



*Ron Snow*

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RE: Santa Cruz Ave Medians - Reduced Safety - Increased Risk

Tuesday, August 5, 2025

Supervisor Ray Mueller,  
Director Ann Stillman,  
County Executive Mike Callagy

Dear Ray, Ann, & Mike:

There are serious problems with medians that are being placed along Santa Cruz Ave and Alameda de las Pulgas in West Menlo Park. There are also issues with sidewalks at several intersections that pose hazards. In each of these cases, there are major safety problems resulting in much higher risk to cyclists, residents, and motorists. The implementation at several of these medians are resulting in greatly **reduced safety and workability for our senior and disabled** community.

While I was intending for this letter to address several project locations that have serious issues, I decided to only address the issues at a single location: Intersection of Palo Alto Way & Santa Cruz Ave. I hope to provide the details on issues at the other locations in a similar email shortly. I hope there can be a meeting on this with you, community, and DPW.

#### **EXAMPLE 1: Median and Sidewalk at Palo Alto Way on Santa Cruz**

At the intersection of Santa Cruz & Palo Alto Way, the west side sidewalk has undergone **four** rebuilds since the Santa Cruz/Alameda Safety project commenced, with the most **recent two rebuilds** occurring within the past couple of months. It is pertinent to investigate and research the reasons behind this pattern of failure that causes multiple builds and rebuilds. A transparent process of review and analysis seems necessary to assess the quality of work, design planning, and competence involved.

Furthermore, the median constructed at this Palo Alto Way intersection was initially positioned incorrectly and subsequently had to be removed last month and rebuilt. This new median fails along the same issues as the first:

- 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.
- 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.
- 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'.
- 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).

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

The median at Palo Alto Way is not the only issue. Consider the sidewalk corners which are now on their 4th rebuild:

- 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. (Darwin Award).
- 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)

**In summary**, the Palo Alto Way construction of the median and west sidewalk corners are not workable and require competent action:

- The sidewalk does not allow easy access for disabled. The crossing signal button is out of reach and on the opposite side of the signal pole.
- 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..
- The median will cause NB traffic to have to veer to the right by about 3 or so feet right before Palo Alto Way and then veer back to the original traffic lane path. This will add dangerous confusion to traffic that already has to deal with many distractions. This traffic lane swerve is unexpected and hazardous.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

**I am requesting, on behalf of the community, that this median be removed.** That the 6 to 7 feet of width it requires be reallocated to provide improved safety to cyclists by use of a better bike lane and hopefully that means striping with a 1' or 2' traffic buffer between the traffic lane and bike lane, as recommended by FHWA and MUTCD.

Sincerely,



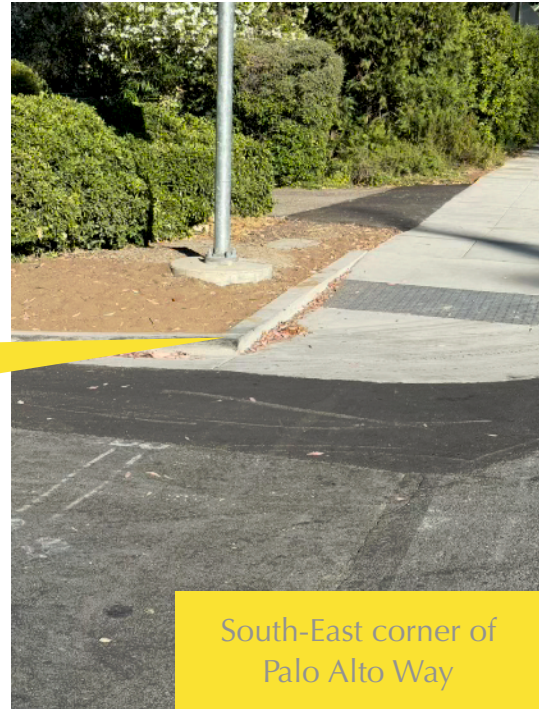
Ronald G. Snow

cc: BPAC, John Langbein, interested community members

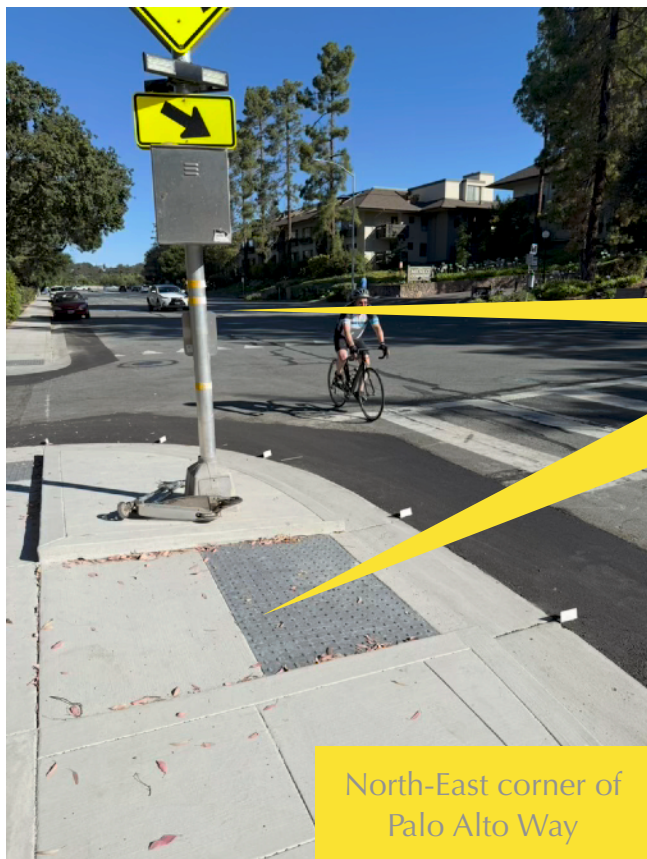
Illustrations:

Hopefully these annotated photos provide some additional clarification and reference.

This sharp 90° curb corner has a high likelihood of causing tire and wheel damage, leading to tire failure. It seems that a rounded or ramped corner would be safer and less damaging.



South-East corner of Palo Alto Way



The crosswalk ramp fails to accommodate disabled persons by placing the crosswalk button out of reach and on the opposite side of the pole

North-East corner of Palo Alto Way



Median appears to restrict left turns by school bus and other long trucks that require a larger radius to clear median.

Unnecessary length of median causes safety issues for resident. Shorter provides refuge for egress via center lane.

Median doesn't provide proper roadway width to safety accommodate 2 traffic lanes, a bike lane, parking, and recommended offsets from median and bulb out.

Notably absent from this illustration is the fact that these NB traffic lanes will undergo a brief rightward swerve of approximately 3 feet. This maneuver is imperative due to the median being directly in the path of the first NB lane (Alameda lane). To prevent collisions, all lanes will be required to shift to the right and, subsequently, swerve back to the left after passing the median.

Median visibility is blocked for most motorists in a moderate to large peloton by the cars in the lead.

**Santa Cruz Ave**  
(@ Palo Alto Way)



There are a lot of distractions at this intersection: Pedestrians, traffic entering/exiting the narrow alley way of Palo Alto Way, cyclists, and motorists trying to jockey for the correct lane for the Alameda and Santa Cruz dedicated lanes further up. These distractions and the resulting chaos, make this median a menace.

Palo Alto Way Intersection

