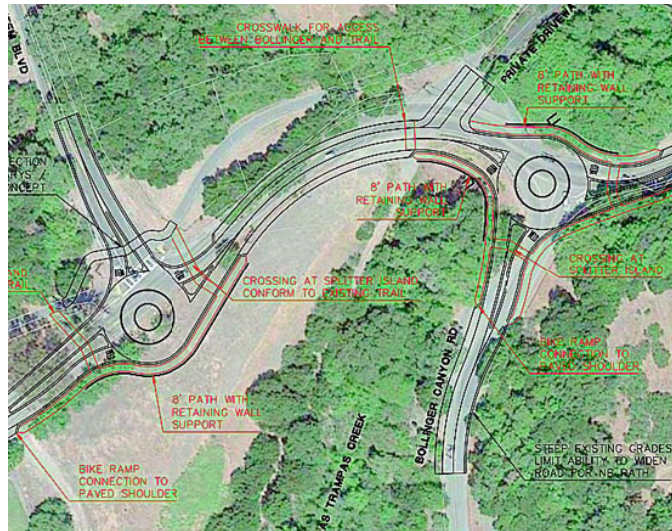


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## Not One, But Two Roundabouts on St. Mary's Road

By Sophie Braccini



Two proposed roundabouts along St. Mary's Road Image provided

the state was considering making the study of them a mandatory option for all intersection improvements. "The main reason is the safety aspect," he said. He explained that the new configuration would calm traffic, shorten the crossing distance for pedestrians and keep traffic moving, thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions. "It also can create a sense of place," added Boyle.

While the roundabouts won't change the current footprint of the roads by much, there will be minor encroachments of some rights of way. The big question, of course, is cost. The total project preliminary capital cost is estimated to be approximately \$6.5 million. Sугang explained that there are grants available for such road safety projects and that there are also other sources of funding, for example with the Contra Costa Transportation Authority. Vice Mayor Mike Metcalf, who is the town representative to CCTA, confirmed that this project is exactly the type the agency promotes.

When Mayor Roger Wykle asked how Omni-Means would handle traffic during the construction project, Boyle said part of the cost would go to constructing a temporary roadway. "It will be inconvenient, but it can be done," he said.

Barry Behr, a resident on Joseph Drive off Bollinger Canyon, said he was delighted to see this forthcoming project. He was involved in an accident at the intersection of St. Mary's Road and Rheem Boulevard two months ago. "This intersection is a real crapshoot," he said. He felt that the college and its 3,500 students was the reason for the road's high traffic. "The college is working on its new master plan," he said, "and I hope they will contribute to the improvements of the intersection." Since the construction of the roundabouts will take some time, Behr asked for some immediate improvements to be done including removal of a eucalyptus tree that is blocking the view of oncoming traffic.

Councilmember Dave Trotter, who lives off Bollinger as well, made a case against the roundabout at Bollinger Canyon. "This is a solution in search of a problem," he said. "I don't see a problem there." Trotter added he has made safe ingress and egress at this intersection for years and that simple vegetation cutbacks and maintenance would improve the visibility sufficiently without spending millions of taxpayer dollars. He was neutral regarding the Rheem/St. Mary's roundabout.

Vice Mayor Metcalf and Mayor Wykle supported the project. And Councilmember Phil Arth, who

Despite opposition by council members Teresa Onoda and Dave Trotter, the Moraga Town Council directed staff April 22 to pursue funding opportunities for two roundabouts - one at the intersection of St. Mary's Road at Rheem Boulevard and one at Bollinger Canyon and St. Mary's roads.

In her report to the council, Senior Civil Engineer Laurie Sугang recapped seven years of study and recommendations that were made to improve the safety and congestion at the two intersections. Sугang reported that several collisions had taken place at those intersections due to the lack of visibility, the steep change of grade and a deep "S" curve.

Consultant Ron Boyle of Omni-Means, which specializes in interchange, roadway and roundabout design, explained that roundabouts would serve this challenging area well. He added that roundabouts have proven safety benefits and that

also lives off Bollinger Canyon, supported Trotter's view but agreed that the Rheem and St. Mary's intersection was dangerous. "Let's go for the grant money," he concluded.

Councilmember Teresa Onoda said that she had very little personal experience at these intersections, since she lives in a different part of town. From her discussion with a resident in that area, however, she concluded that there was not a problem. "I say if we don't have to spend the money, don't spend the money," she said. Her comment included the Rheem/St. Mary's intersection.

Following the 3-2 vote, staff will now pursue grant or other funding options for the double roundabout project.

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