

Connecting Lafayette: Downtown Pathways and Schools Frequently Asked Questions



Date: January 22, 2024

Do you have questions about the Connecting Lafayette: Downtown Pathways and Schools Project? See below for a list of frequently asked questions. All responses are subject to change as conceptual designs for the project elements continue to be modified.

Visit the project website for regular updates and information:

<https://www.lovelafayette.org/connectinglafayette>

Project Purpose & Overview

1. What is the purpose of the project?

The Connecting Lafayette project aims to enhance safety and comfort for people walking and bicycling to Lafayette Elementary School, Stanley Middle School, the Lafayette-Moraga Trail and downtown Lafayette. The project will construct a dedicated multi-use path connecting Lafayette’s downtown, Lafayette Elementary, Stanley Middle School, and the Lafayette-Moraga Pathway, as well as a sidewalk extension on St. Mary’s Road between Topper Lane and Birdhaven Court.

The project also intends to ease neighborhood school-related congestion by introducing an alternative drop-off area for Stanley Middle School on St. Mary’s Road and a sidewalk extension between Acampo Drive and Topper Lane along the north side of St. Mary’s Road.

2. How were these projects selected?

Over the last decade, the City conducted four separate and independent studies on traffic safety, access, “Safe Routes to School,” and circulation in Lafayette, with a specific focus on the neighborhood around Stanley Middle School and Lafayette Elementary School.

Multi-use pathways along School Street and Topper Lane were recommended in a 2022 Rapid Implementation School Safety Plan for Stanley Middle School and Lafayette Elementary School, a 2020 Complete Street Safety Assessment by Berkeley SafeTREC, and a 2013 Safe Routes to School Summary Report for Lafayette Elementary School and Springhill Elementary School. Additionally, the multi-use pathways and Stanley Middle School drop-off zone were proposed in the 2018 Downtown Congestion Relief Plan.

The recommendations from the two Safe Routes to Schools studies and the Downtown Congestion Reduction Plan were the result of multiple public engagement processes, and that included input from community members, the Transportation & Circulation Commission, and City Council.

The four studies can be downloaded from the project webpage:

www.lovelafayette.org/connectinglafayette

3. Who is funding this project, and how much will it cost?

The City secured two federal grants for the project, which will fund the design and construction of the multi-use pathways along School Street, Topper Lane, and the sidewalk along St. Mary's Road between Topper Lane and Birdhaven Court. The City received \$3,100,000 from the Community Project Funding/Congressionally Directed Spending and \$750,000 from the One Bay Area Grant Program.

Local funds will pay for the design of the new, formal drop-off zone along St. Mary's Road and the sidewalk extension between Acampo Drive and Topper Lane. A detailed estimate of construction costs will be prepared during the design phase. However, construction funds for the work along St. Mary's Road have not been identified at this time.

The Lafayette City Council has provided support for the project.

4. How were the initial pathway design decisions made?

Initial designs for the pathways along School Street and Topper Lane tried to achieve the highest degree of safety and comfort for pedestrians and bicyclists, particularly given the proximity of the project to two schools, the Lafayette-Moraga Trail, and downtown Lafayette. Concept designs for all project elements are currently being revised based on input provided during the current public engagement process.

5. How many people are expected to use the new pathways?

Future demand of the pathways is unknown. However, as the network of safe pedestrian and bicycle networks across Lafayette continue to expand, we would expect to see an increase in use on School Street, Topper Lane and St. Mary's Road, consistent with our experience elsewhere in Lafayette. There is also a large population of current students that walk and ride their bicycles to Lafayette Elementary School and Stanley Middle School, and we would expect that these students will use the new pathways in greater numbers as the streets surrounding this school are made more safe through a connected network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

6. What is the timeline for completing the design and construction?

The design process is anticipated to conclude by the end of 2024. Construction is tentatively expected in the summer of 2025. These dates are subject to change. Updates to the schedule will be provided on the project website.

7. How can residents and business owners provide input on the designs and stay informed about the project?

There are several ways to get involved and share input:

1. Attend a community meeting. A second community meeting for the project will be held in spring

2024. Future dates will be listed on the project website ([link](#)).

2. Attend a spring 2024 Transportation & Circulation Commission Meeting and/or City Council Meeting when this project is on the agenda. Dates for these meetings will be added to the project website when scheduled.

3. Contact Patrick Golier, Transportation & Circulation Program Manager at: PGolier@ci.lafayette.ca.us.

4. Sign up for project updates via the City's E-Notification system: <https://www.lovelafayette.org/city-hall/e-notification>

General Design

8. Will bicycles and pedestrians share the multi-use pathways?

Yes, the pathways will be multi-modal, meaning that they will be designed for both pedestrians and bicyclists.

9. Can the multi-use pathway be less than 10' wide?

A multi-use pathway must be at least 10 feet wide, however, per Lafayette's Municipal Code, "any person may ride a bicycle on a walkway unless such walkway is posted prohibiting such use. In all cases a pedestrian shall have the right of way upon a walkway."

10. Are the City's designs based on a survey of private property boundaries and will the project require the use of private property?

Yes, a land survey was completed in summer 2023 and the private property lines are shown on the plans. The project will be constructed entirely within the public right-of-way.

11. Has the City considered reducing the speed limits or adding traffic calming?

School Street and Topper Lane already include traffic calming elements and it is unlikely that any additional traffic calming will be constructed as part of this project.

Cities in California must follow strict state guidelines regarding how speed limits are set; speed limits cannot be set arbitrarily. With that said, the City is currently engaged in a study to consider reduced school speed limits in school zones and portions of these streets may qualify for this speed limit reduction given the proximity to Stanley Middle School.

12. Will the multi-use pathway impact emergency services?

No changes are expected on the existing roadway lanes and as such no impact on emergency services is foreseen.

13. How will the pathway be cleaned?

Cleaning of the pathway will be the responsibility of the City Public Works Department.

14. Will a landscape buffer be placed between the path and the street? If so, where?

At this time we plan on installing a landscaped buffer between the pathway and the street on School Street. The final configuration on Topper Lane has yet to be resolved but it could include a landscaped buffer.

15. Who will maintain the landscaping?

Landscape maintenance will be the responsibility of the City Public Works Department.

16. How many trees might be removed, and how can tree removal be minimized?

On School Street the final configuration of the pathway between First Street and Moraga Road is unknown and therefore the number of trees that may be removed is unknown at this time. However, the trees in the narrow planter strip on the north side of the street between First Street and Moraga Road may be removed. The project is not expected to result in any tree removal on School Street between First Street and the entrance to the Lafayette-Moraga Trail.

Because the final configuration of the alignment on Topper Lane has not been resolved, the full extent of tree removal is unknown on that street.

On Saint Mary's Road tree removal is dependent on the final design of the new drop-off/pick-up zone but trees along the school frontage between the school access driveway and Acampo Street are likely to be removed. The expanded sidewalk along the north side of St. Mary's Road between Acampo Street and Topper Lane is not expected to result in the removal of trees.

17. Will the City replant any trees and vegetation that are removed for the multi-use pathway?

Depending on the space available trees and shrubs can be planted as part of the project.

18. Will Moraga Road get bike lanes as part of this project or in the future?

The geographic scope of the Connecting Lafayette project does not include Moraga Road so any changes to Moraga Road would not take place as part of the Connecting Lafayette project.

However, the City plans to repave Moraga Road in the summer of 2026 and any changes to the existing configuration of Moraga Road may be considered through a design process associated with the repaving effort. The creation of bike lanes on this street would require reconfiguration of the lanes and or parking on the street. This will be discussed at public meetings in advance of the repaving project.

School Street Design

19. Will there be continuous sidewalks on School Street?

Yes, the intent of the project is to provide a continuous pathway along the north side of School Street, from Moraga Road to the Lafayette-Moraga Trail.

20. How many parking spaces might be removed on School Street?

The number of parking spaces to be removed along School Street has not been determined yet and will be based on the project design of School Street between First Street and Moraga Road. No parking loss is expected on the south side of School Street.

Topper Lane Design

21. What is the minimum width for a path on Topper Lane?

The minimum width per City standards is 6 feet.

22. Can you put the Topper Lane multi-use path on the west side of the street?

Yes, but this would require either a shifting of the roadway to the east or significant impacts to the west side property frontages.

23. Will any path options on Topper Lane require the use of private property?

No, the project will be constructed entirely within the public right-of-way.

24. How many parking spaces might be removed on Topper Lane?

Currently there are few, if any, legal on-street parking spaces on Topper Lane. Currently the design options being pursued will not impact the frontage of the properties on the west side including informal parking spaces.

25. Will Topper Lane become a one-way street? If so, how will traffic circulation be impacted?

It is possible to convert Topper Lane to a one-way circulation scheme in order to minimize impacts associated with the pathway. However, this option does not seem to be supported by residents of Topper Lane and so currently is not being considered.

26. Has the City conducted traffic studies?

The City has collected data on each of the three streets impacted by the project, including vehicle counts and speeds, and has collected a full seven days of traffic footage on Topper Lane from a video camera installed on a power pole. However, because the project is not expected to impact vehicle circulation in any way, traffic studies will not be conducted as part of this project. The collected data does not change the need for the project as described in the four studies, and will not impact the design decisions associated with the project.

27. Has the City considered Avalon Avenue for the pathway instead of Topper Lane?

No and this would not afford the residents of Birdhaven with a much desired connection to the Lamorinda trail or schools. This project does not preclude a project to expand the pedestrian and/or bicycle network on Avalon Avenue or any other street in the future.

28. Would it be possible for the City to give the grant money back and do nothing on Topper Lane?

The City Council would have to give that direction. Residents can make public comments at future Council meetings if this is how you would like the City to proceed.

29. Can the City reapply for new grant funding and move the path off of Topper Lane?

Yes. However, grant funding is very competitive and we may not get funding for a future project.

30. Can the City buy property or get an easement at the end of Birdhaven Court to create a connection to the Lafayette/Moraga Regional Trail?

If the property owners were willing to sell the property or sell an easement the City Council could direct staff to pursue this option. However, in the past the residents have made it very clear that they were not interested in this.

St. Mary's Road Drop-Off Design

31. Will there be a sidewalk or multi-use path on St. Mary's Road connecting to the drop-off?

Yes, the project includes the design of a continuous sidewalk along the north side of St. Mary's Road between Acampo Drive and Topper Lane, and design and construction of a sidewalk along the north side of St. Mary's Road between Topper Lane and Birdhaven Court. This would result in continuous pedestrian access along St. Mary's Road between Moraga Road and Birdhaven Court.

32. Will the School District allow a pathway through school property from the St. Mary's Road drop-off?

Design and construction of a pathway on school property between the new drop-off / pick-up area along St. Mary's Road is not included as part of this project. This element would need to be a School District project.