Maybell Avenue Meeting Minutes

Maybell Avenue Pedestrian Pathway and Road Maintenance
December 12, 2006 Meeting Summary

Attendees:

City Staff

Barron Park Neighborhood

Murdo Nicolson
Hung Nguyen
Gayle Likens
Matt Brunnings
Roger Nguy

Introductions
Hung Nguyen began the meeting with introductions. He gave a brief overview of the project and what each staff member would be talking about. Hung, Murdo and Matt were available from the Public Works Engineering Division for pavement/storm drain design and the overall project construction. Gayle Likens from the Planning and Transportation Division was available to discuss the speed tables and overall traffic design considerations.

Presentation of the options
Murdo described the differences between the two plans that were presented to the group. He showed how in both cases the path would continue from Pena Court to Juana Briones Elementary school, along the north side of the street. Maybell Avenue itself will get a new layer of asphalt from Baker to the school. Baker towards El Camino will be repaved after the pending utilities project. Murdo explained to the public how two types of curb and gutter will be used along Maybell Ave, with the traditional raised curb and gutter between Clemo and almost to Baker on the South side of Maybell Ave, and simply valley gutters everywhere else. The difference between the two plans is the acquisition of property easements to widen the public right-of-way. If easements are obtained by the City from certain property owners on the North side of Maybell Ave this will allow the City to construct a wider road, with more space for parking and the path. Without additional easements, the new Maybell Avenue alignment will vary in width, getting narrow in places but still conform to an acceptable street width. –The project also includes installation of 4 speed tables along Maybell Ave and one speed table on Donald Drive. Median islands will also be at crosswalks at the intersections of Maybell Avenue with Amarata and with Coulombe. These improvements are being implemented as part of the trial bike boulevard plan for Maybell Avenue and Donald Drive.

Public Questions & Answers

What will be happening at Maybell Way?
No work is planned on Maybell Way as the road there was resurfaced not too long ago. The City will installing a cape seal as preventative maintenance on Maybell Ave. south of Juana Briones Elementary School. This cape seal will provide a smooth sealed roadway.

Why are you using two types of curb and gutter on Maybell Ave?
This is because of easement and property line issues. There is not always room to install 3′ wide valley gutters. There are also conform issues that come up when trying to change an existing 6″ vertical curb to the flat, wide valley gutter. The conform work required in this process is extensive, so to minimize this impact a combination of curb and valley gutter is proposed.

Is this a new sidewalk or a pathway?
This is an asphalt concrete pathway flush with the existing ground, not a raised concrete sidewalk.
Will there be any sidewalks installed as part of this project?
The only possible sidewalk installed as part of this project would be a small section from the corner of Coulombe to Juana Briones Park, on the south side of Maybell Ave. An easement granted from the property owner is required.

What are the differences in the two designs presented?
The location of the new pathway and parking availability are the differences between the two designs. If the City can acquire certain property easements, then the road can be wider, and there can be on-street parking while keeping the path a safe distance from the street. Without the additional property easements, there will be small areas with no parking on one side of the street and an asphalt berm between the path and the new valley gutter. This alternative is not the optimum design, but is acceptable given the existing right-of-way constraints.

Have the property owners already agreed to give up parts of their land?
No, the City is in the process of contacting the homeowners and discussing the possibility. We will work with them to come to an agreement that works for them.

You said previously that there are power poles which cause you to need property easements, how many poles are in the way?
Even though it is a relatively small number of power poles in the way, due to the tension in the existing system of wires, moving one pole would require moving almost all of them, which is a very expensive proposition. The easements are not needed to install the path around these poles and guy wires.

Why not put the overhead utility lines underground, eliminating the need for the power poles?
The City would like to relocate the lines underground; however the cost for doing this is extremely high and there are no funds to do this work at this time or in the near future.

Where is the new valley gutter in relation to the road and the new path?
The valley gutter is a 3’ wide concrete gutter on the edge of the road. In between the valley gutter and the path would be space for parking in most locations.

What is the reason for this project?
This project is funded by the State Safe Routes to School Program, and is intended to give a safe walking path for the children at Juana Briones Elementary School and others students who use Maybell Ave.

Will there be additional street lighting installed as part of this project? It is very dark on the Northside of Maybell Ave?
There are no street lights included in this project. This is a joint project between the Transportation Department and the Public Works Department. City of Palo Alto Utilities handles the street lights and this question will be forwarded to utilities engineering for evaluation.

Why not relocate the overhead power line underground now?
There is not enough money in the budget to relocate them right now.

What is the timing of this project?
Construction will be scheduled to start after school ends. However, due to funding restrictions, construction cannot begin until July and will run through September of this year.

What will be the width of the travel lanes?
The lanes will vary in width, depending on the easements granted to the city and whether parking is allowed.
When does safety come in?
This project will calm traffic on Maybell and Donald. Currently, the prevailing speed (85th percentile speed) on Maybell is between 29-31 mph, which is higher than the posted speed of 25 mph. Five speed tables will be installed as part of an 8-month trial of the bicycle boulevard plan for Maybell and Donald. After the 8 months, the effectiveness of the tables will be assessed by the Planning and Transportation Division and the City will get feedback from the community on whether they will remain permanent or not.

How can I get out of my driveway at 7:50 AM on a weekday?
Police are very busy and cannot control traffic everywhere.

As a bike boulevard Maybell will be shared by cars and bikes?
Yes, in a calmer environment.

Do speed tables affect bikes?
Speed tables are generally not a problem for bicycles. The Palo Alto Bicycle Advisory Committee is ok with them.

What will discourage kids from walking all over the street like they do now?
The new path will provide a safe and easy walkway; however, citations from the police are the only thing that could completely prevent the kids from walking wherever they please.

Why not install these speed tables on Los Robles?
The City decided to focus on Maybell because it is an important school commute route to Terman, Gunn and Juana Briones schools, the Palo Alto Bicycle Transportation Plan calls for a bicycle boulevard along Maybell, and grant funding was received for the pathway.

Will Willmar Drive get the speeders that are avoiding the Donald speed table?
While it is not anticipated that Willmar drive will experience increased traffic or speeding, this issue will be evaluated as part of the evaluation of the bicycle boulevard trial.

How will you decided between the two scenarios you presented for the alignment of the new pedestrian path?
After this meeting, the City will talk to property owners individually about easement grants as well as other input from the community. There will be another public input meeting before the design is completed.

Why would you install a berm between the pedestrian path and the roadway?
The purpose of the berm is to keep cars off the path and would only be installed at locations where the path is very close to the valley gutter.

Will there be street lighting added as part of this project?
Not at this time but we will bring it up to the City Utilities Department.

Will this project coincide with the Arastadero project and cause a huge traffic mess?
No, the Arastadero project is not planned for this summer and has been postponed to summer 2008.

Have you done a survey on Maybell for bicycle use?
Yes, the City performed a survey two years ago showing that was a heavily used bicycle route.

Audience member comment: “If we have wider lanes, we shouldn't need bike lanes also. I prefer non-straight lanes, because they slow down traffic. Narrow lanes will also slow cars down. Combining this with speed tables would be most effective.”
Will the drainage design match that on Baker?
Yes, it will connect right into to Baker.

Are valley gutters safe for bikes?
Yes, they are flat enough to bike in or over. However they are not meant to be biked on.

What is the parking situation with the new path?
Parking would be limited on the North side and mainly only be allowed on the South side of the road without gaining property easements from homeowners.

How does the new width of Maybell compare with Los Robles?
They will be very similar in width.

Audience suggestion: The City should paint lines on the street to define the boundary of the road and also include chevrons to make the road look narrower. An edge stripe is not currently planned for the street, but could be considered during the evaluation of the trial project.

Why not use decomposed granite for the path? It drains better and is easier to run on?
The City is concerned about the added maintenance with decomposed granite as it tends to rut over time.

Where will the traffic go when it is diverted because of the new Maybell speed tables?
The speed tables are traffic calming devices and typically there is only a 15% diversion of traffic. Arastadero is the nearest arterial road and should get the added traffic.

What is the time and schedule for the construction work?
Construction should start in mid July and go until mid September. The valley gutter will take 1 to 1.5 months and the paving work will be completed in a couple of days.

Where will the valley gutter go near the transformer by the Walgreens?
The valley gutter will go on the street side of the transformer.

Will there be a center stripe painted down Maybell?
No.

Is there a final plan?
We will have a public meeting again after meeting with the individual homeowners about granting easements. The design will be open to questions, comments, and suggestions.

Will the City take any property through eminent domain for this pathway?
No.

Audience Comment:
Parking should be restricted near the corners of streets because they block walkers from the view of the motorists.

The public was now invited to inspect the plans up close, while the City staff was on hand to answer individual questions.

Prepared by Matt Brunnings