

June 5, 2023

VIA MAIL AND EMAIL

San Mateo County Board of Supervisors
Attn: Supervisors
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Ms. Ann Stillman, Director
San Mateo County Department of Public Works
752 Chestnut Street
Redwood City, CA 94063

Re: Community Objection directed to the San Mateo County (the “County”) Board of Supervisors (the “Board”) and the San Mateo County Department of Public Works (the “DPW”) regarding the Project Design Proposal as Presented to the Community on April 18, 2023 regarding the “Santa Cruz Avenue/Alameda de Las Pulgas Complete Street Projects”

Dear Mr. Pine (District 1), Mrs. Corzo (District 2), Mr. Mueller (District 3), Mr. Slocum (District 4), Mr. Canepa (District 5), and Ms. Stillman, Director of DPW:

We are residents of University Park (“**Residents**”) who are concerned about the “**Project Design Proposal**”ⁱ presented by Department of Public Works (the “**DPW**”) and its design consultants Kimley-Horn and Associates (“**Kimley-Horn**”) to the community at a meeting convened on April 18, 2023 at the Oak Knoll Elementary School (the “**Community Meeting**”) following notice thereof at the end of March (the “**Notice**”). As residents who live along the roadways of the Project Design Proposal, we will be the most impacted by the safety implications of the Project.

I. Executive Summary

We were told in the Community Meeting that the DPW plans to finalize the Project Design towards the end of 2023. For the reasons set forth herein, the DPW should be instructed to **NOT** finalize the Project Design until it has appropriately engaged with the Residents in a transparent and inclusive manner on the detailed elements of the Project Design and modifications made thereto that are reasonably acceptable to the Residents.

- DPW Has Not Given Sufficient Weight to the Safety and Quality of Life of Residents in its Project Design Proposal
- DPW’s Project Design Proposal Is Defective on Multiple Levels
 - DPW’s Project Design Proposal Removes Some Residential Street Parking creating Safety Issues and Contrary to the County’s Agreement To Not Do So
 - DPW’s Project Design Proposal Does Not Address Mitigation of Anticipated Traffic Congestion
 - DPW’s Project Design Does Not Implement Key Priority to Shorten Crosswalks
 - DPW’s Project Design Proposal Introduces Disruptive and Possibly Dangerous Medians and Curb Ramps
- Many Residents Were Not Aware of a Preferred Alternative or the Initiation of a New Project Design
- The DPW Neither Effectively Engaged With Residents Nor Responded to the Numerous Emails from the Community

II. Background

The DPW purports to be implementing a “**Preferred Alternative**” authorized by the Board in October 2020 which was based on a “Santa Cruz Avenue and Alameda de las Pulgas Improvement Study Final Report” dated August 2020 issued by Kimley-Horn (the “**2020 Report**”). Following a survey conducted in late 2018 (the “**2018 Survey**”), that alternative had been recommended to the Board by a task force comprised of stakeholders from the community, bicyclists, DPW, Menlo Park fire district, CHP, and the county (the “**Task Force**”) which had been formed to consider bicycle, pedestrian, and roadway improvements on Santa Cruz Avenue and Alameda de Las Pulgas.

As the Board is aware, the Task Force arose from a proposal by DPW in 2016/2017 to impose a peak hour no parking zone along the stretch of road on Santa Cruz Avenue from Sand Hill Road to Alameda de las Pulgas (the “**Corridor**”). That initiative was titled the “No Parking Zone during peak hours commute on Santa Cruz Avenue” (the “**2016 Corridor Proposal**”). The 2016 Corridor Proposal was not well received by many residents, and residents directed a letter in November 2016 (the “**2016 Letter**”) to the Board and DPW (Mr. Horsley was the Supervisor for District 3 and Mr. Porter was the Director of DPW at the time). The 2016 Corridor Proposal was abandoned (as with multiple prior attempts in past decades) because, for among other reasons, it was contrary to an express agreement between the County and residents along the Corridor to preserve resident street parking.

III. DPW Has Not Given Sufficient Weight to the Safety and Quality of Life of Residents in its Project Design Proposal

As noted in the 2016 Letter, the signatories then appreciated that safety is of paramount importance (some of those signatories were also cyclists). The signatories to this letter recognize that DPW has invested time and effort to present a proposal to increase the safety for cyclists, pedestrians, and drivers (we are all of those as well), but we are concerned that resident safety has not received the attention that it should have. The consensus view is that the Project Design Proposal represents a substantial improvement from the arbitrary 2016 Corridor Proposal. We acknowledge and value that effort which has spanned both the Covid pandemic and the unprecedented challenges associated with the heavy rainfall in 2022/2023. And although we are encouraged, we are also confident that the DPW and Kimley-Horn can, should and must do better before a deficient Project Design Proposal is prematurely finalized and imposed without reasonable community input which would relative to the status quo negatively impact the quality of life of many of the Residents along and/or adjacent to the Corridor, our safety, and our property values.

IV. DPW’s Project Design Proposal Is Defective on Multiple Levels

The Board should insure that the Project Design Proposal be modified by the DPW and Kimley-Horn based on community input and engagement at a detail level with the Residents (and particularly with those who have long been engaged in working with the county on the project and those who will be most impacted by the Project Design Proposal) because it inadequately addresses residential parking, pedestrian and resident safety, and anticipated traffic congestion.

Residential Street Parking. Despite the County’s longstanding commitment to preserve street parking for Residents along the Corridor, we understand that some parking spots in the Project Design Proposal will be eliminated (which is contrary to the Preferred Alternative as conceived in 2020). Resident street parking is critical because it is (x) a safety buffer for residents to exit and enter driveways and vice versa

traffic flow and (y) a means for visitors, postal and package delivery, trash/recycling, utility, and others to access resident homes. Furthermore, eliminating street parking in front of Corridor homes means that residents and their visitors must park several blocks away and walk along narrow side streets, with no sidewalks, to get to a home along the Corridor.

Unfortunately, neither DPW nor Kimley-Horn were prepared at the Community Meeting to be specific as to which parking spots would be impacted and how concentrated those spots would be (although we were told that would be posted to the website). Obviously, the configuration of the street parking proposed for removal will be critical to any assessment of the safety implications for Residents and knock-on effects for those nearby. As of the date of this letter, that information has not yet been posted.

Perhaps more surprising was that Deputy Director Krzysztof Lisaj stated at the Community Meeting that he was not aware of the historical agreement to preserve parking along the Corridor (that would unfortunately explain a proposal which includes elimination of some parking) despite the fact (i) that this was a key issue in the abandonment of the 2016 Corridor Proposal and (ii) that this agreement has been expressly and repeatedly referenced over the years by former Menlo Park mayors such as Steve Schmidtⁱⁱ (and even the subject of a legal action several decades ago of a Corridor resident involving the County) when the issue of removal of parking in favor of bike lanes had been proposed. For example, the minutes of the October 2016 BPACⁱⁱⁱ meeting include the following statement: “*Joe Lo Coco also mentioned that the County purchased road right of way from adjacent property owners so that the road could be widened. On-street parking was specifically included in the design to relieve the impacts on the adjacent properties.*”

Mitigation of Traffic Congestion. The Project Design Proposal also did not incorporate planned mitigations for queuing of automobiles at traffic lights at Sand Hill Road and at the Y intersection both northbound and southbound along the Corridor. DPW and Kimley-Horn appear to have concluded (and stated the same at the Community Meeting) that increased traffic queuing is an inevitable result of the proposed modifications and simply one of the trade-offs associated with the Project Design. What mitigations have been explored by DPW and Kimley-Horn to minimize the traffic congestion that can be anticipated? Such congestion could make it more difficult and dangerous for Residents to reasonably access and/or depart from their homes. This is an issue not only for Residents along the Corridor who would experience the additional congestion disproportionately, but also one for residents in adjacent neighborhoods who anticipate increased traffic flow due to re-routing by motorists. This latter concern was voiced by multiple attendees at the Community Meeting without any coherent response from DPW about mitigation possibilities that were/were not explored.

Shortening of Crosswalks. Another key objective that the Project Design Proposal fails to incorporate is the shortening of cross walks at the Y intersection as per recommendations and guidelines from FHWA^{iv}, DOT^v, MUTCD, Safe Streets, Vision Zero^{vi}, and NACTO^{vii}. This was a critical safety priority for pedestrians and particularly children en route to and from La Entrada. According to community Task Force members, this was also to be a key feature of the Preferred Alternative which is not reflected in the Project Design Proposal despite the commitment of then-DPW director Mr. Porter.

Medians and Curb Ramps. Another area of concern was that the Project Design Proposal introduces several medians and curb ramps along the Corridor that would impede the ability of some Residents, service providers, or guests to reach their driveways and/or parking spots in accordance with historical patterns. Residents want to understand these features better and with more specificity ... including whether they are in fact needed to reasonably achieve the desired safety objectives. Improved and

adequate safety along the Corridor for cyclists and motorists could very well be possible without the disruptive (and some potentially countervailing dangerous) consequences of medians and curb ramps. In other words, it is not clear that the right balance has been struck among competing safety considerations, and overall the Project Design Proposal appears over-engineered as regards medians and curb ramps with particularly negative impacts to Residents.

V. Many Residents Were Not Aware of a Preferred Alternative or the Initiation of a New Project Design

There has been insufficient Notice to the residents who will stand to be most impacted by the Project Design. Contrary to DPW's assertions in both the Notice regarding Project Design Proposal" and again at the Community Meeting of a process reflecting "robust community outreach", many Residents along the Corridor and in the Community were not aware of (x) the existence of a Task Force, (y) a Preferred Alternative having been adopted by the Board, or (z) initiation of project design plans or any drafts thereof having been made available.

For many of us, the last activity that could be recalled was the 2018 Survey, and so it has been 4+ years since most of us were exposed to plans related to the Corridor (which in the present proposal now includes the Y intersection and continuations on Santa Cruz and/or Alameda de las Pulgas). Others who knew of and did participate in the January 2020 public meeting at Las Lomitas report that the alternatives were presented conceptually and did not adequately address safety issues while varying significantly from the safety goals for residents that had been established by the Task Force.

Even for those residents who were aware of the Task Force ... they report that, subsequent to the January 2020 public meeting, the DPW essentially abandoned the Task Force and did not respond to emails and input over the last 3+ years. As you know, the community was intensely interested in the 2016 Corridor Proposal and even on short notice the attendance at the Community Meeting in April was substantial. So, it is really inexplicable that the "60% complete plans" were reviewed by the DPW and "no public comments" were received in April 2022 (as stated on DPW's web page for the project) ... other than to conclude that any outreach that did occur was ineffective.

VI. The DPW Neither Effectively Engaged With Residents Nor Responded to Emails from the Community

Even for those community members who were aware of the Task Force report that subsequent to early 2020 the DPW generally ceased to respond in any meaningful manner to suggestions, feedback, and update requests.

That is particularly concerning because many of us perceived the tone and tenor of the presentation by DPW at the Community Meeting as an information session to describe a *fait accompli* to the community so that a box could be checked and the project moved forward whatever the community feedback might be. It is worth noting that the diagrams in the 2020 Report expressly state under "General Notes" that they are "conceptual" ... so even had more of the community been aware of 2020 Report, few would have anticipated that the DPW would press ahead and aim to finalize a Project Design essentially on its own. Furthermore, as noted below regarding parking and the Y intersection for example, the current Project Design deviates from the conceptual design so the DPW can't even reasonably assert that it had adhered to that.

To sum up, the DPW and Kimley-Horn disengaged from the few community members (including those on the Task Force) who were aware of any design activities once the concept-level Preferred Alternative had been adopted well over three years ago.

In light of the above, we disagree with DPW's perspective as understood by many of us at the April 18th Community Meeting that it had received a mandate to implement the Preferred Alternative in its specifics without input and guidance from the Residents.

VII. Conclusion

We look forward to the Board's response and assurance that it will intervene with the DPW to facilitate a productive and collaborative interaction with the Residents (who will disproportionately bear the impacts both as to safety and quality of life). We request that Board members come out and walk along the Corridor with residents and with DPW, to discuss the proposals so that Board members can see for themselves the likely impact on residents. We further request that the Board direct DPW to engage with residents on the specifics of the Project Design Proposal so that modifications can be made to advance the implementation of the Preferred Alternative and in a manner that respects the commitments made by the County with respect to street parking and translates long-term residents' reasonable expectations regarding safe access to and from their homes.

Sincerely,

Concerned Residents in the Community

[Signature pages follow]

ⁱ San Mateo County Public Works Project Design Proposal, Santa Cruz/Alameda Improvement, https://www.smcgov.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/Santa%20Cruz%20Ave%2090%25_0.pdf

ⁱⁱ Menlo Park Mayor Steve Schmidt, April 2, 2002 City Council Minutes referencing Santa Cruz property owner agreement that preserves parking along Santa Cruz Ave, https://www.menlopark.org/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Minutes/_04022002-1704

ⁱⁱⁱ BPAC San Mateo County Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes of October 20, 2017, https://www.smc sustainability.org/wp-content/uploads/SMCBPAC_Meeting_Packet_19_Jan_2017.pdf

^{iv} FHWA Federal Highway Administration, 'Making our Roads Safer through a Safe System Approach', <https://highways.dot.gov/public-roads/winter-2022/01>;

^v DOT.CA California Dept of Transportation, 'Complete Intersections, A guide to Reconstructing Intersections and Interchanges for Bicyclists and Pedestrians', <https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/safety-programs/documents/ped-bike/f0018151-intersection-guide-bicycles-pedestrians-a11y.pdf>

US DOT, Traffic Calming to Slow Vehicle Speeds, <https://www.transportation.gov/mission/health/Traffic-Calming-to-Slow-Vehicle-Speeds>

^{vi} Vision Zero, Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition, Safe Streets for All: Vision Zero, <https://bikesiliconvalley.org/better-biking/vision-zero>

^{vii} NACTO National Association of City Transportation Officials, Urban Street Design Guide, <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/>