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Sent: Monday, May 15, 2023 1:24 PM

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Subject: MVCSP, GreenSpacesMV, and SVBC MV comment on Castro Street Bikeway Feasibility Study

(formal letter attached)



Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning and GreenSpacesMV

c/o Aaron Grossman

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Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition

96 N. Third Street, Suite 375

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May 15, 2023

City of Mountain View Council Transportation Committee (CTC)

City Hall, 500 Castro Street

PO Box 7540

Mountain View, CA 94039-7540

Re: Castro Street Bikeway Feasibility Study, Project 17-53

Dear Chairperson Kamei and CTC members:

The Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning (MVCSP) appreciates the opportunity to comment on this agenda item you will be discussing at your meeting today. We have reviewed the agenda item materials, and we have the following comments we would like to share with you.

- To start, we commend Staff for all their work on this effort over time, and we look forward to seeing all of the project elements in place that will make the corridor safer for and more inviting to active transportation users.
- In general, we support the first recommendation in your list on the first page of the Staff Memorandum (“For the Castro Street/Church Street intersection, approve the Short-/Medium-Term Alternative 2 (no changes for the intersection) and the Long-Term Alternative 2 (continuing the bike lanes through the Church Street intersection by studying options for a pedestrian scramble or converting to a roundabout).”). We’ll note, however, that we prefer, in general, to see all solution options considered on their own merits rather than have them bundled in alternatives, although we do recognize that Staff might choose to bundle as certain options only work if handled together.
- We believe the intersection of Castro and Church needs to be less complex, with so many phases, as it is now. This is a small intersection with limited traffic, so a simpler solution seems more fitting to us. To this end, fewer phases, a pedestrian scramble, or a roundabout should be explored. We often hear that folks have become inclined to use the Castro/Mercy crossing or the midblock crossings instead to avoid this unnecessary bottleneck. Therefore, we support the intention cited in the Staff Memorandum that “features such as a roundabout or pedestrian scramble (where all signals are held red to allow pedestrians to cross all at once) would be considered as part of the concept design.”
- We support the intended treatments called out as follows: “The protected bikeways in the northbound lane are suggested to have a low, mountable concrete curb or semiraised bikeway with a mountable curb. The buffer space provided for southbound travel is placed near vehicle parking rather than the motor vehicle travel lane to decrease crash risk created by opening car doors in this high-turnover parking area.”
- We support the intention to convert angled parking to parallel parking where this can be done.
- We would still like to see eliminating vehicle left-turn movements to provide space for bike lanes in the final plans.
- We support Staff evaluating removal of angled parking or conversion to parallel parking.
- The time frames called out in the Staff Memorandum seem extremely broad (“short/medium term (two to seven years) and long term (eight to 20 years).” Is it possible to tighten this up at all given expressed community wish for faster project turnaround through Public Works.
- The Staff Memorandum calls out that the minimum lane width required for VTA buses is 11’. This requirement is commonly cited (likewise for large emergency vehicles). We wonder if there are opportunities for VTA and City public safety to explore narrower vehicles for use on city-serving streets such as Castro, even if consideration must happen in the long run, which we assume is the case.

- We support the use of Tuff Curbs or a similar treatment where applicable. However, please ensure high visibility for these and that their surfaces are not overly slippery (in some cases, bike tires might need to be able to roll over them).
- We support implementation of raised, midblock crossings to help best ensure pedestrian safety in those locations.
- We do not agree with the Council Transportation Committee on their not supporting the increased parking loss required to eliminate dooring risk. Our priorities are pedestrian and bicyclist safety over the convenience of convenient parking. From a business perspective, foot traffic represents nearly all of their business visits. Even those driving need to walk between their vehicles and business entrances.
- We're not sure about losing sharrows markings, as they can be beneficial regardless of the other changes. That said, there could be nuances in this we're not aware of or noting.
- We fully support either leaving the trees slated for transplanting where they are, or, if they must be transplanted, to do this sooner rather than later in the interest of best survival for the trees.
- Similarly, we support allowing for space behind trees to be utilized for other purposes, such as plants, art, or bike parking.
- For additional bike parking facilities, we would like to see those places as close as possible to the Castro/California intersection in the interest of best serving locations along the pedestrian mall.
- GreenSpacesMV in particular is concerned about the increased hardscape as a result of these changes. Specifically, narrowing the Castro median by five feet means adding five feet of impermeable surface to the street and making the environment that much more unpleasant. We firmly wish to see the City move more in a direction of decreased hardscape and a more natural environment realized as often as possible. For example, when the intersection of Calderon and Dana was reconfigured, two large trees were taken out and never replaced. We certainly hope bike safety was improved, but pedestrian comfort and canopy were significantly decreased and walking discouraged, and this on a major walking route to Landels School.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Bruce England

for the Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning, GreenSpacesMV, and the Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition Mountain View local team

cc:

Brandon Whyte, Active Transportation Planner

Ria Hutabarat Lo, Transportation Manager

Damian Skinner, Assistant Public Works Director

Dawn S. Cameron, Public Works Director

Kimbra McCarthy, City Manager

Heather Glaser, City Clerk
Shiloh Ballard, Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition Executive Director
Anthony Montes, Community Organizer

About Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning

The Mountain View Coalition for Sustainable Planning is a local volunteer-based organization dedicated to making Mountain View as beautiful, economically healthy, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian accessible, and affordable as possible. MVCSP member interest and expertise covers areas such as housing, transportation, the environment, the economy, and beyond!

For more information, see <http://www.mvcsp.org>.

To contact us, send email to mvcsp.info@gmail.com.

About GreenSpacesMV

Our focus is on biodiversity, native, drought-tolerant, and pollinator-friendly landscaping, complete green streets, parks and other open spaces, including Privately owned, publicly accessible (or POPA) park spaces, and so on.

For more information, see <https://www.facebook.com/GreenSpacesMV>.

To contact us, send email to GreenSpacesMV.info@gmail.com.

About Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition

Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition is a non-profit, membership-based organization that works to create a healthy community, environment, and economy in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. SVBC coordinates the Mountain View Local Team of residents who are passionate about bicycling and making change in their community.

For more information, see <https://bikesiliconvalley.org/> and <https://bikesiliconvalley.org/local-teams/>

To contact us, send email to advocacy@bikesiliconvalley.org