

**LISTED BELOW ARE THE QUESTIONS (Q) SUBMITTED BY THE RESIDENTS
AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS FOR THE
SANTA CRUZ AVENUE AND ALAMEDA DE LAS PULGAS COMPLETE STREET
PROJECT**

**COUNTY PROJECT NO. RW934
PROJECT FILE NO. E5043**

**COUNTY OF SAN MATEO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS HAS PROVIDED
RESPONSES (R) TO THE QUESTIONS BELOW**

Location: Median and Sidewalk at Palo Alto Way on Santa Cruz Avenue

- Q1. The median doesn't provide enough roadway width to safely accommodate 2 NB traffic lanes a 5' bike lane, 8' parking, and an offset (aka shy distance) for the median and bulb outs. At one point, it doesn't provide the ability to comply with the 3' cycling law. The use of the median limits this NB roadway width to only 33' 7" when 36' is required.
- R1. The median on Santa Cruz Avenue near Palo Alto Way in the southbound direction is designed to accommodate parking, a vehicle lanes, and bike lane in the northbound direction in the configuration shown on the plans. Once construction and pavement striping around the median is completed, two 10' wide travel lanes, a 5.5' wide bike lane with buffer, and 7.5' wide parking will be accommodated. Bike lanes were designed based on the Caltrans Highway Design Manual. The three (3)-foot cycling law refers to the "Three Feet for Safety Act" which is a law requiring drivers to give cyclists at least three feet of clearance when passing. It is not a design standard. Striping is subject to change based on field conditions, but the County will adhere to the plan as much as possible.
- Q2. The median is mostly a hidden obstacle in the roadway, where only lead NB vehicles can see it, while it is primarily hidden from vehicles following.
- R2. The Santa Cruz Avenue and Alameda de las Pulgas Improvement Project (Project) was under construction at the time of this comment, and the final striping at and around the median, as shown on the plans, had not been installed.

- Q3. The SB Santa Cruz roadway width is also compromised by the median, where the SB direction needs to accommodate 1 traffic lane, a left turn lane, a bike lane, and an additional offset (aka shy distance) for the median and the curb gutter. That is a total of about 28', but the roadway provided by the median appears to have less than 25'.
- R3. Bike lanes were designed based on the Caltrans Highway Design Manual. The three (3)-foot cycling law refers to the "Three Feet for Safety Act" which is a law requiring drivers to give cyclists at least three feet of clearance when passing. It is not a design standard. Once construction and striping around the median is completed, one 10' wide turn pocket, one 10' wide travel lane, and a 5' wide bike lane will be accommodated in the southbound direction.
- Q4. The 2' wide median does NOT take 2'. It really is taking up a width of 6' to 7', due to required offsets to keep traffic lanes safely away. Using FHWA/MUTCD information, this requires approximate 4' to 5' additional width. That is wasted real estate that should instead be used for cyclist safety (wider bike lane or, as recommended, a 1' to 2' traffic safety stripe to separate the traffic lane and bike lane).
- R4. The Project was under construction at the time of this comment, and the final striping and signage on and around the median, as shown on the plans, had not been installed. Traffic will be shifted closer to the median as part of final striping.
- Q5. The median is a significant increase in risk and substantially diminishes the safety of cyclists. The bike lane is 'squished' to less than 5' by the bulb out and the two adjacent traffic lanes. This is a chaotic area with motorists jockeying to get to the correct NB lane. Motorists are distracted. Pedestrians and side traffic cause further distractions. Add the impenetrable hard median and it creates the chaos that results in accidents and serious injury.
- R5. The Project was under construction at the time of this comment, and the final striping and signage at this location, as shown on the plans, had not been installed. Traffic will be shifted closer to the median as part of final striping and the bike lane will be 5.5' wide. Striping is subject to change based on field conditions, but the County will adhere to the plan as much as possible.
- Q6. The median is excessively long and unnecessarily blocks safe egress from the adjacent resident on NB Santa Cruz. Residential access and safety should have been prioritized.
- R6. Median locations were determined during the Project's development in the planning phase and represent the alternative selected by the community during this process.

Where left turn movements are restricted by medians, residents are able to access their driveways via right turns in and out.

Q7. DPW seems to have overlooked the challenges posed by this median for SB school buses that utilize this intersection to turn onto Palo Alto Way, as well as the numerous large semi-trucks that service the neighborhood. It appears that such long vehicles will require blocking part of the SB traffic lane to make the left turn in order to avoid hitting the median.

R7. The intersection geometrics were designed so that a bus is able to make the left turn onto Palo Alto Way from the left turn lane on Santa Cruz Avenue.

Q8. The west side crosswalk 'ramp' for disabled persons has been constructed without full consideration of the disabled. The crosswalk signal button to press to cross the street is difficult to impossible to press because it was placed on the opposite side of the signal pole - furthest away from person.

R8. This construction issue related to the pedestrian push button location has been corrected and the final work at this location had not been completed at the time of the comment.

Q9. The South-East corner curb is a potential tire-wheel damage hazard. Cars turning right on to Palo Alto Way often are hitting this sharp corner. It seems better that such a sharp corner in that situation could be rounded or ramped in such a way as to not cause expensive damage. (Note, this same issue occurs on a few other intersections on Alameda)

R9. If a vehicle strikes this curb, they have veered off the road and into the curb ramp pedestrian landing area. The design encourages drivers to not infringe on pedestrian areas to improve safety for pedestrians. The County will continue to monitor driver behavior and determine if any adjustments are needed.

Q10. The sidewalk does not allow easy access for disabled.

R10. Sidewalks were designed with a focus on providing improved safety and accessibility for all users and in accordance with current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements.

Q11. The median requires much more width than just the 2' of the median and thus doesn't allow the roadway width needed to safely provide for the traffic needs in either direction nor does it allow the project to meet the safety requirements and goals.

R11. As discussed in R4, final striping addresses this comment. Please refer to R4.

Q12. The median is a significant obstacle that greatly reduces safety to motorists and cyclists and greatly increases the risk of accident, serious injury, and property damage.

R12. Medians are a standard roadway design feature used to slow traffic and improve roadway safety.

Q13. The median seems to be at the expense of cyclist safety, taking away the roadway width that could have provided a much safer bike lane width.

R13. As discussed earlier, final striping addresses this comment. There will be no extra or unused roadway width left after final striping.

Q14. The median is not a safety refuge for pedestrians. It has virtually no real world safety benefits. In fact, it significantly reduces safety and introduces high risk for accidents and injury.

R14. Medians are a standard roadway design feature used to slow traffic and improve roadway safety.

Q15. The design was not thought out and based on early designs by Kimley Horn done in 2017 with no input from the community and apparently very limited knowledge of the real life use of the roadway here.

R15. The design reflects the alternative selected by the community during public engagement held during the planning phase of the Project and additional outreach during the design phase.

- Q16. I'd like to see a dedicated right turn lane onto Palo Alto Lane allowing drivers to slow down before turning, without impacting drivers that are continuing north.
- R16. The bike lane is striped in a manner that allows right turning vehicles to merge in and use the bike lane and buffer area to make their right turn on to Palo Alto Way. A right turn only lane at this intersection was not part of the community selected alternative that moved forward into final design.
- Q17. (Regarding Palo Alto Way) Now, both going out and coming in are more difficult. Going out, one now has to swing wider into Santa Cruz to avoid the bulb that is ostensibly for pedestrians.
- R17. The intersection geometrics were designed such that a vehicle is able to make the turning movement. A centerline stripe will be added to Palo Alto Way to guide drivers into proper lane position and support appropriate turning movements. This addition is not reflected on the current set of striping plans, but will be added when the striping contractor is on site.
- Q18. For Palo Alto Way median, I would add that I see no advantage to either drivers or pedestrians to having it. Just today, I almost got rear-ended trying to turn left from Santa Cruz into PAW because there wasn't any middle turn lane for me to use.
- R18. The Project was under construction at the time of this comment, and the final striping and signage at this location, as shown on the plans, had not been installed. A dedicated left turn lane will be included as shown on the striping plans and in the final striping.
- Q19. I don't see the utility of the median at Palo Alto Way and, for the larger median at Liberty/Prospect, it should either be narrowed or moved slightly towards "the hills" side of the Alameda; that side of Alameda has ample space. (Note that the bulb-out at Liberty/Prospect is further narrowed due to a fairly large drainage grate -- most riders will avoid these grates for a number of seemingly trivial reasons -- rougher ride, potential of slippery metal, and/or vertical slats of the grate cutting into light-weight tires).
- R19. These medians serve multiple purposes including traffic calming, limiting conflicting turning movements into and out of driveways and side streets, and thereby improving overall pedestrian and cyclist safety. Median locations were determined during the Project's development in the planning phase and represent the alternative selected by the community during this process.

Q20. I was driving towards Santa Cruz ave from Palo Alto ave around 8:30am on a weekday, and I wanted to make a left. I was in my Tesla Model 3, and at the same time, an SUV wanted to turn right on Palo Alto ave. They were hesitant and didn't want to turn and ended up blocking the entire traffic behind them. I gestured to them that they may have enough room to pass and I moved my car slightly out of the way so they could, but our cars were a mere inch or two from brushing against one another. Round out the curb. It's a sharp 90-degree right now, and if we can round it out significantly, that may help 2 cars navigating.

R20. If a vehicle strikes this curb, they have veered off the road and into the curb ramp pedestrian landing area. The design encourages drivers to not infringe on pedestrian areas to improve conditions for pedestrians. A centerline stripe will be added to Palo Alto Way to guide drivers into proper lane position and support safe turning movements. The County will continue to monitor driver behavior and determine if any adjustments are needed.

Q21. I was on Santa Cruz ave trying to make a left on Palo Alto ave around 3:30pm also on a weekday. The new median on Santa Cruz is too broad and I have to make a much wider turn than necessary. And this is me driving my sedan. How are pickup trucks, buses etc, supposed to even turn onto Palo Alto ave anymore? Also, the turn lane is still there, which makes it awfully confusing because someone may want to get into the turn lane to make a turn only to have a median in the way.

R21. The Project was under construction at the time of this comment, and the final striping and signage at this location, as shown on the plans, had not been installed. A dedicated left turn lane will be included in the final striping. The intersection geometrics were designed so that a pickup truck, garbage trucks and buses are able to make the left turn onto Palo Alto Way from the left turn lane on Santa Cruz Avenue.

Q22. Has anyone tried driving up and down Palo Alto way from East/West and turning on to Santa Cruz from North and South a few times? If you did, you would realize that there is no longer enough room for two cars to be at the intersection at one time without either hitting each other or a car potentially rear ending another car that is trying to turn onto PA, since it needs to now slow down to a stop in order to turn onto PA way, this will cause a serious accident.

R22. The design didn't change the width of Palo Alto Way. The design encourages drivers to not infringe on pedestrian areas to improve safety for pedestrians. A dedicated left turn lane will be installed on Santa Cruz Avenue to allow vehicles to queue for their turning movement onto Palo Alto Way. A centerline stripe will be added on Palo Alto Way to guide drivers into proper lane position and support appropriate turning movements. The County will continue to monitor driver behavior and determine if any adjustments are needed.

Q23. The Issues: When coming from Santa Cruz turning right onto PA Way, the pavement/concrete edge/curb goes well into Palo Alto way. This causes cars to either go over the sharp corner curb or after you go over it many times, you want to veer a bit more left to avoid going over it. This results into the cars then ending in the middle of Palo Alto Way going east right and into cars coming down PA way going west onto Santa Cruz. If cars do not try and avoid the back sharp curb, the tires are running over the sharp point and when they go over the back of the vehicle moves over to the left and can easily hit a car.

R23. If a vehicle strikes this curb, they have veered off the road and into the curb ramp pedestrian landing area. The design encourages drivers to not infringe on pedestrian areas to improve safety for pedestrians. A centerline stripe will be added to Palo Alto Way to guide drivers into proper lane position and support safe turning movements. The County will continue to monitor driver behavior and determine if any adjustments are needed.

Q24. Why would you make the residents turn from the middle lane left onto Palo Alto Way? This causes confusion and a delay in turning as the cars are merging from Santa Cruz coming the opposite direction and slows down traffic and not only is it dangerous that you are now NOT using the turn lane and turning from a MIDDLE LANE, but you have to wait a lot longer to turn into the neighborhood. Why would you take out the turn lane!?

R24. The Project was under construction at the time of this comment, and the final striping and signage at this location, as shown on the plans, had not been installed. A dedicated left turn lane on Santa Cruze Avenue will be included in the final striping.

Location: Median on Alameda between Prospect and Liberty Park

- Q25. In the northbound direction, the median does not provide sufficient roadway width to safely accommodate one northbound traffic lane, a 5' bike lane, and the required offset (also known as shy distance) for the median and bulb outs. It appears that the median placement may not provide the width necessary to comply with the 3' cycling law.
- R25. The median is designed to accommodate vehicle and bike lanes in the configuration shown on the plans. Bike lanes were designed based on the Caltrans Highway Design Manual. One 10' wide travel lane and one 7' wide bike lane will be accommodated at this location. The three (3)-foot cycling law refers to the "Three Feet for Safety Act" which is a law requiring drivers to give cyclists at least three feet of clearance when passing. It is not a design standard.
- Q26. Residents of Prospect St. are prohibited from using Alameda's center two-way turn lane and must wait for traffic on Alameda to clear in both directions before making a left turn. This is even more challenging for long vehicles or those towing a trailer when existing Prospect St.
- R26. Medians are a standard roadway design feature used to slow traffic and improve safety for roadway users, in particular cyclists and pedestrians. An intent of this median is to slow traffic to address the County's desire to improve pedestrian safety at this existing uncontrolled pedestrian crossing location, in part by removing the safety issue of left-turning vehicles from Prospect Street waiting to merge into the through lane from the two-way left turn lane. Median locations were determined during the Project's development in the planning phase and represent the alternative selected by the community during this process. The lane diet and traffic calming features along Alameda de las Pulgas are intended to slow traffic speeds, and cars turning left from side streets will only have to contend with crossing a single vehicular lane vs. crossing two lanes that existed prior to the Project.

- Q27. The residence on the west side of Alameda is blocked from using the center turn lane to exit or enter their driveway, necessitating a more hazardous U-Turn elsewhere or routing through a significantly longer path through neighborhood streets.
- R27. Median locations were determined during the Project's development in the planning phase and represent the alternative selected by the community during this process. Where left turn movements are restricted by medians, residents are able to access their driveways via right turns in and out.
- Q28. While the northbound lane is overly narrow and lacks roadway width, the opposite is true for the southbound lane, which gives the impression of a super wide-open roadway capable of two traffic lanes. Our safety task force collaborated with DPW from 2017-2020 to ensure that traffic lanes would be 10' wide, primarily to provide motorists with a perspective of a narrower road and a more residential atmosphere, thereby achieving calmer and slower traffic. However, with such a wide roadway on the southbound side, motorists may not perceive a different road perspective—a super wide roadway.
- R28. Lane widths were developed in conjunction with input and feedback from the community during the Project's development. The design primarily uses 10' lanes. In a few limited locations, lanes wider than 10' are used to address various roadway space allocations.
- Q29. This median is 11' wide, wider than the 10' wide center 2-way turn lane that was agreed to. Due to required offsets to protect motorists from the high median curbs, the width of this median could/should be at least 3 feet narrower.
- Q29. The median offset mentioned in this comment appears to originate from the Caltrans Highway Design Manual, which includes a median offset for highways in urban settings. These requirements are not typically used on local streets and particularly not used with complete street projects when the goal is to reduce speeds.

- Q30. The median's design and location, situated on the crest of a hill, ignores the visibility challenges that exist here on Alameda. Glare from the sun and headlights significantly impair a motorist's ability to see the median. Furthermore, its placement is unexpected, as most drivers do not anticipate a median to abruptly obstruct a substantial portion of their normal travel lane.
- R30. The median is not situated in a way that it will obstruct the northbound travel lane; medians are routinely used to guide vehicular traffic, similar to striping. Regarding the comment about the median obstructing the southbound lane, at the time of this letter the final striping had not been installed. Striping will be placed to align the approaching southbound lane with the edge of the median.
- Q31. I don't see the utility of the median at Palo Alto Way and, for the larger median at Liberty/Prospect, it should either be narrowed or moved slightly towards "the hills" side of the Alameda; that side of Alameda has ample space. (Note that the bulb-out at Liberty/Prospect is further narrowed due to a fairly large drainage grate -- most riders will avoid these grates for a number of seemingly trivial reasons -- rougher ride, potential of slippery metal, and/or vertical slats of the grate cutting into light-weight tires).
- R31. These median serves multiple purposes including traffic calming, limiting conflicting turning movements into and out of driveways and side streets, and thereby improving overall pedestrian and cyclist safety. Median locations were determined during the Project's development in the planning phase and represent the alternative selected by the community during this process.

Q33. At several points in the corridor, these medians force traffic to swerve to avoid medians that are placed in the normal traffic flow. This joggling adds chaos, the kind of chaos that our community worked to eliminate, with your help, in 2018 with the improvements at the Y, resulting in a reduction of accidents and major improvement to safety for residents and all motorists.

R33. The Project was under construction at the time of this comment, and the final striping and signage at this location, as shown on the plans, had not been installed.

Q34. The reduced roadway width imposed by these medians eliminates the room for the promised parking that is not only needed by residents, but required for USPS mail, service trucks, and major utility maintenance.

R34. Mail and trash service was considered during design. Parking impacts were considered during the design and effort was made to minimize the impacts to parking along the Project limits.

Q35. Cars must slow down when they reach the “Y” stoplight, but this light is positioned beyond a curve in the road and motorists do not see it coming so they speed. People are driving way too fast and we need to give them clear guidance and a safe visual cue to begin slowing down immediately.

R35. The Project was under construction at the time of this comment, and the final striping and signage at this location, as shown on the plans, had not been installed. The County will continue to monitor this intersection and determine if any adjustments are needed.

General concerns

- Q36. I agree that the installed median strip is difficult for drivers to see. I'm a bicyclist, but I'm very unclear on whether the strip is supposed to protect me, or is it meant for pedestrians? When I cross Santa Cruz Avenue as a pedestrian, I don't stand on the strip.
- R36. The Project was under construction at the time of this comment, and the final striping and signage at this location, as shown on the plans, had not been installed.
- Q37. I'm certainly aware that the current views indicate that narrow traffic lanes will reduce motor vehicle speeds. That is certainly the case during roadway construction where the traffic lane is threaded between two k-rails. However, for many streets, including the Alameda, the design has both a center turn lane and a bike lane. This extra space gives more space for speeding motorists should they lose control of their vehicle. Drivers subconsciously will factor that extra space when selecting their speed of travel. As a caveat, I am not familiar with the traffic engineering literature, but if I were to evaluate such a study, I would look closely at the geometry of the roadway and whether 'clear-space' is evaluated in the study.
- R37. Configuration of the roadway striping and medians reflects the alternative selected by the community during the planning process. Narrowing of travel lanes has shown to reduce speeds after being installed.
- Q38. There was a request from the community to provide the latest set of striping plans for review.
- R38. Striping plans have been posted on the project website and can be found at the following link:
[Santa Cruz Avenue and Alameda De Las Pulgas Improvement Project | County of San Mateo, CA](#)