Improve safety of pedestrian crossing across westbound free right turn at St. Mary's Road, such as: "squaring" the right turn at the intersection, or installing warning lights; vi. Incorporate improvement of pedestrian crossing at Herman Drive; vii. Incorporate intersection improvements outlined in Recommendation F for the Brook-School intersection. 	The 2005 Capital Improvement Program tentatively includes a project to make improvements along the Moraga Road corridor. The City Council authorizes staff to include the MORTRAC recommendations into this project and seek CCTA approval of the project scope and Measure C funding allocation.	\$1,000,000

No.	Recommendations	Concepts	Implementation Next Steps(s)	Order-of-Magnitude Cost
D	Improve bicycle and pedestrian safety on First Street.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Modify curb ramps on First Street pathways to be in line and of the same width as the path; ii. Extend the pathway to be along the north side of School Street from First Street to Avalon Court. Study opportunities to replace on-street parking to provide space for pedestrian / bicycle facilities between Moraga Road and the Lafayette / Moraga Trail. 	The City Council authorizes staff to include this recommendation into the Moraga Road Corridor Project identified in Recommendation C. It is questionable whether this work would qualify for Measure C funding.	\$20,000 to modify curb ramps; \$100,000 to widen sidewalk on School Street.
E	Negotiate with the Moraga to use the Palos Colorados traffic signal to meter traffic on Moraga Road.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. This development is conditioned to install a traffic signal, which could be used to meter traffic. 	When the project is completed, the City negotiates with Moraga to agree to use it as a traffic-metering device.	No capital cost to the City.
F	Implement intersection improvements at Moraga Road/Brook-School Streets.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Install pedestrian-actuated electronic signs to more efficiently regulate the eastbound and southbound right-turn-on-red restrictions. ii. Explore sidewalk widening along the back of walk on the east side of Moraga Road to improve access to the Brook Street crosswalk across Moraga Road for bicycles coming from School Street and the east. 	<p>The City Council authorizes staff to include this recommendation into the Moraga Road Corridor Project identified in Recommendation C. This work would qualify for Measure C funding.</p> <p>Widening along the back of walk on the east side requires right-of-way from the school property.</p>	\$10,000 for two electronic signs. \$50,000 for intersection sidewalk improvements.
G	Implement an on-going vegetation management program to improve walkway clearance and sight distances at side streets, driveways, sidewalks and around curves on Moraga Road.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. City maintenance division would be required to cause vegetation to be pruned along the corridor on an on-going basis. 	The City Council includes this recommendation as a priority for the Public Works Division's budget.	Unknown on-going operational costs.

Next Steps

Once a list of recommendations has been approved by the City Council, implementation will occur. The order of implementation will depend on a number of factors, including: availability of funds; availability of staff; environmental review requirements for individual projects; and complexity of planning and engineering processes. MORTRAC will develop an implementation plan based on these factors. The Plan will include opportunities for Commission and public input as more details are developed for each recommendation. MORTRAC recognizes that as conditions change, the recommendations presented in this staff report may be revisited in the future.

Recommendation**Attachment**