

**Downtown Monterey Road Traffic Calming
Working Group Meeting #3
October 8, 2021**

Meeting Purpose

The October 8th Working Group will include the review of the lane reduction plan from an engineering perspective. This plan is made up of multiple components including improvements in the Downtown and improvements to support traffic flow outside the Downtown Area. Additionally, the timing of projects that could impact the implementation will be discussed. To support this conversation a succinct background on Citywide and Downtown traffic issues will be provided. The purpose of this meeting is to focus on traffic, pedestrian safety, and related components.

Meeting Objectives

- A. Review traffic impacts as it relates to the Downtown Lane Reduction Project.
- B. Discuss considerations for traffic system enhancements to support reduced traffic through the Downtown.
- C. Discuss timing considerations for the project.
- D. Discuss considerations for the implementation of the Lane Reduction Project in the Downtown area.

Background

The concept of traffic calming efforts in Downtown, including the lane reduction on Monterey Road, has been discussed and evaluated for over 20 years by City officials. The City’s guiding documents support such endeavor; however, this topic has always been controversial due to increasing traffic within the community. Morgan Hill’s traffic is uniquely impacted due to its location within the regional traffic network. The continual job growth and housing shortage to the north, combined with ongoing housing construction to the south, will continue to force traffic off Highway 101 and onto City streets until expansion of the freeway can be achieved. Monterey Road will continue to be used as a regional connector and needed by our residents as cut-through traffic increases on Butterfield Boulevard.

The City’s past approach on traffic management practices have been focused on safety. The City manages most of its traffic signals independently and does not have a networked traffic signal system. Infrastructure funding for congestion management has been a low priority as compared to funding the maintenance of pavement and sidewalk infrastructure and improving safety within the City roadways. Very limited resources for active congestion management activities, combined with the philosophy that improving north-south traffic will only encourage further deviation from the freeway, has been the justification for this approach. The Hale Avenue Extension Project is the first major congestion management project the City has embarked on since the completion of Butterfield Boulevard.

Historically, even after Highway 101 was constructed, Monterey Road continued to be utilized as a major thoroughfare. However, the phased construction of Butterfield Boulevard, resulted in a significant decline in the traffic on Monterey Road. However, recent informal counts completed by the Police Department in May 2021 demonstrate that traffic on Monterey Road through the Downtown has increased. The table to the right demonstrates traffic counts on Monterey Road over the years.

| Year | Daily Traffic |
|-----------------|----------------------|
| 1987 | 24,957 |
| 1991 | 24,641 |
| 1994 | 21,510 |
| 2000 | 25,340 |
| 2005 | 20,565 |
| 2010 | 17,633 |
| 2015 | 15,628 |
| 2016 | 16,165 |
| 2021* | 20,000 |
| *Informal Count | |

The Hale Avenue Extension Project is underway and will provide an alternative route for traffic to utilize on the west side of the City. Completion of the new roadway between Main and Dunne Avenues will be in late 2023 at the earliest. It is anticipated the project will reduce traffic through Downtown by approximately 4,000 cars per day.

The [City's Vision Zero Policy](#) provides direction on improving the City's roadways and prioritizes safety of all those using the roadways over traffic efficiency. The Vision Zero report provides some history on traffic collisions in the City. Additionally, the Police Department has pulled data for the Downtown area and found that from 2017-2021, 59 collisions were documented, four of which involved pedestrians.

There is significant data that demonstrates Complete Streets Programs, including Traffic Calming/Lane Reduction Programs, increase safety and support alternate modes of transportation (pedestrian and bicycling). Based on this data, in 2015, a pilot project to narrow Monterey Road through the Downtown was conducted. The 2015 Complete Streets Pilot Program showed that the time delay caused by the lane reduction was insignificant (less than one minute), yet the increase in the number of people biking and walking Downtown was significant. While the City Council did not approve the permanent reduction of the roadway to a single lane, the Project was not viewed as a failure and the Council directed staff to return to the Council to review the project with the completion of the Hale Avenue Extension. The Project was brought back at this time at the request of the current City Council in response to requests for support from the business community in response to the Covid-19 Pandemic. Staff strongly supports the traffic calming efforts with a lane reduction to improve safety, but equally understands the frustration increased that traffic brings residents.

Background Documents

- A. [2015 Pilot Project](#)
- B. [Hale Avenue Extension Traffic Study](#)
- C. [Cut Through Traffic Study](#)
- D. [Morgan Hill Vision Zero Policy](#)
- E. [Federal Highway Administration – Complete Streets](#)
- F. [Federal Highway Administration – Traffic Calming](#)

Traffic Implications and Mitigations – Outside Downtown

Discussion:

As the traffic within the City has increased in recent years, the City is not recommending moving forward with the Downtown Lane Reduction Program without creating a plan to support reducing the traffic delay for residents travelling north-south and attempting to mitigate traffic impacts on the surrounding streets. The 2015 Pilot Project provided key data to support both short-term and long-term traffic mitigation strategies. Short-term strategies will take place prior to the lane reduction program occurring, mid-term are anticipated to occur within the next 3-5 years, and long-term will be further out. These strategies are outlined below:

Short Term Strategy 1 - Butterfield Corridor Improvements

The primary short-term strategy will be to improve the Butterfield Corridor by increasing its efficiency through traffic signal upgrades allowing synchronization of the entire corridor, signal prioritization for drivers using Butterfield at the Cochrane and Monterey Road intersection, and physical improvements to specific intersections. Upgrades to the roadway are estimated to cost approximately \$106,000 and it is anticipated the improvements would increase the traffic flow on the roadway by a very significant

percentage. While this improvement will improve north-south traffic delays considerably, it will cause longer wait times for all drivers using the cross streets to cross or access Butterfield Boulevard during peak hours. This plan will be reviewed in detail during the working group meeting.

Short Term Strategy 2 – Improved Directional Signage and Communications

To support the increased use of Butterfield over Monterey Road, a communications plan will be implemented to support drivers use of the improved and more efficient Butterfield Boulevard. While communication to residents will occur via City media channels and through press releases to the local media, signage will be used to encourage drivers to use the preferred Butterfield Route. This will include the use of 3-4 electronic message board signs and permanent roadway signage along Monterey Road. The electronic message board signs will be placed in single locations initially, and can be relocated to support increased notification to drivers.

Short Term Strategy 3 – Safety Improvements and Enforcement

The 2015 Pilot Project demonstrated that Butterfield Boulevard became the primary route for alternate traffic by the end of the Pilot. It is anticipated that with the improved efficiency on Butterfield, this will again be the case. However, we understand that cut-through traffic on the west side of the City will remain when the lane reduction occurs. The City has just completed safety improvements and roadway reconfiguration on Wright Avenue to support increased safety and slower driving. Wright Avenue was the primary street on the west side that saw the largest increase in traffic during the 2015 Pilot Project.

Mid Term Strategy 1 - Hale Avenue Extension and Corridor Improvements

Within 3 years, the Hale Avenue Extension Project from Main Avenue to Dewitt/Spring Avenues will be complete and will minimize cut through traffic on the west side residential streets. It will also further support reducing traffic on Monterey Road through the Downtown.

Mid Term Strategy 2 – Traffic Planning Studies and Implementation

In FY 2022-23, the City intends to develop an overall Transportation Master Plan and conduct a Traffic Signal Optimization Study to further support reducing traffic congestion, multi-modal transportation improvements, and bicyclist and pedestrian safety for the community. The results of this planning work will be projects and policies that can further support transportation improvements for the City as a whole, but also the Downtown.

Long Term Strategy 1 - Full Synchronization of Traffic Signals across the City

This option would be implemented following the update of the Citywide Planning Studies and could result in new and innovative means to support traffic congestion reduction.

Considerations:

- Should any strategies be implemented prior to or in conjunction with initiating the lane reduction?
- Should the City move forward with improvements to Butterfield Blvd to improve the flow of north-south traffic and prioritize that route at intersections over the use of Monterey?

Outside Considerations – Projects Impacting Downtown

Discussion:

The purpose of this section is to discuss known public projects that could impact traffic in the Downtown in the coming years. Projects that will be actively under construction include:

- A. The Fifth Street Sewer Project – This Project will connect a sewer line via Fifth Street from Monterey Road and a small section of Depot Street. It is anticipated to be under construction in the coming months and completed in Spring of 2022. It will include minor traffic impacts on Monterey and larger impacts on Depot Street and Fifth Street.
- B. The Lumber Yard Development Project and Depot Street Realignment – This Project is anticipated to commence in early 2022 and will cause major disruption on Depot Street for up to a year. It will ultimately result in improved traffic flow efficiency once Depot Street is realigned with Church Street.
- C. Valley Water Flood Control Project – The project will heavily impact City roadways at various times over the next 3 years. The intersection of Main and Hale Avenues prior to the completion of the Hale Avenue Extension Project will be impacted. Del Monte Avenue will be heavily impacted, including the intersection of Dunne for a period of several months. This project will also include significant truck traffic as they off-haul dirt from the project.

Considerations:

- With significant construction projects occurring in and near the Downtown in the coming years, should the timing of commencement of the Lane Reduction Project be reviewed?

The Lane Reduction Plan - Downtown

Discussion:

The proposed Lane Reduction Program from an Engineering perspective is similar to what was constructed during the 2015 Pilot Project with enhancements. The Plan incorporates input from areas (including learnings from the previous plan, current conditions in the Downtown, input from the Police and Fire Departments, current engineering standards and best practices) in developing the plan. This input includes a very strong desire from Public Safety on having the ability to enter and use the bike lane for emergency use. The major changes include:

- A. Improved configuration and striping at the intersections at Main Avenue and Dunne Avenue that support improved traffic flow and bicycle enhancements.
- B. The use of rounded curbs within the buffer between the bike lane and traffic lane to prevent driving in the bike lanes, but allow Public Safety access to the space.
- C. Flexibility within the plan to allow for parklets or parking spaces in what's now the parking lane on a block-by-block basis.

The plan was developed to support the limited budget available to the City for implementation of the Lane Reduction Program. While the implementation cost is limited, it will provide a permanent solution that can be maintained efficiently and cost effectively. With this plan as the basis, the City would have a future option to develop long-term streetscape improvement plans for Downtown, while benefitting from the lane reduction at the same time. Funding for both the design and implementation of long-term streetscape improvements is currently not available.

Additionally, due to the cost effective design for implementing the Lane Reduction, a second trial is not recommended, as rental of the equipment for the temporary closure may result in similar costs and will not provide the same quality of improvements that will support the highest levels of safety and the most efficient traffic flow.

The Lane Reduction Program Plan is estimated to cost approximately \$90,000 to implement. The plan will need to be merged with the beautification and parklet planning to finalize the design. The draft plan is included with this report.

Considerations:

- The proposed Lane Reduction Program Plan, as it did in 2015, allows for cars making a right turn off Monterey Road in the Downtown, to share the bike lane space to make the turn. This design is intended to support traffic efficiency and reduce the wait time for those visiting the Downtown. An alternative would be to eliminate this shared use through each intersection. This would allow for increased separation between cars and bicyclists but increase traffic and wait times for those visiting the Downtown.