Frequently Asked Questions

Neighborhood Traffic Safety & Bike Boulevard Project | www.cityofpaloalto.org/bikepedsafety

What Construction is Currently Happening? Construction is completed on Ross Road (NTSBB Segments 1, 2 and 3). Most striping and signage have been completed. All planter boxes/slotted speed humps on Ross Rd have been built and landscaping installed. Work is on hold in Segment 4 (Amarillo/Greer area). Instead of the actual elements, temporary elements are being installed at Amarillo and Greer for the public to try out. Work is underway on Louis between Moreno and Amarillo to install the raised intersections (Segment 5).

For the longer version of the FAQs, click here.

Q1. Why Ross Road? Is this a bicycle boulevard to nowhere?

Palo Alto continues to build more bicycle connectivity to encourage more people to choose options that do not involve a motor vehicle. Ross Road is a major part of building the bicycle connectivity in Palo Alto; linking Jordan and Bryant St. and creating a safe crossing of Oregon Expressway for pedestrians and bicyclists. It is identified as a planned bicycle boulevard in the Council-adopted Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

Q2. Why Are Roundabouts Safer Than a 4-Way Intersection?

A.

According to the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), roundabouts are often safer, more efficient, less costly and more aesthetically appealing than conventional intersection designs. The FHWA Office of Safety identified roundabouts as a Proven Safety Countermeasure because of their ability to reduce the types of crashes that result in injury or loss of life. Roundabouts reduce the types of crashes where people are seriously hurt or killed by 78-82% when compared to conventional stop-controlled and signalized intersections, per the AASHTO Highway Safety Manual (due to lower motor vehicle speeds). Roundabouts are a significantly safer for all road users.

Q3. How can I provide feedback about this project or other Palo Alto streets and bikeways projects?

A. You can provide feedback through any of the following channels:

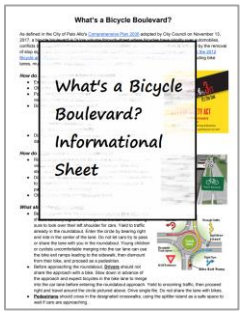
- City Council Meetings (during Oral Communications)
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee (PABAC) Meetings
- Email the City Council (city.council@cityofpaloalto.org)
- Email the City's Transportation Division (transportation@cityofpaloalto.org)
- Email or call the Project's Community Relations Manager from Granite Construction (Sarah Ratliff, Sarah.Ratliff@gcinc.com, (669) 225-1617)
- A survey is open until May 10th at: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/bikeblvd

Q4. Can Fire Trucks get through this new design without an impact on response times?

Yes. They can make it through with negligible impacts on response times. In addition to PAFD reviewing the design, the fire operations team often reassess all routes to stay acquainted with street layouts. See the video here of the ladder truck traversing the roundabout.

Q5. Why is it safer for people riding bicycles along a bicycle boulevard to ride in the travel lane rather than riding as close to the curb as possible? Doesn't that increase the likelihood of a collision with a car?

A. Maintaining a straight line in the travel lane when biking on a bicycle boulevard is safer due to the lower travel speeds of motor vehicles on traffic-calmed streets. Research shows that shared lane markings and other bicycle boulevard features encouraging drivers to maintain slower speeds (including speed humps, chicanes, and bulbouts) make it safer for bicyclists to ride in the center of a residential street travel lane. This position also gives people riding bicycles a better view of oncoming traffic. Bike lanes are not feasible on Ross Road due to parked cars on both sides of the street. When bicyclists choose to ride in the parking lane along Ross Road, they are less visible to drivers when they suddenly swerve out into the travel lane to avoid parked cars. Additional risks are riding in the door zone, right hooks, and drivers backing out of driveways.



More information about traffic safety measures can be found here. The Safe Routes to School Education Resources webpage has more educational information about using the bike boulevard.

Q6. When will construction be over; what are some of the impacts be during construction?

A. Timeline: The adopted construction timeline is online here: www.cityofpaloalto.org/bikepedsafety Note, the City has shifted the project timeline. Updates to the project schedule will be shared when available. In the interim, segment 4 work continues to be installed on Louis Road.

Construction Impacts: Barricades and cones are often used during construction for the safety of construction crews; these barricades and cones temporarily narrow the roadway and make street navigation challenging. All streets will remain open during construction. No temporary or permanent street closures or diversions are planned as part of this project. Please drive, walk, or ride slowly and carefully for your safety, and the safety of construction workers and other road users.

Q7. ***What is the goal of the* Neighborhood Traffic Safety & Bike Boulevard Project*?***

A. This project is part of a larger effort to achieve Council-adopted goals to double the rate of bicycling by 2020, reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions, and improve regional and local bike network connectivity. These goals will be achieved by moderating vehicle speeds, enhancing pedestrian and bicycle safety, and reducing cut-through traffic. Palo Alto has the third highest rate of bicycle commuting in the United States. Bicycle boulevards reduce motor vehicle traffic at morning school arrival and dismissal times; benefit local air quality; reduce traffic congestion; and improve health. The relevant policies in the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan are Policy T-4.2, T-6.1, and T-6.2.

Q8. ***What are some examples of the new features?***

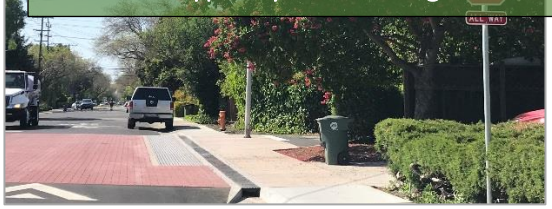
A. The NTSBB project consists of the following features:

Bicycle (Bike) Boulevard: A bicycle boulevard is a shared street design where vehicles and bicycles operate in the same space at low speeds.

Bulbouts/curb extensions extend the sidewalk or curb face into the parking lane at an intersection to narrow the roadway and reduce the crossing distance for pedestrians (note: the travel lane size is the same).

Chicanes: a series of raised or delineated curb extensions, edge islands, or parking bays on alternating sides of a street. This moderates vehicle speeds by visually narrowing the roadway (though the travel lane is the same).

Raised Intersections: a speed table that is marked and signed for pedestrian crossing. It extends fully across the street, can be longer than a typical speed table, and is typically 3 inches high.



Roundabouts: a circular intersection where drivers travel counterclockwise without traffic signals around a center island. Users yield at entry to traffic in the roundabout, then enter the intersection and exit at their desired street.

Slotted Speedhumps: speed tables that include wheel cutouts to allow large vehicles to pass unaffected, while reducing passenger car speeds.

For more information about common traffic safety modifications, please visit the NACTO website and the Federal Highway Administration's (FHWA) Traffic Calming e-primer tool.

Learn more about Palo Alto's Bicycle and Pedestrian goals in the Bike / Ped Plan.