

# Lafayette eyes Mt. Diablo street improvements, roundabout

[By Jennifer Modenessi Contra Costa Times](#)

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LAFAYETTE -- An effort to beautify a stretch of Mt. Diablo Boulevard between First Street and Brown Avenue and make it a safer place to walk, bike and drive is underway -- and it could involve a roundabout.

Circulation Commission members met this week to discuss several possible improvements to one of the city's main streets, including new medians, upgraded crosswalks and a circular traffic feature with a center that could be used for public art or attractive landscaping. Their recommendations will be passed on to the city council, which will discuss the options at a hearing Aug. 13.

The roundabout would be located near Golden Gate Way where it intersects Mt. Diablo Boulevard. between Blackwood Lane and Brown Avenue.

The suggestions build on the Downtown Street Improvements Master Plan, adopted in the late 1980s, which established design guidelines for streetscape improvements along Mt. Diablo Boulevard and surrounding streets.

As part of that plan, the city has been working on a pedestrian and bikescape improvement project on a section of Mt. Diablo Boulevard extending up Happy Valley Road to the BART station since last winter, Transportation Planner Leah Greenblatt said. Those improvements include a new sidewalk and a pedestrian crosswalk at the south BART parking lot.

Now that the project is nearly complete, the city is turning its attention to the eastern part of the area.

A \$540,000 grant of Measure J funds from the Contra Costa Transportation Authority for a project on Mt. Diablo Boulevard between First Street and Brown Ave is also providing impetus.

The proposal includes a center median on Mt. Diablo Boulevard between First Street and Brown Avenue that would occupy the present two-way left-turn lane, as well as an additional turn pocket near the Corporate Terrace driveway east of First Street.

The roundabout along Mt. Diablo Boulevard near Golden Gate Way would have a 20-foot wide circulation lane and additional room for large vehicles. Lanes would narrow from two to one in each direction approaching the circle, in addition to other modifications to the area surrounding the roundabout.

Staff is estimating the cost of median improvement will be \$540,000, which would be funded fully by the grant. The roundabout and other options at Golden Gate Way could cost up to an additional \$200,000.

Greenblatt said some residents asked whether a traffic signal might be more cost-effective than the roundabout. She also said several merchants did not support medians because of the possible impact to vehicles trying to reach their businesses. Commissioners were also not as supportive of medians as they were the roundabout.

Engineering services manager Tony Coe said if the council decides on the scope of the work and votes to proceed, engineering and design will begin and the project could break ground in late 2013.