

July 23, 2018be

Dear Mayor, City Council Members, City Staff

My wife and I are pleased to support all the concepts in the current Phase 2 of the Lomas Santa Fe Corridor Improvement Project. This transforms a 50 year old design, conceived when the goal was to live in the suburbs and drive our automobiles long distances to work. It has served the community during that time, but it is time to look forward to the next 50 years.

I had previously provided an email of general support with comments on May 31, "LSF Corridor Workshop Comments" that do not need to be repeated in full here. Let us restrict support here to both the Western and Eastern sections, with the bulk of comments coming on the Eastern roundabouts for upper east LSF, something we strongly favor.

An overall recommendation for the *entire* corridor is uniform 10.5' travel lane widths. This was the design for 101 which allowed posting a 35 mph speed limit after a speed survey. Hwy 101 through our City is so much improved since completion in 2013. The narrow 10' travel lanes on Santa Helena (lower traffic collector street) have also worked brilliantly since 2015, and the 6' wide bike lanes there have provided safer biking to / from Solana Vista and Skyline (by older kids living in the Santas); schools have had to add bike parking to accommodate increases. The psychological friction that slows down drivers to stay between the lines is a proven way to lower maximum speeds, and we're seeing more of it around SD County.

Another comment that applies on both sides of I-5 is that the bike lane and pedestrian striping, as well as pedestrian accommodations with crosswalk, signal and curb enhancements, will also provide a safer experience for both bicyclists and pedestrians, as well as motorists who will be better aware of the more vulnerable road users' presence.

Western Section Improvements

We want to recommend that if the proposed cycletrack on the south side from Nardo to Stevens is constructed, that sharrows and Bikes May Use Full Lane signage be placed in the adjacent travel lane down the hill. Although the cycletrack can give our students a safer route to local schools which we strongly support, as a Class IV *optional* facility for bicyclists, many cyclists may want to continue to use the travel lane. Including proper signage will help educate both motorists and cyclists that this may be more convenient for bicycling 15-25 mph, consistent with the CA Vehicle Code. Class IV facility designations are brand new, and the majority of the population just doesn't know the rules for usage and non-usage.

Eastern Section Improvements

Although we are strongly supporting the roundabout concept, we would like to address all the features of both the Striping and Roundabouts options as individual items of a set, imagining that funding constraints may only provide funding for pieces in phases. Let's list each, giving a short summary of what we see are the pros and cons, without regard to cost for now. How can we enhance our community's quality of life? What will we proudly pass on to our descendants for a sustainable future?

Multi-Use, Class I path. This path along the north side from Santa Helena to Highland under both options, along with potential landscaping improvements shown at Workshop 2, would make this a lovely, more natural path for walking or biking. We don't think many of us would ever consider that use today because of current conditions: the hot, crumbly asphalt and concrete sidewalk is inches from what might as well be an aircraft runway for noisy

vehicles flying by at high speeds. It is currently difficult to cross Lomas Santa Fe from the north side sidewalk to the Plaza and back again across 4 lanes of a major arterial (even with less major traffic volume, mentioned later). We anticipate that a natural, trail-like path would be attractive to families out for a walk or bike ride together.

But, most importantly: Safe Routes to School. The multi-use path would provide a safe connection from the east Lomas neighborhoods for children walking and rolling to school, whether they turn right at Santa Helena to use the safer streets now there to Solana Vista, or cross to Skyline using the newly installed pedestrian signaling and bike lane treatments to cross the I-5 ramps, the major safety concern in Solana Beach when thinking car-free. Getting more kids out of their parents' cars further provides traffic reduction around school pickup/dropoff periods, the kids love it, AND decreases air pollution and greenhouse gases in our city! There are still improvements near the freeway that could be made in cooperation with Caltrans but those ideas are for a future project.

- *Pros:* Safe route to school, safety, car-free access to the Plaza, walkability, LSF beautification.
- *Cons:* Such paths are expensive. It would be good if design could avoid any purchase of residents' land. The current roundabouts option shows 3 or 4 affected properties for the multi-use path to skirt the roundabouts. We would recommend a design that would minimize or eliminate this impact; if required, proper compensation is of course required for their valued improvement to the community.

Roundabout at Highland: Everyone should embrace this if you watched the 10 minute [US DOT informational video](#) on Modern Roundabouts. At Highland, a roundabout would provide a far more efficient traffic flow than a 4-way stop intersection. This may be counter-intuitive to roundabout skeptics or those familiar with the outdated "rotaries/roundabouts" on our own East Coast (Boston, etc.). In the Solana Beach concept, we have an added aesthetic as this is the eastern gateway to our City. The relatively new artwork on the median can be reconfigured (it already has been transformed once) to provide an entrance to Solana Beach that we all will be proud of.

- *Pros:*
 - Efficient traffic flow: up to 35% lower travel times have been reported.
 - Safety: > 90% fewer fatalities, 73% fewer injuries, 51% fewer crashes.
 - Environment: fewer stops and idling for lower emissions and noise.
 - Safety: pedestrians (only look for traffic in one direction for each leg to/from the median refuge) and cyclists (have 2 options: use the roadway as a vehicle, *or* slide up the ramp extension of the bike lane and use the sidewalk, yielding to pedestrians). A design detail is to provide sharrows at proper points to guide cyclists using the road into the safest position to navigate the roundabout, as done in Carlsbad and Del Mar.
 - Maintenance: once in place, little maintenance is required.
 - Accommodating large and emergency vehicles: geometry of the roadway and the interior apron are required to do this; this has been accounted for in preliminary design.
 - An additional note on safety is that since 2007, although there have only been 5 vehicle collisions, 3 of the 5 were t-bones, which are rare by design in modern roundabouts because of the deflection vane. Fortunately, no fatalities so far and a roundabout at Highland should nip that to zero in the future, for sure. There was also a vehicle-pedestrian collision, something else that should happen much less frequently with a *modern* roundabout design.
- *Cons:* Expensive initially. Residents' relative inexperience in San Diego to this modern infrastructure. To address the latter, the US DOT video shows examples of communities resisting roundabouts in concept, but

then embracing them after implementation. More locally, a new modern roundabout, similar in features to those proposed by COSB, was recently installed at Jimmy Durante, just south of the race track. We would like to quote a note to us from Ira Sharp, who chaired the Del Mar TPAC (Traffic & Parking Advisory Committee) during the planning of that roundabout: “As Karl can attest, I was chairman of the Del Mar Traffic and Parking Advisory Committee when the plan for the roundabout in Jimmy Durante was studied and eventually constructed. It was very controversial before construction and much to our surprise there have been very few detractors since construction. I believe it has smoothed traffic flow and improved access from San Dieguito Road. I think we need more roundabouts, based on this experience.”

Intermediate Roundabouts Between Highland and Via Mil Cumbres (VMC) / Las Banderas. At Workshop 1, a Lomas resident asked, “What about roundabouts?”, an idea not included in the initial plan. A roundabout concept then became part of the work done between the two Workshops. The primary objective for this roadway section, as for any design, is to slow down maximum speeds, a common complaint from our eastern Lomas Santa Fe neighbors. We wondered: How would roundabouts affect traffic flow and safety, especially since the idea is to merge two lanes to one entering the roundabout? Single lane roundabouts are simpler to understand, safer, and require less real estate. Data was collected by consultants, during peak traffic hours and at multiple times when schools were in session. The team fed the collected data into traffic models and provided a couple of videos to help inform the public: [AM peak hours](#); [PM peak hours](#). Since these roundabouts are designed for 20,000 ADT (average daily traffic) and Solana Beach measures this section at about 14,000 ADT, the simulations not only show how smoothly the traffic flows given current peak conditions, but there is even head room for about 50% more. We are hoping that future land use in the County as well as Via de La Valle’s expansion to handle 30,000 ADT will keep total traffic volume from the east under control. There will not be much increase in traffic from Solana Beach alone as our City is nearly built out east of Las Banderas. The simulations also show safe transition during the merge prior to the roundabout and the re-opening back to two lanes past the roundabout.

- *Pros:* Slower maximum speeds due to the innovative design. Although increased traffic enforcement and/or electronic speed signs, flashing when speed limit is exceeded, might slow things down if people are grossly speeding, those measures are not permanent. If the roadway allows the speeds, people will want to do anything to get home or to work faster. Another huge benefit is the effective removal of the t-bone and head-on collisions. We’ve been lucky not to have a single one on this stretch in the past 11 years, but a single t-bone or head-on from a resident exiting/entering the eastern neighborhoods with a 40+ mph vehicle on LSF could easily be a fatality, and imagine the uproar should that happen. This design ensures that both left and right turns are protected from all but at most a side swipe or an inattentive bumper collision. For left turns especially, drivers will not have to cross two lanes of this currently high speed arterial in order to exit or enter the neighborhoods. This is designed solely for the eastern LSF residents. Although a side benefit is improved safety and convenience for cyclists and pedestrians, it is by no means an effort to turn LSF into a regional bike magnet. We see the local recreational use not increasing by much, but we do hope for an increase in bicycle use by the Solana Beach residents in these neighborhoods. The primary beneficiaries are the residents of the neighborhoods adjacent to LSF.
- *Cons:* Same as at Highland, with the additional concern that the lane constriction prior to the roundabout seems like a safety issue to many at first glance, given that traffic in two lanes needs to be alert and negotiate to enter the single lane, possibly with cyclists as well who choose the roadway option, guaranteed the popular choice westbound where their speeds will easily align with motor vehicle speeds. Being alert is a good thing, we may add. We are relying on the empirical data and engineering analysis that shows this is preferable from a safety point of view to cars trying to cross a high-speed 4 lane arterial in

order to exit and enter the neighborhoods. We are convinced by the data shown so far and our personal observations over this stretch the 29 years we have lived here, but also would welcome the City to demonstrate at the Aug 22 meeting, how the flow would behave during the 15-20 minute worst-case periods of school traffic exiting/entering the neighborhoods. We also challenge anyone to do the math: Motorists heading west will NOT cut through on Via Mil Cumbres! Traveling 0.6 mi between the VMC entrance and exit along LSF with roundabouts slowing traffic to even an average speed of 30 mph is much more efficient than cutting through the VMC neighborhood. To gain time, motorists would need to *average* at least 40 mph along VMC residential streets, a distance of 0.8 mi with 2 full stops and a 25 mph speed limit; with the stops, cars would need to accelerate to 50+ mph at times to average 40! This is not only highly illegal, but dangerous beyond what any driver would consider. A Sun Valley cut-through is even less likely; do the math plus you end up with worse congestion at the Wells Fargo Bank during school dropoff. Good data and analysis may be needed to convince those who just can't imagine it, arguably influenced by the unarguable congestion at the lights west of VMC/Las Banderas. Down the road, when funding is available to support detailed design of these intermediate roundabouts, maybe even temporary hemispherical circles and cones to provide a real-life testbed may also be useful. There are some low-cost permanent roundabouts (really "traffic circles") in Oceanside and San Clemente that we know cost on the order of \$5-\$10K.

Striping Only – No Roundabouts. This option still has merits as we remember it as the *only* one at Workshop 1. We envision the look to be very similar to the recently completed facilities on Leucadia Blvd, between I-5 and El Camino Real; they have narrowed the travel lanes, increased the width of the bike lanes, added left side buffers where possible to account for narrowed travel lanes, and made great use of green paint, including green stop-dash across intersections, conflict areas, right turn only lanes, etc. The same thing would certainly be an improvement on LSF. It doesn't necessarily solve the speeding east of VMC/Las Banderas, except to the point that 10.5' width lanes provide, assuming the City embraces that recommendation. It also doesn't provide the extra safety of the turn movements that the roundabouts provide in and out of the neighborhoods. Improved striping today, if there is no funding for roundabouts, is better than doing nothing.

- *Pros:* Considerably less expense. This could be a pleasant section of road, just like recent improvements to Leucadia Blvd. Bike lanes would be safer with improved pedestrian safety. The road configuration would be less of a change for those who are unsure about roundabouts.
- *Cons:* This would not be a permanent solution to a roadway design that would permanently lower speeds through this section of the corridor. Eventually, the City would have to come to terms with that, unless the 10.5 width lanes really were sufficient.

Last but not least, congestion at the signalized intersections on LSF is the primary driver for what people "feel" about traffic on the corridor. These proposed improvements might have very little effect on traffic buildup at the lights at rush hour periods, especially close to school arrival and departure times and fair and race traffic. We imagine that the westbound traffic may build up in a more "metered" way as traffic should run at more regular, slower speeds down the hill. Similarly up the hill, eastbound traffic will be coming to the Highland intersection at hopefully more regular intervals, to a smoothly circulating roundabout. Improvements and removal of those signals bordering I-5 are for another project and another time. Ira Sharp from Del Mar suggests we need more roundabouts which could help a few of those intersections. The USA does not do roundabouts well at freeway interchanges, however, and it is not up to our City of 13,000+ to lead the way, although we are doing a great job in SD County leading the way on energy! Perhaps a vision of autonomous vehicles networked to intersection

signal controllers, with software optimized for efficient traffic flow is the best we could hope for; give that on the order of 25 years, maybe sooner.

Summary Comments

We hope that, at the conclusion of Phase 2, we are not simply deciding between a striping option and a roundabouts option. Instead we need a list of traffic elements, with preliminary designs and cost estimates to support quick turn-around on grant proposals as they arise. Based on our experience of the Hwy 101 and Stevens Projects, we realize that project components are left on the table for the future because only so much money is available. This project will be no different. So, if there are initially funds available for the striping option and, say, the Highland roundabout only, we urge you to pursue that as a first phase. That would not only provide the expected improvements of those two elements, but help people get over the anxiety they may be currently feeling about driving or bicycling through roundabouts. The intermediate roundabouts could be added one at a time in an order designed to provide the best speed reduction along the way. The Multi-Use path is such a good idea and would be an added asset to the community. That could be funded alone, at any time. It would be our personal first preference if money were no object.

We think the conceptual improvements provided in this Study, with the Roundabouts option, will provide a real future for Lomas Santa Fe to continue to serve us for the next 50 years. To those who say, especially for the Roundabouts option, "If the traffic flow is working today, it will continue to work similarly under either option, and we haven't had a single collision in 11 years, why are we doing *anything*?" it is easy to understand such thinking. However, if you go through all the Pros listed above and provided elsewhere in all the documentation provided by the City, we think that Jonas Salk would be proud of Solana Beach as he reminded us: "*Our greatest responsibility is to be good ancestors.*"

Sincerely,

Karl Rudnick, PhD.

Retired Chief Scientist, SAIC

Member of BikeWalkSolana, Solana Beach's Active Transportation Advisory Committee

North County Cycle Club ride leader

San Diego County Bike Coalition Webmaster

League of American Bicyclists League Cycling Instructor #3481

Jill Cooper

Retired Solana Vista Teacher

Member of BikeWalkSolana, Solana Beach's Active Transportation Advisory Committee

Residents at 1019 San Patricio Dr.