TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

DATE: SEPTEMBER 12, 2005

SUBJECT: REPORT ON MIDDLEFIELD ROAD OPERATIONAL ISSUES IN THE MIDTOWN AREA FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF NEW TRAFFIC SIGNAL AND LEFT TURN POCKETS AT MIDDLEFIELD ROAD/BRYSON AVENUE INTERSECTION

This is an informational report and no Council action is required.

BACKGROUND

On May 19, 2003, City Council approved the installation of a traffic signal with left turn pockets at the intersection of Middlefield Road/Bryson Avenue, and asked staff to evaluate the impacts of the traffic signal, as well as a “three-lane option”, and return to Council with a report within 12 months of completion of the traffic signal. The intersection had the fourth highest accident rate in the city, and the traffic signal and left turn pockets were a necessary safety improvement.

DISCUSSION

In order to carry out City Council’s directive City Staff worked with members of the Midtown Residents Association, Midtown merchants, residents of the Midtown area, and the Palo Alto Bicycle Advisory Committee. Topics discussed included (1) evaluating traffic flow along Middlefield in the vicinity of Midtown, including impacts resulting from the existing midblock pedestrian signal in front of Wallgreens, and (2) identifying ways to improve the safety and quality of pedestrian and bicycle travel along the Middlefield Road segment, including evaluation of a “three-lane option” on Middlefield. The three-lane option involves the elimination of one through travel lane in each direction on Middlefield between Oregon Expressway and Colorado Avenue (exclusive of these intersections) in order to accommodate bicycle lanes. A two-way left-turn lane would also be provided.

On July 27, 2005, based on input from stakeholders, staff made the following recommendations to the Planning and Transportation Commission: (1) retain the existing lane configurations along Middlefield Road between Oregon Expressway and Colorado Avenue; (2) retain the existing midblock pedestrian signal on Middlefield Road in front of Wallgreens, and (3) form a committee to further review larger transportation/planning issues associated with the Midtown area. The staff report to the Planning and Transportation Commission (Attachment 1) describes
in detail the work performed by the committee between July 2004 and June 2005, and the justifications for the recommendations that were put before the Commission.

The Planning and Transportation Committee agreed unanimously with all three of staff’s recommendations, with recommendation #3 revised to read “the formation of a continuing stakeholders group to advise the Transportation Division on all issues related to access, egress, circulation, parking, and travel safety for the Midtown area.” The minutes from the July 27, 2005 meeting (Attachment 2) provide details of the discussion, which took place at the meeting.

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cc: Midtown Residents Association
Midtown/Middlefield Stakeholder’s Group
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