

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

August 23, 2016

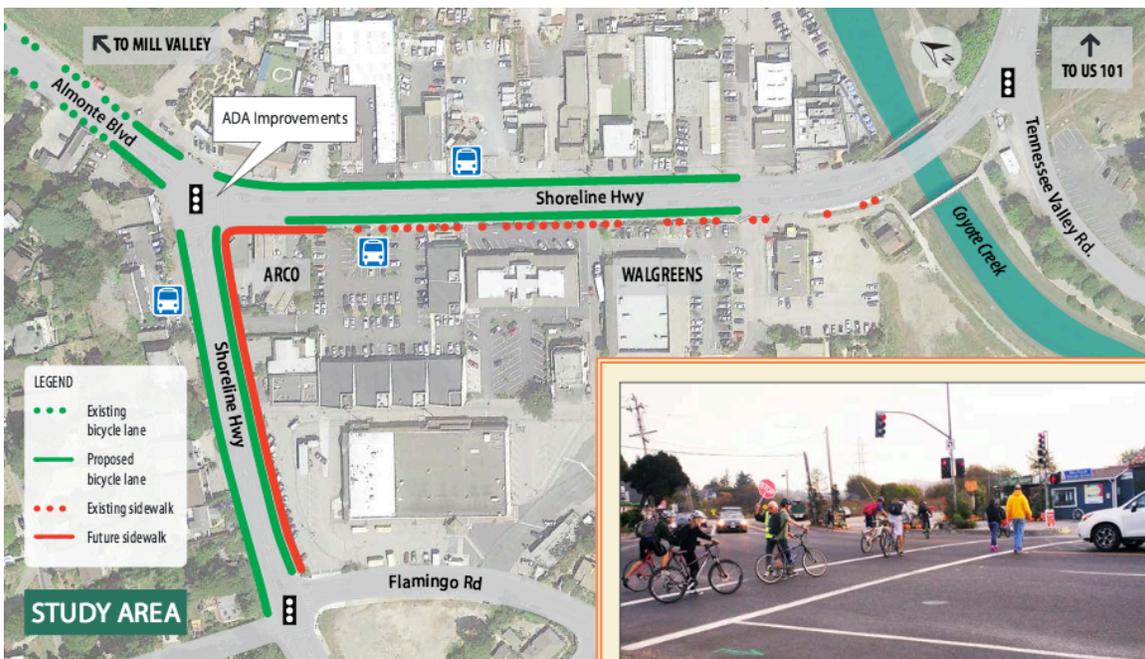
Dan Cherrier, TAM Principal Project Delivery Manager
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Re: Proposed Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan at Shoreline Hwy. in Tam Junction

Dear Transportation Authority of Marin,

We have significant concerns about your DRAFT Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan at Shoreline Hwy in Tam Junction (pictured below), as the proposed improvements do not meet the priority transportation needs of the Tam Valley and Almonte communities and Mill Valley as a whole. We, therefore, submit the following comments and recommendations.

**Proposed Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan at Shoreline Hwy
between Flamingo Rd. & Coyote Creek**



<http://www.tam.ca.gov/Modules/ShowDocument.aspx?documentid=9053>

I. UNINCORPORATED MILL VALLEY'S PRIMARY TRANSPORTATION NEED

The primary transportation need in the Tam Junction vicinity is an improvement in the vehicle traffic flow along Almonte Blvd. and Shoreline Hwy., which is currently at a perilous Level of Service (LOS) F. Until vehicle traffic flow is significantly improved, bicycle and pedestrian improvements are of secondary importance.

According to the 2010 Bay Area Census Data for Mill Valley Residents [<http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/MillValley.htm>]: 68.7% of workers, who live in Mill Valley, drove to work in a car, truck, van or motorcycle; 15.9% of workers worked from home; 8.3% of workers took public transportation to work; 3.6% of workers bicycled to work and 3.2% of workers walked to work. Such percentages are valid for incorporated and unincorporated Mill Valley residents. As such, transportation via vehicle is our primary source of transportation and should be given top priority when planning transportation improvements.

Please understand that we fully support pedestrian and bicycle improvements too. However, new bicycle and pedestrian pathway changes must not further impede vehicle flow or prevent potential vehicle flow improvements. This is especially true for Shoreline Hwy, which the Marin Countywide Plan's EIR described as the most congested highway in Marin County. Unfortunately, TAM's proposed Tam Junction Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan would hinder vehicle flow and vehicle flow improvements, in direct conflict with the local communities' primary transportation goal.

Therefore, we recommend holding off on bicycle improvements, which would crowd the vehicle traffic lanes and hinder potential vehicle traffic flow solutions, until vehicle traffic flow along Shoreline Hwy and Almonte Blvd is significantly improved. Narrowing of traffic lanes in order to add enhanced bicycle lanes is ill advised. Studies show that narrower lanes slow vehicular speeds and result in more collisions. Pedestrian steps, lanes, pathways, and sidewalks, which would not involve traffic lanes, should proceed.

Moreover, Shoreline Hwy is one of the most dangerous highways in Marin. When alternative routes for bicycles are available, bicycles should be kept off of Shoreline Hwy.

II. RECOMMENDATIONS REGARDING IMPROVEMENTS TO LIGHTS, INTERSECTIONS, BICYCLE LANES AND PEDESTRIAN PATHWAYS/SIDEWALKS IN THE TAM JUNCTION VICINITY

A. Proposed Bicycle Lanes on Both Sides of Hwy 1 between Flamingo and Almonte Blvd. (This section is called "Shoreline Hwy" on the above map.):

The DRAFT Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan proposes new bike lanes along both sides of Hwy 1 between Flamingo and Almonte Blvd. The traffic along this portion of Hwy 1 is highly congested. Vehicles entering and exiting the many commercial driveways add to the congestion. There is no room in this vicinity for the proposed bike lanes. Moreover, the area is too hazardous for the safe passage of bicyclists.

Hwy 1, traveling East from Flamingo to Almonte Blvd., begins as a one lane and then separates into two turning lanes. One turning lane turns right onto Shoreline Hwy.,

leading toward Hwy 101, and the other turning lane turns left onto Almonte Blvd., leading toward the Almonte Neighborhood and downtown Mill Valley. The two turning lanes should start sooner to alleviate backup.

Similarly, traveling West on Hwy 1 from Almonte Blvd. to Flamingo, the left turn lane on Hwy 1, in preparation for turning at the stoplight onto Flamingo, also needs to be longer so that cars don't back up in the right hand lane or line up beyond the allowed space at the directional arrow. This is particularly needed due to the traffic going to the Good Earth Market.

Suggested Solutions:

1. Lengthen turning lanes on Hwy 1 between Almonte Blvd. and Flamingo;
2. Deter bicyclists from using Hwy 1 between Flamingo and Almonte Blvd.;
3. For bicyclists heading toward Sausalito, it would be better to direct them to take Flamingo toward the Tam Valley Community Center and hook up with the McGlashan Multi-use Pathway. This would give more room for car lane improvements and keep the bikes away from the dangerous vehicle traffic on Shoreline Hwy;
4. For bicyclists riding down Shoreline Hwy from above Flamingo and heading to the Almonte neighborhood, it would be safer to enter the neighborhood via Gibson Ave. For bicyclists wanting to travel from Flamingo toward Downtown Mill Valley, we recommend that they walk their bikes for one block along the newly proposed pedestrian sidewalk on Hwy 1 between Flamingo and Almonte Blvd. Reverse routes are recommended for those wanting to travel from the Almonte neighborhood or Downtown Mill Valley toward Stinson Beach.

B. Proposed Bicycle Lanes on Both Sides of Shoreline Hwy between Coyote Creek Bridge and the main Tam Junction light, where Almonte Blvd. begins:

The DRAFT Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan proposes new bike lanes along both sides of Shoreline Hwy between Coyote Creek Bridge and Almonte Blvd. This portion of Shoreline Hwy, flanked with stores and commercial driveways on either side, is too congested for the safe passage of bicyclists.

Suggested Solutions:

1. For bicyclists heading from Sausalito towards Muir Woods/Stinson Beach, direct them along the Charles McGlashan Multi-use Pathway to Marin Ave., a parallel route to Hwy 1. Eventually, they can turn right on "Maple Street" and connect with Hwy 1 away from the busy shopping area;
2. Bicyclists heading from Sausalito towards the City of Mill Valley and vice versa, should be directed to use the Mill Valley - Sausalito Multiuse Pathway.
3. Bicyclists heading from Tam Junction to the City of Mill Valley should be directed to take the Charles McGlashan Pathway and connect with the Mill Valley – Sausalito Pathway.

C. Improvements to Almonte Blvd.

The DRAFT Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan proposes extended bike lanes along both sides of Almonte Blvd., near the main intersection of Tam Junction. It is questionable whether there is enough room for expanded bike lanes in this area, more than what already exists. Vehicle lanes must be a priority here.

Recommendations for Almonte Blvd.:

1. Provide a Pedestrian Sidewalk along Almonte Blvd.:

What is needed, more than additional bike lane improvements, is a sidewalk along Almonte Blvd. for safe pedestrian passage from Rosemont Ave. (the main entrance to the Almonte neighborhood) to Shoreline Hwy. This would not obstruct vehicle passage for there is plenty of room for a sidewalk over the drainage ditch on the neighborhood side of the street. The drainage could be undergrounded with a pipe and a sidewalk could be constructed above. This would allow Almonte residents to safely walk to the Tam Junction Shopping Center. Currently, pedestrians (if they dare) must walk in the bike lane on Almonte Blvd., alongside speeding cars and bikes.

2. Improve the Rosemont Ave. / Almonte Blvd. Intersection:

Rosemont Ave., off of Almonte Blvd., is the main entrance/exit for the Almonte District Neighborhood. During commute times, traffic is backed up all along Almonte Blvd. from Shoreline Hwy. to Camino Alto due to the changes made to the Shoreline Hwy. lights. This makes it extremely difficult for vehicles to exit Rosemont Ave. onto Almonte Blvd., especially at commute times. A long line of vehicles backs up Rosemont Ave. It is also very dangerous for pedestrians to use the crosswalk that crosses Almonte Blvd. at Rosemont at any time of day. Many Almonte parents will not allow their children to walk or bike to school because they feel it is too dangerous for them to cross Almonte Blvd. at Rosemont Ave.

The following improvements would greatly improve the Rosemont Ave./ Almonte Blvd. intersection:

- Improve the timing of lights on Shoreline Hwy. (See improvements #D and #E);
- Paint a right hand turn lane on Rosemont. Currently there is only one lane to exit Rosemont. Creating a right hand turn lane to turn right from Rosemont Ave. to Almonte Blvd. would greatly improve traffic flow;
- Install a flashing yellow light at the Rosemont Ave. and Almonte Blvd. Intersection, similar to the one that is located at the cross walk that crosses Almonte Blvd. near the Almonte Marsh and the Tam High football field.

D. Improve the Tennessee Valley Traffic Light:

The Tennessee Valley traffic light has had a tremendously adverse impact on traffic flow and safety for all. We wish to make suggestions to improve this situation.

Having attended most of the Gateway Planning Committee meetings regarding the Tennessee Valley Pathway (AKA the Charles McGlashan Pathway), we are aware that

originally the light at Tennessee Valley was only going to be a light for an ADA compliant pedestrian crosswalk across Hwy 1 (AKA Shoreline Hwy.). The light was to only be activated when pedestrians pushed the crosswalk button. At the time it was thought that the crosswalk and the light would rarely be used because it would only be occasionally needed for the safe crossing of the disabled (which are few) and occasionally for the safe crossing of the able-bodied when under the bridge was flooded. During dry weather, able-bodied pedestrians/bicyclists would continue to pass underneath the bridge.

Suggested Solutions:

The light should be returned to its original purpose and the following changes should be made:

1. Change the purpose of the Tennessee Valley Light to only be a light for a pedestrian crosswalk that crosses Hwy 1 and which is only activated when a pedestrian or bicyclist pushes the crosswalk button;
2. Place a sign on either side of the crosswalk (across Hwy 1) that states something like; "Pedestrians/Bicyclists: If you are able and the conditions are dry, please use the pathway underneath the bridge." OR "In order to avoid waiting for the light to change, please use the pathway underneath the bridge." OR "In order to help traffic flow, please use the pathway underneath the bridge when dry."
3. Continue to allow vehicles on Tennessee Valley to turn right onto Hwy 1 whenever there is an opening in the Hwy 1 flow of traffic;
4. Allow vehicles on Hwy 1 to turn left onto Tennessee Valley whenever there is an opening in the Hwy 1 flow of traffic, as was allowed previously.

Such changes would allow pedestrians and bicyclists to safely cross Hwy 1, improve circulation, and allow for greater flow of traffic along Hwy 1.

E. Improve Timing of Lights on Shoreline Hwy. (AKA Hwy 1) in the Tamalpais Community Services District and the Almonte District.

Vehicles are stopped in all directions for much too long of time at intersections with stoplights on Shoreline Hwy, when there is no pedestrian in sight.

Suggested Solution:

1. Only apply time for a pedestrian crossing if a pedestrian pushes the cross button.

F. Require All Proposed Improvements To Be Attractive

All proposed improvements should not just be functional but should also improve the attractiveness of the Tam Junction area. Before a project is approved, a three dimensional drawing in color of the project should be presented to the community. Decision makers should listen to residents' opinions about whether or not the proposed project improves or detracts from the area's beauty. If the project is unattractive, it should be redesigned.

For example, many residents have expressed that, although the new median barrier that prevents vehicles from turning left into the Arco Gas Station improves traffic flow, the barrier is unattractive and should be redone with a design that is more aesthetically pleasing.

Thank you in advance for your conscientious consideration.

Very truly yours,

/s/

Sharon Rushton

Chairperson

Sustainable TamAlmonte

Cc: Supervisor Kate Sears