



STAFF REPORT

City Council

Meeting Date:

10/22/2024

Staff Report Number:

24-185-CC

Study Session:

Consider next steps for the Coleman and Ringwood
Avenues Transportation Study

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the City Council provide feedback on the next steps for the Coleman and Ringwood Avenues Transportation Study (Project).

Policy Issues

The Coleman and Ringwood Avenues Transportation Study is consistent with General Plan Circulation Element policies to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety (CIRC-1.7 and 1.8), support safe routes to school programs (CIRC-1.9), accommodate all modes (CIRC-2.1), support use of streets for people walking and bicycling (CIRC-2.7), and expand the bikeway network (CIRC-2.9).

Background

Coleman and Ringwood Avenues are both important routes for students walking and bicycling to several area schools, including Menlo-Atherton High School, Laurel Elementary School (both Lower and Upper campuses), the Peninsula School, KIPP Valiant Community Prep, and Silicon Valley International School. The Menlo Park Transportation Master Plan identifies improved bicycle facilities as a priority project on Coleman Avenue from Willow Road to the City border, as well as a desired extension of that route north through the County-owned portion of Coleman Avenue to Ringwood Avenue. The two roadways are primarily within the City of Menlo Park or County of San Mateo jurisdiction, though a small portion of Ringwood Avenue (one side of the street adjacent to a portion of the Menlo-Atherton High School campus) is within the Town of Atherton.

Coleman Avenue is one of three roads (along with Bay Road and Middlefield Road) that connect Ringwood Avenue with Willow Road. Given its centralized location and lower traffic volumes compared to the parallel routes, Coleman Avenue serves as the most direct route for children that bicycle and walk to school. Ringwood Avenue, while primarily located within the County, is an important part of a bicycling and walking route that connects from downtown and Caltrain to the Flood Triangle, Suburban Park, Lorelei Manor, Belle Haven and Bayfront neighborhoods. The Ringwood Avenue pedestrian/bicycle bridge is an integral component of that route, offering a less stressful, separated alternative to crossings over US 101 at Marsh Road or Willow Road and allowing many students to travel to schools on both sides of US 101.

In December 2021, the City Council approved a memorandum of understanding with the County of San Mateo to jointly fund a study to identify and evaluate safety upgrades for Coleman and Ringwood Avenues, with a focus on improving active transportation options in these corridors. City staff, together with County staff and W-Trans, the project consultant, kicked off the Project in February 2022. The Project included a review of existing conditions, identification of challenges and opportunities, development and evaluation of improvement options, and development of a final report. The Project also included substantial outreach,

including a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), a Community Advisory Committee (CAC), public engagement events, and presentations to the Complete Streets Commission (CSC) and the County Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC).

The TAC included staff representatives from public agencies (including Menlo Park and San Mateo County), Samtrans, the Menlo Park Fire Protection District, and administrators from several schools. The CAC included a diverse set of representatives including students and parents from several schools, members of relevant commissions (City of Menlo Park CSC and County BPAC), local residents, and community-based organizations serving the Belle Haven neighborhood and East Palo Alto.

The first round of community engagement was held in spring and summer of 2022 and included five pop-up events, two walking tours, two outreach events focused on gathering feedback from the Belle Haven community (National Night Out and the Belle Haven Community Climate Change Team), and a community survey. The team received over 200 responses to the online survey and received in person input from well over 100 individuals.

Based on the first round of community outreach, the Project team identified opportunities and constraints and potential improvement concepts for both streets. As the characteristics and widths of each street vary along their lengths, focus areas were created for each street. Ringwood Avenue included one focus area adjacent to Menlo-Atherton High School and a second adjacent to Laurel Elementary School (Lower Campus). For Coleman Avenue, the focus areas included separate areas for the County and the City sections.

The team conducted a second round of engagement through an in-person workshop at Menlo-Atherton High School that provided over 60 participants an opportunity to create their ideal design concepts for each of the four focus areas. Staff assembled the concept designs generated by participants and conducted a second online survey with the top concepts that emerged from the workshop, which received over 450 responses. Based on feedback from this round of engagement, two alternatives were identified for each street.

On Aug. 24, 2023, staff presented the draft concepts to the CSC and received feedback from the CSC and the public. Several members of the public spoke and provided suggestions related to the designs of Coleman Avenue, including a preference to remove parking from the north side of the road adjacent to the proposed two-way path, and working with nearby businesses on Willow Road to share available, under-utilized parking. The CSC discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the proposed bicycle design alternatives, Coleman Avenue user groups and priorities, daytime and overnight parking demands, parking removal options, parking alternatives, pedestrian crossing at Coleman Avenue and Ringwood Avenue, community meetings and the project timeline.

In September and October 2023, staff and the consultant team conducted additional outreach including a workshop held at Menlo-Atherton High School and pop-up event along the County portion of Coleman Avenue that included field markings of where the new facilities would be located and potential tree removals that may be required. Feedback at these meetings included concerns that the proposed alternatives may not address the safety goals of the project on Coleman Avenue due to the significant conflicts between vehicles and bicyclists during the peak hours of use.

To address the feedback received at these events, staff conducted additional outreach focused on Coleman Avenue in December 2023, including a webinar and a survey. These events focused on reviewing potential pilot options for Coleman Avenue to address the concerns raised at the prior meetings. The survey results

showed that 45% of respondents preferred the “no through traffic” pilot that would restrict through traffic on Coleman Avenue at the City-County border over the other pilot options or no change.

On Feb. 14, the CSC provided feedback on the draft study report (Attachment A), which included a long-term option for each of the Coleman and Ringwood corridors plus the “no through traffic” pilot option for Coleman Avenue. The CSC voted unanimously to recommend acceptance of the draft report with the following recommendations:

- Ringwood Avenue: evaluate left turn restriction from Ringwood Avenue to Menlo Atherton High School, improve drainage and increase enforcement.
- Coleman Avenue: add all-way stop on Coleman Avenue at Santa Monica Avenue, explore other traffic calming measures to supplement the pilot, and explore parking removal options for bike lanes for the pilot.

Analysis

Since the CSC meeting in February, there were two further community driven efforts to provide feedback on the alternatives and pilot installation. One included a survey that indicated a preference for a “one-way” pilot on Coleman Avenue and the other was a petition signed by a majority of the residents living on Ringwood Avenue objecting to the long-term alternative.

The consultant team updated their draft summary report and produced a draft final report for the Project (Attachment B). Several appendices to the final report are available for review on the County’s project website (Attachment C).

The draft final report identifies the following long-term alternatives:

- Coleman Avenue. This alternative would add bicycle lanes and a walking path in the County. In the City, parking would be removed on one side of the street and the sidewalk would be widened on the north side to provide a shared used path. Traffic calming (e.g., speed tables, bulb outs and enhanced traffic circles) would be provided across the corridor to help reduce vehicle speeds.
- Ringwood Avenue. A preferred alternative emerged for Ringwood Avenue that garnered majority support during the study. This alternative was later objected to in a petition signed by Ringwood Avenue residents. This alternative would include constructing a two-way shared use path on the north side of Ringwood Avenue, retaining the existing bicycle lanes, and providing additional protection for those lanes. It would also include improved crossings and speed tables to reduce vehicle speeds.

As described on pages 12 through 15 of the draft final report, four pilot concepts in the County and two in the City were developed for Coleman Avenue. Staff has excerpted these six concept drawings and included them for ease of reference as Attachment D. The options are also summarized in Table 1. The pilot options in the City section are based on the removal of parking on one side of the street.

Jurisdiction	Extents	Option
San Mateo County	Ringwood Avenue to City border (approx. Riordan Place)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Turn restrictions 2. Through traffic restriction (road closure) 3. One-way (toward Ringwood Avenue) 4. Traffic calming
City of Menlo Park	County border (approx. Riordan Place) to Willow Road	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Bike lane westbound, shared lane eastbound 6. Narrow bike lanes both directions

The City Council and San Mateo County Board of Supervisors also recently received a letter of support from representatives of each school within the Menlo Park City School District and Menlo-Atherton High School for Option 3, one-way circulation on Coleman Avenue, which is provided as Attachment E.

On Sept. 17, the County hosted a Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) meeting to discuss the Project. County staff and the consultant team presented the results of the study. More than 80 people provided comments either written or verbally during the meeting. A majority of the comments supported the one-way pilot. The BPAC did not take any action on the item, but two of the committee members recognized that most of the responses were in support of a one-way pilot and while they did not indicate a preference for a pilot option they expressed support with moving forward with safety improvements on Coleman Avenue. The BPAC is scheduled to discuss a draft letter (Attachment F) supporting a one-way pilot on Coleman Avenue in the County section at their Oct. 17 meeting.

Each of the options identified in the final report would require additional work to advance, as well as continued community engagement. For the long term options that additional work would include developing final engineering designs for the preferred options. For the Coleman Avenue pilot, it would include additional design work and finalizing the evaluation of the pilot.

If the City and County pursue a pilot, staff anticipates conducting the pilot over approximately six months, using temporary materials such as paint and bollards along with signage to communicate to the restrictions to road users. The City and County would likely develop an evaluation approach that could include data on changes in use of Coleman Avenue and surrounding streets, safety, and public input if the City Council and San Mateo County Board of Supervisors directed the installation of the pilot.

Table 2 summarizes the cost of the options identified.

Street	Description	Cost estimate
Coleman Avenue	Short-term - pilot options	\$60,000 - \$200,000 ¹
Coleman Avenue	Long term - County	\$3,700,000
Coleman Avenue	Long term - City	\$3,900,000
Ringwood Avenue	Long term - separated bike path on north side (City and County)	\$8,000,000

Note: All cost estimates are preliminary and will be refined as projects go through engineering design
¹ Costs shown are for improvements within the City section only.

Options for the City Council

Staff is requesting feedback from the City Council on next steps. Table 3 describes the potential direction.

Table 3: Potential actions for City Council direction	
Potential future actions	Considerations
1. Accept the final report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would conclude this phase of the project as any pilot option or the long-term alternative would need additional design and budget.
2. Express support for the one-way pilot within the County section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received the most support and can be installed in a shorter time frame. • Would use temporary materials so it can be easily removed if not successful
3. Remove parking on one side to facilitate bicycle improvements within City section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would allow for installation of narrow bike lanes or bike lane in one direction and sharrows in the other direction.
4. Install traffic calming measures within City section	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These would primarily be adding speed tables
5. Install stop sign at Santa Monica Avenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not meet stop sign warrants and would impede the through bicycle movement. • Provides clear right of way designation for those crossing Coleman to access bus stops.
6. Pursue long term option	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expensive and would not be installed quickly. • Would need to look at funding sources such as grants to implement

Action 1 is a standalone option as the City Council can accept the final report with or without moving forward with the other options. Actions 2 through 5 are short-term options and related to implementing a pilot. Action 2 focuses on the pilot within the County section while Actions 3 to 5 include elements that could be implemented as part of a pilot within the City section. Action 6 is the long-term alternative and staff could continue to look at a long-term option while the City implements the short-term options.

For Ringwood Avenue, next steps will be led by the County with support by the City since most of Ringwood Avenue is in the County’s jurisdiction. A small portion of Ringwood Avenue (between Middlefield Road and Arlington Way) is split between the City of Menlo Park and the Town of Atherton.

While the report does not provide recommendations for Bay Road, the City is considering improvements to Bay Road as part of the Vision Zero Action Plan implementation. These improvements would include enhancing the existing bicycle lanes and pedestrian crossings and assessing the existing speed hump locations and would be implemented as part of a future repaving project.

Impact on City Resources

The Project was funded through the City’s five-year capital improvement program and used Measure W funds. The budget adopted by City Council is sufficient to complete the current study and the pilot options except for Action 3. Additional funding would be needed if the City Council direction is to include bicycle facilities in the City section which is estimated to be up to \$140,000 for the bike lane option that included a buffer and separation device in one direction. The long-term alternative would require a larger effort and staff would look at potential grant opportunities to help fund the project.

Environmental Review

This action is not a project within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines §§15378. Any future improvements would undergo environmental review as needed.

Public Notice

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with the agenda items being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

Attachments

- A. Hyperlink – Staff Report # 24-002-CSC: menlopark.gov/files/sharedassets/public/v/2/agendas-and-minutes/complete-streets-commission/2024-meetings/agendas/20240214-complete-streets-commission-agenda.pdf#page=7
- B. Hyperlink – Final draft report: smcsustainability.org/wp-content/uploads/Coleman-and-Ringwood-Avenues-Transportation-Study_Final-Draft-Summary-Report.pdf
- C. Hyperlink – County project website: smcsustainability.org/colemanringwoodwalkbike
- D. Excerpted graphics from the draft report showing possible pilot options in the City and County sections
- E. Letter of support from Menlo Park school representatives
- F. Draft letter from San Mateo County Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

Report prepared by:
Kristiann Choy, Senior Transportation Engineer

Report reviewed by:
Azalea Mitch, Public Works Director

A wide-angle landscape photograph showing a winding waterway or stream flowing through a green, hilly area. The sky is filled with large, white, fluffy clouds, and the water reflects the light. In the foreground, there are some tall grasses and small purple flowers. The image is framed by a blue horizontal band containing the title text.

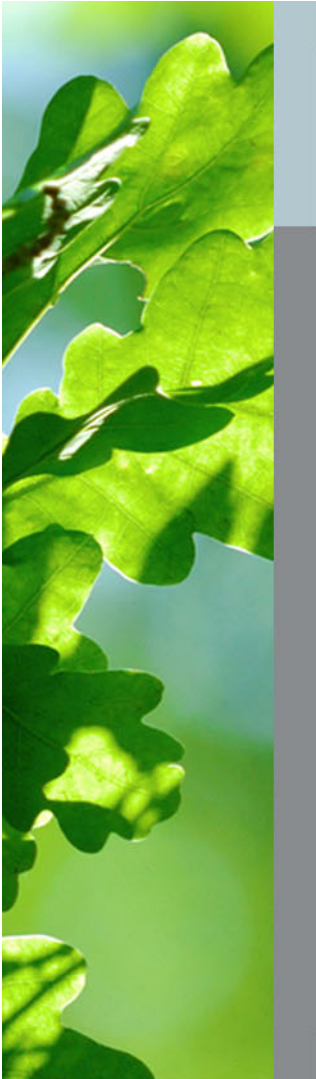
Coleman Avenue pilot options for County and City



SUMMARY OF PILOT OPTIONS FOR COLEMAN AVE.



Jurisdiction	Extents	Option
San Mateo County	Ringwood Ave. to City border (approx. Riordan Place)	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Turn restrictions2. Through traffic restriction (road closure)3. One-way (towards Ringwood Ave.)4. Traffic calming
City of Menlo Park	City border (approx. Riordan Place) to Willow Rd.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">5. Bike lane westbound, shared lane eastbound6. Narrow bike lanes both directions



LINK TO FULL DRAFT REPORT

- https://www.smcsustainability.org/wp-content/uploads/Coleman-and-Ringwood-Avenues-Transportation-Study_Final-Draft-Summary-Report.pdf

TURN RESTRICTION (PAGE 13)

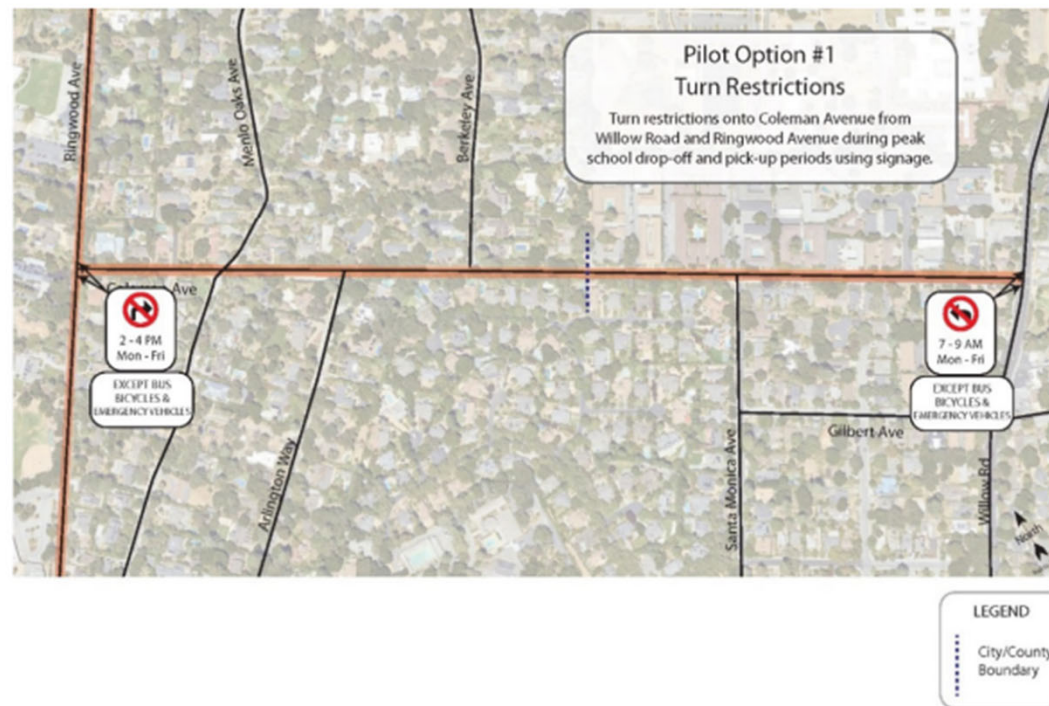


Plate 11 Pilot Option 1 – Turn Restrictions



THROUGH TRAFFIC RESTRICTION (PAGE 13)



Plate 12 Pilot Option 2 - Through Traffic Restriction (Road Closure)

ONE WAY (PAGE 14)

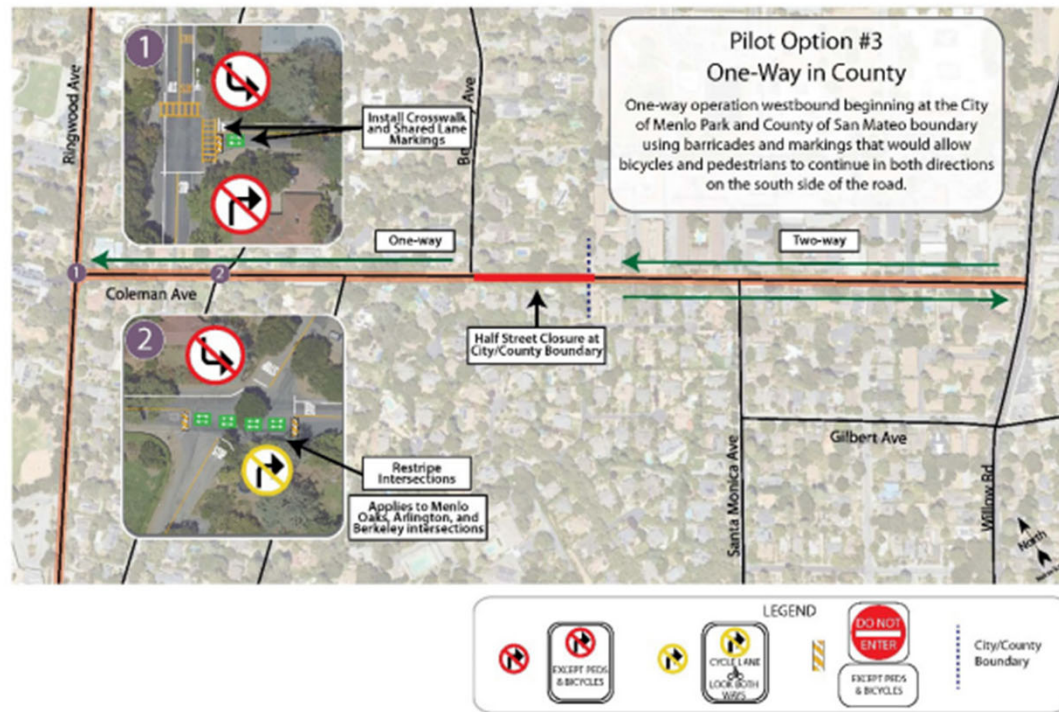


Plate 13 Pilot Option 3 – One-way Circulation in County



TRAFFIC CALMING (PAGE 14)



Plate 14 Pilot Option 4 – Traffic Calming



BIKE LANE WESTBOUND (PAGE 15)

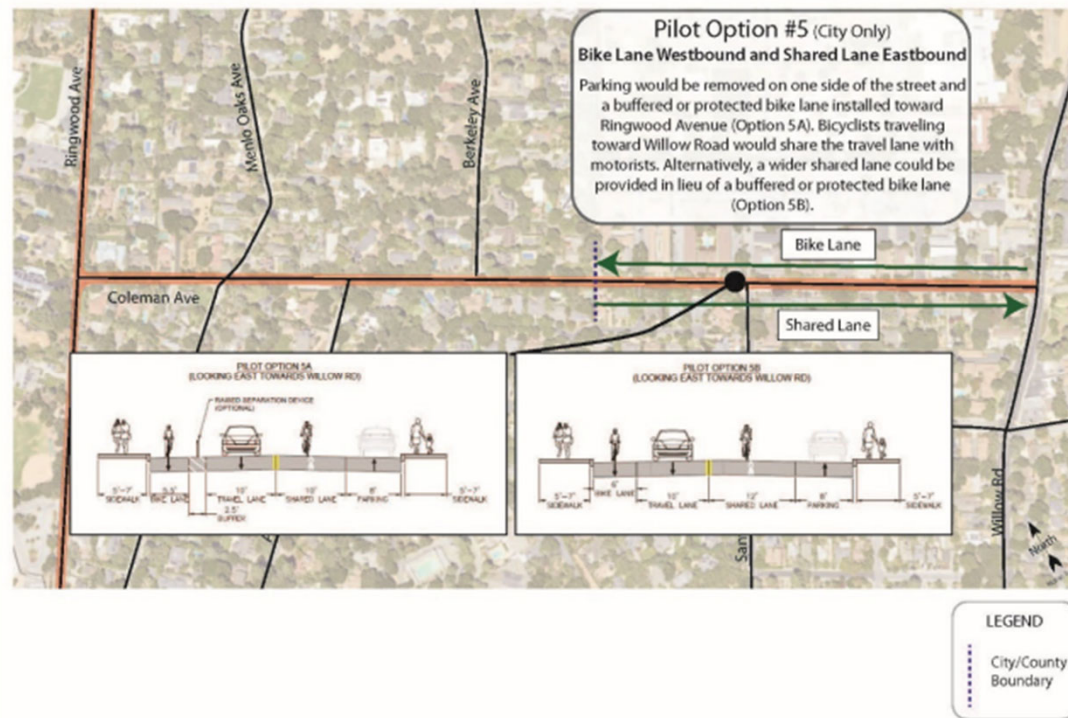


Plate 15 Pilot Option 5 (City only) – Bike Lane Westbound and Shared Lane Eastbound



NARROW BIKE LANES (PAGE 15)

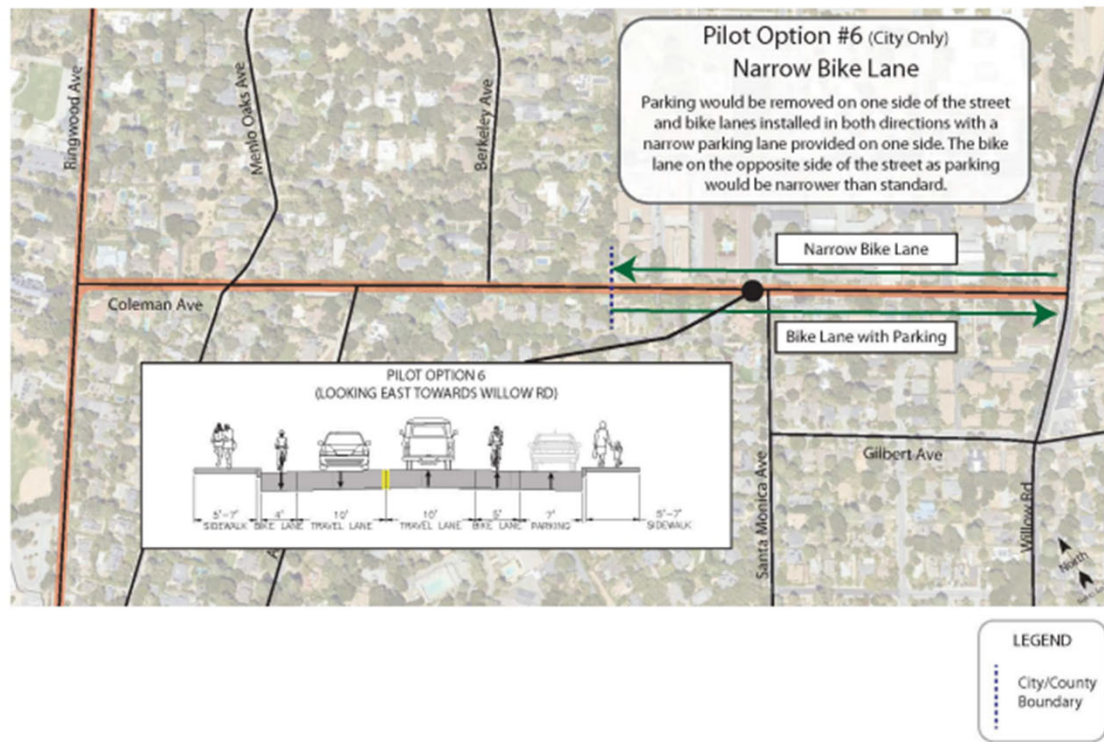


Plate 16 Pilot Option 6 (City only) – Narrow Bike Lanes

September 26, 2024

Dear President Slocum, Vice President Canepa, Supervisor Corzo, Supervisor Mueller, Supervisor Pine and Mayor Taylor, Vice Mayor Combs, Council Member Doerr, Council Member Nash and Council Member Wolosin,

We, the below-signed superintendents and school leaders serving Menlo Park, Atherton, and East Palo Alto children, urge you to take action regarding Coleman Avenue in Menlo Park, California.

Elected officials and the community have tried and failed for more than two decades to improve safety on this 0.7 mile corridor that our students use daily. We believe this time can be different. With the current momentum, support from parents and Coleman Avenue residents (as evidenced at the [9/17 BPAC meeting](#)), and your leadership, we can improve this issue, that's been putting our children at risk, and that has discouraged our young people and families from biking and walking to school.

Coleman Avenue is currently a main two-way thoroughfare for walkers, bikers, and drivers traveling to Menlo-Atherton High School, Laurel Elementary (Lower and Upper), Encinal Elementary, and Hillview Middle School.

On the county part of Coleman, there are no official contiguous sidewalks or designated bike lanes. Walkers, bikers, and drivers share the same road. On any given school day during commute hours, the conditions are unsafe - pedestrians and cyclists (of all ages, beginning with young children) and drivers (including teenagers) all competing to find space, no matter the official direction of traffic flow. Our students deserve safer routes to and from school. Children of all income levels use Coleman Avenue to get to their education. Finding a safe solution for their travel will provide equitable access to education and improve overall health for users.

We are responsible for the safety of our students and we believe the smoothest and quickest way forward to increase the safety of Coleman Avenue, at this time, is to go with the one-way pilot (option #3 from the [Coleman/Ringwood Transportation Study, p. 10.](#)) as soon as possible.

The one-way pilot will:

- Be a compromise that residents and Coleman commuters can support.
- Give us new information about travel behaviors and whether more active users are drawn to the road when there are fewer safety hazards.
- Be relatively low-cost.

- Give us an opportunity to show collaborative leadership with each other, schools, and residents.
- Provide us with the opportunity to build something notably beautiful: a road where all users in all modes of transportation feel safe.

Some of the most invested elected leaders with the most institutional knowledge of Coleman will be leaving their seats in December (Slocum, Wolosin), and in the interests of not further delaying this project, we urge you to vote for and fund a one-way pilot before new electeds come on board.

We are on the precipice of real action -- please take action to fund this one-way pilot. Our children deserve a safer route to school and there is no reason to wait to make it happen.

Sincerely,

Kristen Gracia

Kristen Gracia
Menlo Park City School District Superintendent

Sharon Burns

Sharon Burns
Encinal Principal

Linda Creighton

Linda Creighton
Laurel Principal - lower campus

Alicia Henneghan

Alicia Henneghan
Laurel Principal - upper campus

Alicia Payton-Miyazaki

Alicia Payton-Miyazaki

Oak Knoll Principal

Danielle O'Brien

Danielle O'Brien
Hillview Middle School Principal

Crystal Leach

Crystal Leach
Sequoia Union High School District Superintendent

Karl Losekoot

Karl Losekoot
Menlo-Atherton High School Principal

COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Department Liaison:
 San Mateo County
 Department of Public Works
 555 County Center, 5th Floor
 Redwood City, CA 94063
www.smcgov.org/publicworks

October 17, 2024

Supervisor Ray Mueller
 Hall of Justice
 400 County Center
 Redwood City, CA 94063

RE: Draft SMC BPAC Recommendation for the Coleman and Ringwood Avenues Transportation Study

Dear Supervisor Mueller,

The San Mateo County Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee urges the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors to fund and expedite the One- Way Pilot Program on Coleman Avenue in Menlo Oaks.

Coleman Avenue in Unincorporated Menlo Oaks and the City of Menlo Park, is a 0.7 mile corridor with a road designed for motor vehicles, causing numerous collisions and near misses for walkers, cyclists, and others who use active transportation. Coleman Avenue is currently used as a main two-way thoroughfare for walkers, bikers, and drivers traveling to and from Menlo-Atherton High School, Laurel Elementary (Lower and Upper), Encinal Elementary, and Hillview Middle School. On the Unincorporated part of Coleman, there are no sidewalks or designated bike lanes. Walkers, bikers, and drivers share the same road. The shoulders can be blocked with bins on garbage days. The shoulders flood when it rains. There are blind turns at the intersections. On any given school day during commute hours, the conditions are unsafe; pedestrians and bikers, including young children, and drivers, including teenagers, all compete for the same space. Children have been hit by cars or frightened by near misses. Consequently, parents decide they need to drive their children to school, further increasing traffic congestion.

This problem has been debated by the community and elected officials for over 20 years, with no agreement as to a solution. Finally, following a study funded by the Board of Supervisors and overseen by the County's Sustainability Department, the majority of the community that has participated in the process supports moving forward with the One Way Pilot Program. The proposed pilot would turn Coleman Avenue into a one-way street in the County's portion in the "westbound" direction (that is from the border between Menlo Park to Ringwood Avenue). The westbound option was chosen as it provides the best service to motorists heading to Ringwood in the morning when traffic demand is greatest due to the deadline of getting to school on time. The afternoon commute is more dispersed over time leading to less congestion since many of the students are engaged in after-school activities. The one-way option is to be implemented as a pilot

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Elaine Salinger, <i>Chair</i>	Cristina Aquino (Alternate)
John Langbein, <i>Vice Chair</i>	Mark Lee (Alternate)
Michael Barnes	
Susan Doherty	
Fred Zyda	

An Advisory Committee to the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors

COUNTY OF SAN MATEO
BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN
ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Department Liaison:
San Mateo County
Department of Public Works
555 County Center, 5th Floor
Redwood City, CA 94063
www.smcgov.org/publicworks

to gauge whether it lowers congestion on Coleman Avenue and to evaluate its impact on the rest of the community. While support for this solution is not unanimous, strong support for the pilot was recently demonstrated at the September 17, 2024 BPAC meeting when parents, Coleman Avenue residents, school employees, and community leaders advocated for the One Way Coleman Ave Pilot Program.

The extra space obtained by reducing the two vehicle lanes to a single, one-way lane would be used to accommodate bikers, walkers, and other forms of active transportation. Any reconfiguration needs to be coordinated with Menlo Park so that travel across the border between the two jurisdictions is relatively seamless.

You have received a letter in support of the One Way Coleman Ave Pilot Program from all of the school superintendents and principals in the area.

With your help funding and approving this project, we can solve this problem that's been putting children at risk, and that has discouraged young people and families from biking and walking to school. Coleman Avenue is a narrow road that clearly needs improvement. Transforming Coleman Avenue has the potential to significantly increase active transportation in the area, alleviating traffic congestion.

We also encourage both County Staff and the Board of Supervisors to work with the City of Menlo Park to improve Coleman Ave in the City's section so that those using active transportation can safely travel the City's section, too.

For further information regarding the benefits of cycling to school:

<https://sfstandard.com/opinion/2024/09/11/the-case-against-driving-city-kids-to-school/>

Sincerely,

Elaine Salinger, Chair
County of San Mateo Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

cc: Ann Stillman, Carolyn Bloede

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

Elaine Salinger, *Chair*
John Langbein, *Vice Chair*
Michael Barnes
Susan Doherty
Fred Zyda
Cristina Aquino (Alternate)
Mark Lee (Alternate)

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