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## St. Mary's Road roundabouts project goes back on the shelf

By Vera Kochan



Rendition of proposed St. Mary's Road roundabouts Image provided

St. Mary's Road/Rheem Boulevard intersection, and an all-way stop at St. Mary's Road/Bollinger Canyon Road intersections; 6) Traffic signal at St. Mary's Road/Rheem Boulevard intersection; and 7) Realignment of Bollinger Canyon Road to the intersection of St. Mary's Road at Rheem Boulevard.

Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA) provided \$464,000 in funding through the Measure J Major Streets Program in 2016, in order to complete a preliminary design; and later that year, the town council appropriated \$140,707 from the Lamorinda Fee and Finance Authority (LFFA) in order to award a \$590,707 contract to engineering consultants Kimley-Horn and Associates. Their services were used to complete the 35% design and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) environmental documentation from CCTA's funding agreement.

The town held two community informational meetings. The first was held July 2017, from which valuable information was gathered through public comment cards. The second meeting was held Sept. 27, 2018. Its purpose was to answer many of the questions and concerns from the comment cards filled out by attendees from the prior meeting.

The largest concerns the project team received were geared toward safety, the various configurations in question, and financing the project. Another alternative emerged in the form of adding a large roundabout at St. Mary's/Rheem with a mini-roundabout at St. Mary's/Bollinger. This scenario showed a marked savings in safety cost, reduction of time spent waiting at intersections, reduction in operation and maintenance cost and a slight decrease in emissions. While the initial capital cost was slightly higher than other alternatives, the accumulated costs compared to all the of proposed alternatives was substantially lower over time. As such, Kimley-Horn has completed a 35% preliminary design of this roundabout with probable construction costs in 2022 at an estimated \$7,361,000. If the town is interested in seeking future funding from outside sources in order to complete the engineering design and construction it could look to CCTA for various possibilities.

During the town council meeting, public comments ranged from those in favor of the roundabouts to those who wanted the status quo. Council members discussed the idea of stop signs with cost savings in mind and the big "what if." What if the town went to the trouble of installing roundabouts, and they didn't work? There was also some concern about dragging the project out even longer without coming to a final conclusion.

Knapp reminded the council that the purpose of the presentation was simply to approve the Initial Study and Mitigation Negative Declaration, and to appropriate \$37,000 from Fund 799 - LFFA (Fiscal Year 2021-22) into FY 2022-23 to pay the final engineering costs and close out the project at the 35% Conceptual Study and Plans level. Staff was able to reduce expenditures by approximately \$70,000 and return it to the LFFA regional traffic impact fund for other town priorities. While the council unanimously approved the resolution, they chose not to budget \$50,000 to pursue grant funding next year.

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