

DATE: January 30, 2024

TO: Council Transportation Committee

FROM: Edward Arango, Assistant Public Works Director/City Engineer
Dawn S. Cameron, Public Works Director

SUBJECT: **Shoreline Boulevard Interim Bus Lane and Utility Improvements, Project 16-58—
Scope Phasing Options**

RECOMMENDATION

Receive a report on the potential scope phasing options for Shoreline Boulevard Interim Bus Lane and Utility Improvements, Project 16-58, and make a recommendation to the City Council.

BACKGROUND

Shoreline Boulevard Interim Bus Lane and Utility Improvements, Project 16-58 (Project), is identified as a Priority Transportation Improvement in the North Bayshore Precise Plan (NBPP) intended to support commercial and residential development in the North Bayshore Area. The NBPP improvements to Shoreline Boulevard also support strategies for mode shift without adding vehicle capacity. Those strategies included a reduced 45% single-occupant vehicle (SOV) commute mode, infrastructure to encourage higher commute modes for bicycles, pedestrians, and transit users, expanded Transportation Demand Management (TDM) programs, and creation of a Transportation Management Association (TMA). For Shoreline Boulevard, the NBPP included protected bike lanes and cycle tracks, wider sidewalks, a center median bus lane, and a bicycle and pedestrian bridge over U.S 101.

Prior to March 2020, Shoreline Boulevard was heavily congested in the peak hours and peak directions (a.m. northbound, p.m. southbound). Substantial delays and traffic backups occurred daily, impacting transit service entering North Bayshore. Traffic studies showed a transit time savings of up to seven minutes using a dedicated median bus lane in the 0.6-mile segment of North Shoreline Boulevard from West Middlefield Road to Pear Avenue. Transit services were well used and included high commuter use of Caltrain and connecting MVgo shuttles operated by the TMA and multiple corporate shuttles operated by North Bayshore employers. The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) also operates a route (Line 40) through North Bayshore. These transit services (MVgo, corporate shuttles, and VTA) could use the planned median bus lane. It was estimated at the time that about 20 buses per hour would use the bus lane in the peak hour.

Project Development

When the Project was initiated in 2016, the scope included both surface and utility improvements. Figure 1 shows the current Project elements.

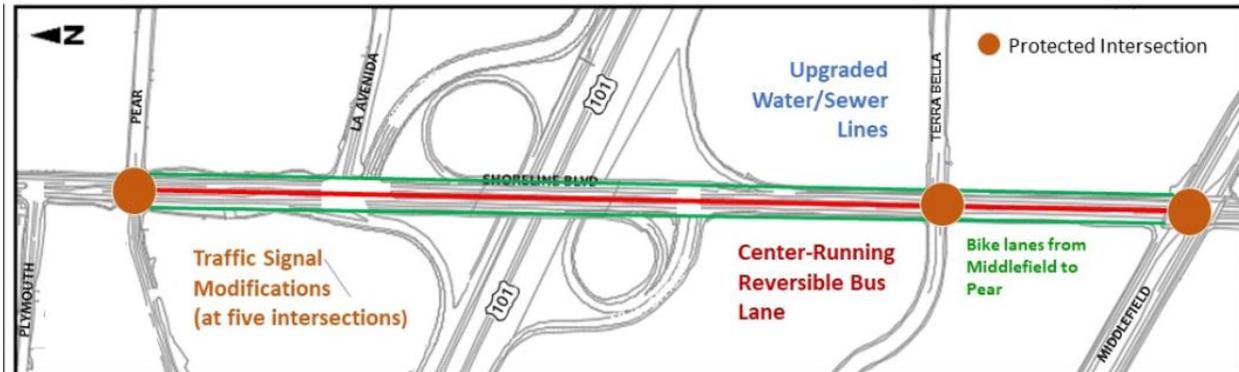


Figure 1: Shoreline Corridor Project Elements (Project 18-43)

Council has taken several actions for the design, right-of-way acquisition, and construction of the Project. Recent key actions include:

- [December 3, 2019](#): Council approved plans and specifications and authorized staff to advertise the Project for bids.
- [December 8, 2020](#): Council approved amending the Project budget to add funding and awarded the construction contract to Granite Rock Construction (Contractor).
- [October 26, 2021](#): Council approved amending the Project budget and agreement with Mark Thomas & Company, Inc. (Mark Thomas), to add design support during construction. Council also directed staff to defer constructing the second left-turn lanes on West Middlefield Road for five years and to proceed with California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review and NBPP Environmental Impact Report (EIR) revisions as needed for removal of the additional left-turn lanes from the construction project's scope of work.
- [May 24, 2022](#): Council approved terminating the construction contract with Granite Rock Construction, transferring and appropriating \$577,331 in additional funding, and amending the Mark Thomas agreement to revise the design and repackage the plans and specifications.
- [October 25, 2022](#): Council accepted the completed construction elements of the Project and authorized final contract payment to Granite Rock Construction.

- [June 27, 2023](#): Council approved transferring and appropriating \$683,000 in additional funding, and amending the agreements with Mark Thomas (design services) and Grey Bowen Scott (project management services) to complete project design.
- Right-of-way acquisition: The City has completed the purchase of the right-of-way needed for the protected bikeways from nine parcels.

The Project is currently at 95% design with construction expected to start in early 2025.

Shoreline Boulevard at U.S. 101 Bicycle and Pedestrian Overcrossing Project

This Shoreline Boulevard at U.S. 101 bicycle and pedestrian overcrossing project (Overcrossing Project) proposes to construct a bicycle and pedestrian bridge, parallel and adjacent to Shoreline Boulevard over U.S. 101 from Terra Bella Avenue to Pear Avenue. It will provide for bicycle and pedestrian connectivity between the protected bike lanes and sidewalks constructed as part of the Project, north and south of U.S. 101. The Overcrossing Project has not progressed beyond preliminary engineering design due to staffing vacancies and higher-priority projects. In addition, the North Bayshore Development Impact fees and the Shoreline Fund previously appropriated for the construction phase of the Overcrossing Project have been reallocated to other projects in the North Bayshore Area further along in design that required additional funding.

DISCUSSION

Current Conditions

While upgraded bicycle and pedestrian facilities continue to be an important need, reduced vehicle traffic volumes, continuance of remote work, a suspension of planned office development, and slower job growth have affected the need for, and potential utilization of, the median bus lane in the post-COVID era. Key factors include:

- **Lower-traffic volumes**—Vehicle traffic in North Bayshore is significantly lower than pre-COVID levels. Traffic is also much lower on Mondays and Fridays compared to midweek volumes. Gateway monitoring for fall 2023 showed that midweek morning traffic was less than 80% of early 2020 volumes and less than 70% in the afternoon. As Figure 2 shows, traffic in the North Bayshore Area has been slowly increasing but remains well below pre-COVID levels.
- **Limited-travel time benefit**—The current lower-traffic levels result in reduced delays and traffic backups. The bus lane would provide less travel time benefit under current conditions.

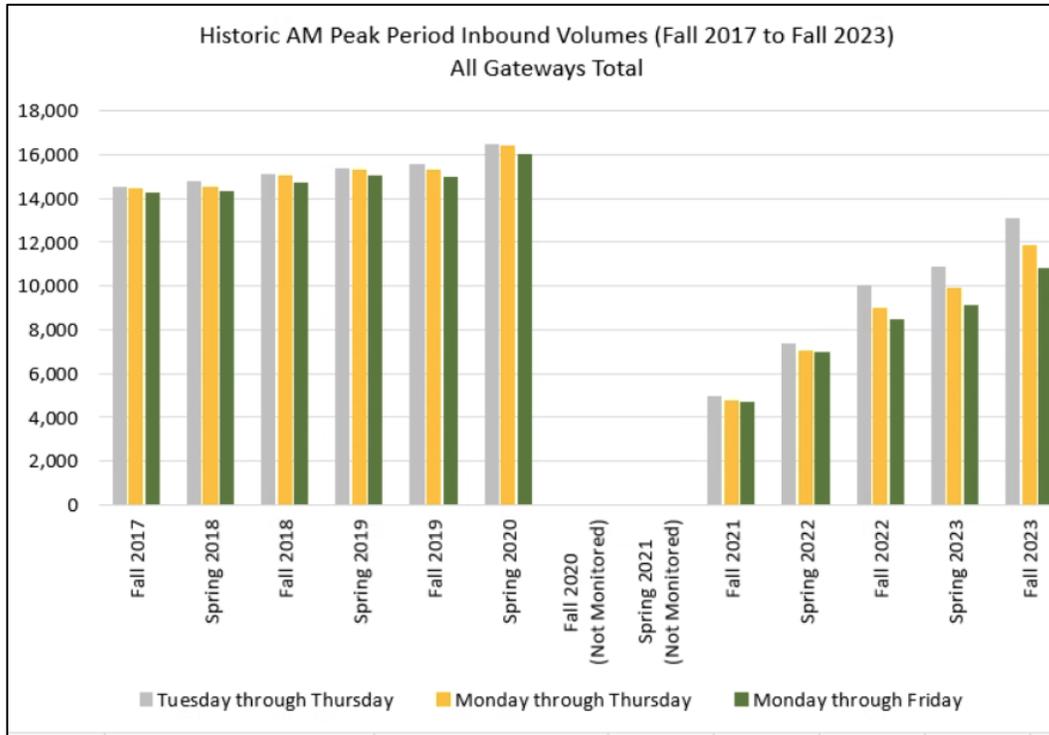


Figure 2: North Bayshore Gateway Monitoring History

- **Reduced Caltrain Ridership**—Before the pandemic, Caltrain ridership was at an all-time high and served many North Bayshore commuters. Many of the previous Caltrain commuters transferred to shuttles operating along Shoreline Boulevard. Today, Caltrain carries only 40% of the previous ridership and is shifting away from a commuter-focused system.
- **Reduced MVgo Ridership**—MVgo shuttles operated by the TMA continue to operate, serving the Caltrain connection. Two routes serve North Bayshore with 10 trips in both the a.m. and p.m. peak periods (40 total daily trips). However, usage of these shuttles has dropped substantially. The current ridership is one to two riders per trip. As a result, the TMA is considering service reductions and schedule adjustments to accommodate reduced ridership.
- **VTA Usage of Bus Lane**—VTA operates one all-day route through North Bayshore. With a 30-minute frequency, VTA provides two buses an hour in each direction. At recent discussions, VTA staff has indicated that they are not likely to use the median bus lane, citing minimal time savings for their customers while creating potential confusion with buses stopping at either curb-side or center locations, depending on time of day. VTA did

indicate a willingness to reconsider in the future when a bus lane could provide more benefits and stressed the importance of customer outreach and driver training.

- **Reduced Corporate Shuttles**—The fall 2023 North Bayshore gateways monitoring report shows that the transit mode share has dropped to below 20%, likely reflecting a reduction in corporate shuttle trips and usage. The largest number of corporate shuttles arrive via San Antonio Road or Rengstorff Avenue. Additionally, the current bus lane design does not allow access from the Shoreline Boulevard/U.S. 101 on- and off-ramps, and North Bayshore employers have indicated corporate shuttles may have a lower usage of the future median bus lane as a result.
- **Delayed Office Development and Reduced Employee Population**—As North Bayshore employers continue to coordinate policies of remote work and more flexible commute schedules, they are reconsidering office space needs. The largest employer, Google, is not planning any new office space at this time, is terminating the Google Landings office development project, and is focusing on housing development approved in their North Bayshore Master Plan. Additionally, several employers in the North Bayshore Area over the past year have reduced their staffing levels. As a result, the number of daily employees is unlikely to change substantially for several years, and those employees are less likely to be in the office every day, reducing transit demand.

Scope Phasing Option

As outlined above, implementation of the median bus lane element of the Project may not be needed or fully utilized in the next few years. Staff has explored the potential phasing of elements of the Project to allow key pedestrian, bicycle, and utility improvements to move forward into construction while deferring the bus lane elements to a future phase.

Staff proposes a three-phased approach to the Project scope:

1. **Complete the bicycle, pedestrian, and utility improvements.** The initial phase will focus on completing the bicycle, pedestrian, and utility improvements with construction targeted for 2025. The modified Project will still include protected bike lanes, protected intersections, sidewalks, traffic signal modifications, and landscaping modifications. The median bus lane improvements would be deferred to a future phase, including median curbs and paving, bus stop platform construction, and transit signals.
2. **Perform a feasibility study.** A second phase would be a feasibility study of interim pedestrian or bicycle improvements through the U.S. 101 interchange. A possible element could include a two-way bicycle path to allow bicyclists to use the Shoreline Boulevard median area over U.S. 101 between Terra Bella Avenue and the La Avenida or Pear Avenue

intersections. If feasible and supported by Council, this would provide a protected bike facility and may avoid the freeway on- and off-ramp merging conflicts between bicyclists and vehicles. Access to the median could be at improved intersections built with the first phase, where the improvements could be compatible with a future median bus lane phase.

This phase would also include deferring the U.S. 101 bicycle and pedestrian bridge since the median bicycle lane would provide a protected facility.

3. **Construct the median bus lane improvements.** The third phase (construction of the bus lane) would occur when conditions in North Bayshore support an effective and well-used median bus lane. This phase would also be linked to construction of the U.S. 101 pedestrian/bike bridge since the bridge would replace the interim median bicycle lane, if constructed in Phase 2. Improvements in this phase would include additional median paving and curbs, median bus stop platform construction, and transit signals and signage. This phase would also include evaluating design modifications to allow corporate shuttles access to the bus lane from U.S. 101 on- and off-ramps at Shoreline Boulevard as well as coordination with VTA to maximize usage.

Deferring implementation of the bus lane until traffic volumes increase to levels that would help ensure that the service is effective and well-supported when it is introduced. This would also provide interim savings to the City with removal of the median bus lane construction costs and deferred operations and enforcement costs.

FISCAL IMPACT

Shoreline Boulevard Interim Bus Lane and Utility Improvements is split into two separate capital improvement projects, one for design and one for construction. The projects are funded from restricted utility funding sources for the utility elements of the Project and from the Shoreline Fund, Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Reserve, and a developer contribution for the transportation elements of the Project (Table 1).

Table 1: Funding Sources, Projects 16-58 and 18-43

	Design, Project 16-58	Construction, Project 18-43
1045 La Avenida development (Microsoft) contribution	--	\$1,045,342
CIP Reserve	--	145,263
Shoreline Regional Park Community, 2018 Series A Bond	\$593,000	13,997,000
Shoreline Regional Park Community Fund	2,003,000	737,000
Water Fund	478,000	350,000
North Bayshore Water Impact Fees	--	3,414,000

	Design, Project 16-58	Construction, Project 18-43
Water Capacity Fees	444,000	86,000
Wastewater Fund	349,331	2,000,000
North Bayshore Wastewater Impact Fees	--	269,000
Wastewater Capacity Fees	<u>148,000</u>	<u>358,000</u>
TOTAL	<u>\$4,015,331</u>	<u>\$22,401,605</u>

The design funding is fully committed, and construction funding has approximately \$18 million in available funds. During the construction phase of the Project in 2021 and 2022, a majority of the costs incurred by the City included contractor mobilization, demolition work, materials and equipment, potholing, soil testing, and overhead and profit.

Project Costs

The Project is at 95% design, and the estimated construction project cost is \$23 million. This estimate does incorporate the removal of the scope elements (Middlefield Road left-turn lanes) to be deferred to a later date as directed by Council in 2021. Staff has not performed a detailed analysis of the cost savings by deferring the median bus lane elements but expects the near-term savings to be between \$1.2 to \$1.5 million, which could help cover some of the escalated costs for the bicycle and pedestrian elements of the Project. Should the Committee be supportive of the deferral of the median bus lane, staff and the consultant team would perform a detailed cost-savings evaluation. Staff will recommend to Council at a future date additional appropriations to the Project once a final cost estimate is identified.

Question No. 1: Does the Committee recommend deferring the median bus lane elements and phasing the Project?

Question No. 2: Are there other phasing options the Committee would like staff to explore?

NEXT STEPS

Should the Committee support project phasing, staff will bring the Project’s phasing option to Council, anticipated in March 2024, to receive Council direction and potentially revise the Project scope.

CONCLUSION

Shoreline Boulevard Interim Bus Lane and Utility Improvements, Project 16-58, is identified as a Priority Transportation Improvement in the North Bayshore Precise Plan (NBPP) and is currently at the 95% design stage. As a result of continued remote work transition, current North Bayshore conditions show a reduction in vehicle traffic volumes, ridership of Caltrain, MVgo, and corporate shuttles as well as delayed office development. There is a benefit to the phasing of elements of the Project, allowing pedestrian, bicycle, and utility improvements to move forward while deferring the median bus lane elements to a future phase. The initial phase would focus on completing the bicycle, pedestrian, and utility improvements. A second phase would initiate a feasibility study and potential construction of interim pedestrian or bicycle improvements through the U.S. 101 interchange. A third phase to construct the median bus lane improvements would occur when conditions in North Bayshore support the effective use of a median bus lane and would be coordinated with delivering the U.S. 101 bicycle and pedestrian bridge.

Staff requests Committee feedback on the following questions:

Question No. 1: Does the Committee recommend deferring the median bus lane elements and phasing the Project?

Question No. 2: Are there any other phasing options the Committee would like staff to explore?

EA-DSC/LL/1/PWK
932-01-30-24M

cc: PWD, APWD—Arango, PCE—Gonzales