

**SUSTAINABLE TAMALMONTE
215 JULIA AVENUE
MILL VALLEY, CA 94941**

March 3, 2017

Mill Valley City Council
Mill Valley Dept. of Public Works
Mill Valley City Manager Jim McCann
Senior Planner Danielle Staude
26 Corte Madera Ave.
Mill Valley, CA 94941

Re: Request for a revision of the Marsh “Room” of the Miller Ave. Streetscape Improvement Project in order to retain the full length of the right-turn lane from outbound Miller Ave to Almonte Blvd

Dear Mill Valley City Council, Department of Public Works, City Manager Jim McCann, and Senior Planner Danielle Staude,

Thank you again for listening to community concerns and considering a revision to the Miller Avenue Streetscape Plan as it relates to the Marsh “Room” and the Miller Ave/Almonte Blvd intersection.

We attended the City of Mill Valley meeting on March 2nd pertaining to the Miller Avenue Streetscape Plan and have the following comments:

I. ADOPT THE THIRD DESIGN OPTION – COMBINED BIKE LANE AND RIGHT-TURN LANE

After listening to the City of Mill Valley Staff’s presentation, we still urge you to revise the Marsh “Room” of Miller Avenue Streetscape Plan and retain the full length of the existing right-turn lane on outbound Miller Ave that leads to Almonte Blvd by adopting the “Third Design Option – Combined Bike Lane and Right-Turn Lane”. This option, along with our other recommendations described below, ensures the best circulation and safety conditions for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

Staff’s “New Recommended Design Change” still merges the two lanes into one lane on outbound Miller Ave in front of the Tam High Football Field where traffic begins to back up during high traffic congestion times. Per Staff’s January 30th Memorandum and Traffic Consultant David Parisi’s March 2nd Presentation, this recommended design would cause right-turning vehicles to be delayed when vehicle queues extend more than 400 feet east of Almonte Blvd. Creating new delays (even if minor) and worsening traffic congestion is unacceptable. When there is traffic congestion, conditions are not safe for motorists, pedestrians, or bicyclists.

Although we now understand that a berm will be installed and Miller Ave will be raised in some sections to help with flooding, until the work is completed we won’t know for sure

whether or not the results from these improvements will be satisfactory. Sometimes when a roadway is raised in one place, it creates flooding in another unexpected place.

Therefore, the “Third Option Design - Combined Bike Lane and Right-Turn Lane” is superior to Staff’s “New Recommended Design Change” during times of flooding. The Third Option allows vehicles to use either outbound lane on Miller Ave in order to traverse through the flooding and avoid the salt-water pools that are corrosive to vehicles, whereas the Recommended Design limits this flood avoidance capability.

II. CONDUCT TRAFFIC ANALYSIS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

Based on local residents experiences, we believe the traffic analysis has underestimated the degree and frequency of traffic congestion that would be generated by the “New Recommended Design Change” when: 1) Shoreline Hwy is substantially congested and when; 2) the flashing beacon at Almonte Blvd is activated at the same time that Shoreline Hwy is substantially congested.

During the March 2nd meeting, David Parisi declared that the traffic analysis was completed solely in the month of November 2016. November 2016 was a very wet month with little tourist traffic. It is imperative that traffic studies are also conducted at peak tourist times, which occur on sunny weekends and particularly on sunny holiday weekends and during the summer.

II. BE CAUTIOUS DUE TO THE UNKNOWN EFFECTS FROM THE NEW TAM JUNCTION BIKE & PEDESTRIAN PLAN THAT WILL BE COMPLETED IN 2018

We recommend that you use caution if you are still considering adoption of Staff’s Recommended Design, which is a plan that is predicted to increase delays and traffic congestion. Besides other factors that may increase traffic congestion, a new Tam Junction Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan has been approved and is supposed to be completed in 2018. The plan changes bicycle lanes, widens sidewalks, and adds ADA improvements along Shoreline Hwy in Tam Junction. We do not yet know how this plan will escalate traffic congestion on Shoreline Hwy.

III. ENCOURAGE BICYCLISTS TO USE THE BIKE PATHS, PARTICULARLY THE MULTI-USE PATHWAYS ALONG THE MARSH, THAT ARE SEPARATE FROM THE ROADWAYS

At the March 2nd meeting, a Mill Valley resident, who we believe is a member of the Mill Valley Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC), stated that the City of Mill Valley is encouraging adult bicyclists to not use the Multi-Use Pathway along the marsh but rather to use Almonte Blvd. and Miller Ave. He said that this decision was made because of accidents caused by speeding bicyclists on the Multi-Use Pathways. He also said they plan to visit the bicycle rental services in San Francisco, like Blazing Saddles, and give them maps that highlight roadways, rather than the separate Multi-Use Pathways, for the tourist bicyclists to use.

If this is the City’s point of view, we are greatly dismayed and hope you will reverse this decision. Millions of dollars have been spent on the Multi-Use Pathways in the City of Mill Valley and Unincorporated Mill Valley. This money was spent to give pedestrians, horse riders and bicyclists safe passage, away from vehicles that travel at much greater

speeds. On March 2nd, many residents commented on how unsafe it was for the slower bicyclists to travel alongside the faster vehicles on Miller Avenue.

Rather than encouraging adult bicyclists to use the roadways, which are less safe for them than the Multi-Use Pathways, the City should encourage all bicyclists to use the Multi-Use Pathways and, additionally, police and ticket the bicyclists that are speeding on the Multi-Use Pathways to prevent such unsafe behavior. Bicyclists would still be able to use the roadways but they should not be encouraged to do so.

We recommend you speak with the City of Sausalito Councilmembers and find out the problems that Sausalito is facing with an inundation of tourist bicyclists.

IV. WHAT ABOUT PEDESTRIAN IMPROVEMENTS?

We understand that one of the goals of the Miller Ave Streetscape Plan is to create “complete streets”. However, we do not see any improvements in the Marsh Room for pedestrians. How is a pedestrian supposed to safely walk directly from the Miller Ave/Almonte Intersection towards downtown Mill Valley and vice versa?

We suggest that you consider incorporating a sidewalk on one side of Miller Avenue for pedestrians to safely walk between Almonte Blvd and Camino Alto. Perhaps the drainage ditch along the Tam High football field could be enclosed inside a pipe and a sidewalk could be built on top of the pipe. (Or, could a sidewalk be placed on top of the berm you plan to create?)

We also encourage you to work with the County to create a crosswalk across Almonte Blvd so that pedestrians can walk safely from the parking area near Almonte Marsh to the other side of Almonte Blvd in order to reach the crosswalk with the flashing beacon that crosses Miller Ave. We suggest that this crosswalk be farther down Almonte Blvd, away from the Miller/Almonte intersection.

V. CONCLUSION

In order to ensure the best circulation and safety conditions for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians, we urge you to revise the Marsh “Room” of the Miller Avenue Streetscape Plan and retain the full length of the existing right-turn lane on outbound Miller Ave. that leads to Almonte Blvd. by adopting the above-referenced “Third Design Option – Combined Bike Lane and Right-Turn Lane”. We also urge you to follow our other recommendations, expressed above.

Thank you in advance for your conscientious consideration.

Very truly yours,

/s/

Sharon Rushton, Chairperson
Sustainable TamAlmonte

Cc: Supervisor Kate Sears

Cc: Supervisor Aide Maureen Parton

Cc: Becky Murray, Administrative Assistant to City Manager Jim McCann