



MEMORANDUM

TO: City Council

FROM: Bill Robeson, Assistant City Manager/Public Works Director

BY: Shannon Sweeney, City Engineer

SUBJECT: Traffic Way Bridge Replacement Project, Traffic Detour Plan, and Parking Impacts

DATE: September 9, 2024

RECOMMENDATION:

Review and provide input regarding the traffic detour plan and parking impacts associated with construction of the Traffic Way Bridge Replacement Project.

IMPACT ON FINANCIAL AND PERSONNEL RESOURCES:

\$6,911,469 is budgeted in FY 2024-25 and the same amount is budgeted in FY 2025-26 for the Traffic Way Bridge Replacement Project (the "Project"), for a total of \$13,822,938 over the next two fiscal years. The Highway Bridge Program (HBP) is funding 88.53% (\$12,237,447) of the project, and Measure O-2006 Sales Tax is funding the remaining 11.47% (\$1,585,491) of the project. The detour plan is included in the plans and specifications and will be funded as part of the construction project, scheduled to be awarded in December 2024.

BACKGROUND:

Traffic Way Bridge was first constructed over Arroyo Grande Creek in 1932. Its piles are concrete posts originally embedded 23 feet into the ground for support (Figure 1).

Scour, the washing away of soils and creek materials due to creek flow, has resulted in a loss of embedment or reduction of piling depth. Loss of embedment negatively impacts the structural integrity of the bridge. In 2006, Caltrans first identified concerns about the bridge pilings. A 2016 inspection revealed signs of deck cracking, failed expansion joints, spalling concrete, concrete abrasion, and creek channel erosion.

On [July 24, 2018](#)¹, the City Council approved agreements for the City to seek reimbursement from the HBP to replace the bridge. This funding covers 88.53% of the bridge replacement cost, with the balance coming from local funds.

¹ <https://www.arroyogrande.org/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/7342?fileID=13214>

Figure 1: Traffic Way Bridge Piles



On [July 28, 2020²](#), the City Council reviewed options for the bridge's full or partial closure during construction and selected a full closure option as the preferred alternative for the project. A significant factor in this decision was the construction time frame. A partial closure would take approximately two years, while full closure is estimated at one year. Figure 2 is a rendering of the new bridge design, which eliminates the potential for scour and reduces the probability of debris accumulation in the future.

Figure 2: Rendering of the New Bridge Design



² <https://www.arroyogrande.org/AgendaCenter/ViewFile/Item/9992?fileID=16092>

Bridge replacement plans and specifications are complete. As the Project continues to move forward, plans to reroute traffic through the area is increasingly becoming a focal point due to the Project's impact on the community.

ANALYSIS OF ISSUES:

A project of this magnitude, the City's largest capital project in its history, has many items to consider reducing the overall impact on the community. Accordingly, staff have conducted early and more recent community and stakeholder outreach to help inform plans associated with traffic detours and parking impacts. The traffic detour plans and parking impacts can be realistically evaluated now that the design and construction plans have been completed and certified. Staff continues to evaluate and incorporate feedback and will provide further updates and plan confirmations at a subsequent Council meeting, potentially the meeting on September 24, 2024.

Community Outreach

Community meetings on the Project were held on [November 18, 2021³](#), and [April 24 and 25, 2024⁴](#). Press Releases were sent out for these meetings and community members and local business owners were encouraged to attend to receive updates on the status of the Project. Each meeting was productive and had about ten members of the public/business owners in attendance.

A Village Business Group email was sent out on August 30, 2024 that provided a reminder about the Project, encouraged a conduit for feedback through email, phone calls, and/or individual meetings between Village businesses and Project staff, included an invitation to a Project review meeting on September 4, 2024, and contained specific notification of tonight's City Council meeting where the Project's detour and parking impacts will be considered.

The Project has been a frequent topic at several Village Business Group meetings over the past year.

Traffic Detour

Traffic Way is an arterial roadway that conveys approximately 11,000 vehicles per day. Throughout the design process decisions have been made to accomplish the full closure option previously approved by the City Council. The current construction schedule is April 2025 through December 2025. The main points to the detour plan due to the closure of the Traffic Way Bridge are:

- routing northbound traffic on Traffic Way onto Bridge Street
- modifying traffic circulation on Bridge Street to one way

³<https://www.arroyogrande.org/DocumentCenter/View/9815/Community-Meeting-Presentation-111821?bidId=>

⁴ <https://www.arroyogrande.org/DocumentCenter/View/12362/Traffic-Way-Bridge-Replacement-Project---Community-Meeting-20240424r3>

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- installing a temporary traffic signal light at the Bridge Street and East Branch Street intersection that will allow traffic to turn in both directions (Nevada Street will be temporarily closed)
- parking modification on East Branch Street from Bridge Street heading west
- several other safety measures designed to alleviate traffic congestion are discussed further in this report

[Detour maps](#)⁵ are available on the [Traffic Way Bridge Replacement Project](#)⁶ website. The planned detour affects several groups as listed below.

Five Cities Fire Authority (FCFA), Arroyo Grande Police Department (AGPD), and San Luis Ambulance

Fire Station 1 is located on Traffic Way and Station Way, just south of the proposed road closure. Public Works staff have met with FCFA and AGPD staff and emailed San Luis Ambulance staff to discuss the detour plan and project schedule. FCFA staff indicated that they are considering moving certain fire apparatus to the Grover Beach station to improve their response times during the construction phase of this Project.

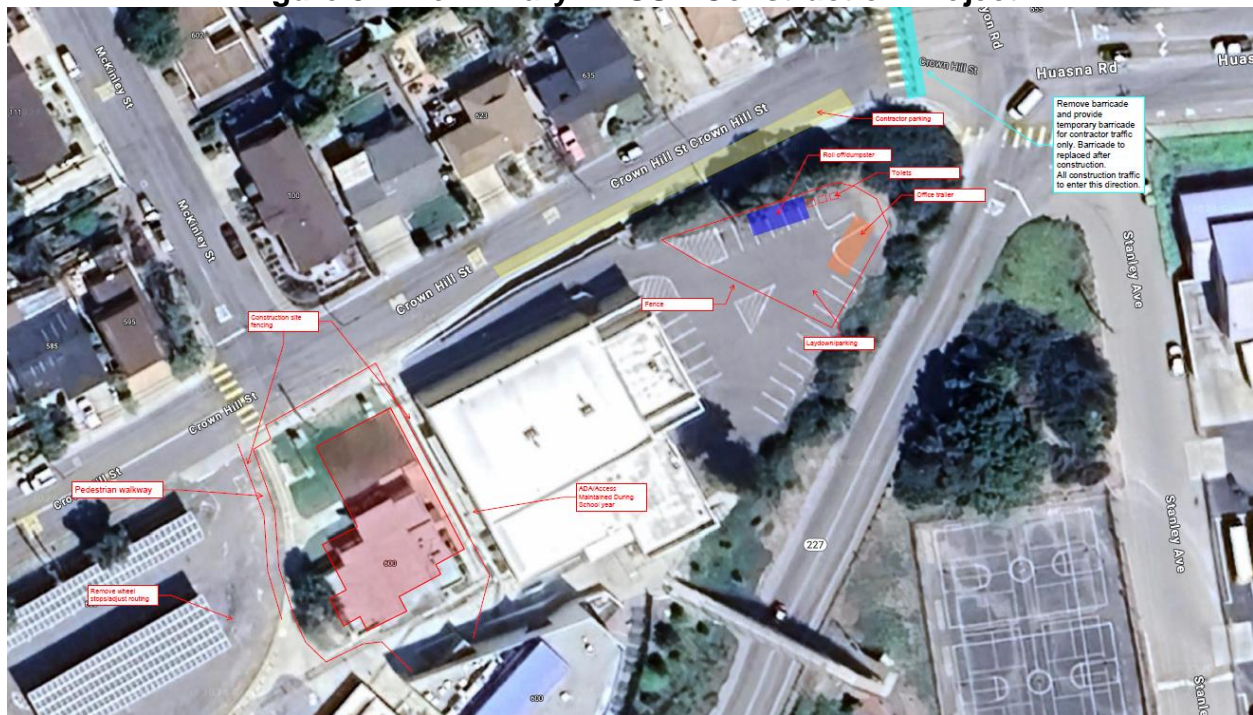
Lucia Mar Unified School District (LMUSD)

Student traffic at Paulding Middle School (Paulding) and Arroyo Grande High School (AGHS) will be impacted by the closure. In addition, LMUSD has notified City staff that they have a sizeable 16-month construction project to build a new administration building within the construction fencing shown in Figure 3 at Paulding starting November 2024. This could add additional construction traffic through the Village. City staff is working with LMUSD staff to consider diverting construction traffic through the currently barricaded entrance at Crown Hill Road and Huasna Road.

⁵ https://www.arroyogrande.org/DocumentCenter/View/12363/Traffic-Way---Traffic-Flow_20240425

⁶ <https://www.arroyogrande.org/753/Traffic-Way-Bridge-Replacement-Project>

Figure 3: Preliminary LMUSD Construction Project



The detour plan and project schedule were shared with LMUSD operations staff because of the potential impact that the detour will have on LMUSD bus routes and City and LMUSD staff are committed to remaining in regular communication during the respective projects.

United States Postal Service (USPS)

The detour plan and project schedule were shared with the USPS postmasters in Arroyo Grande and Pismo Beach to ensure they had adequate time to plan for consistent mail delivery during the construction period.

Regional Transit Authority (RTA)

Three of the four [South County RTA bus routes⁷](#) traverse Traffic Way between Branch Street and Station Way hourly and will be affected by the street closure. The detour plan and project schedule were shared with RTA operations staff and City staff will continue to work with RTA staff on alternate bus routes and accommodations.

Village Business Owners

Village businesses will be impacted by the street closures, loss of parking, and increased traffic congestion resulting from the detour plan. The detour plan and project schedule were shared with Village business owners, who were encouraged to meet with City staff to discuss the detour plan and parking impacts. During a meeting on September 4, 2024,

⁷ <https://www.slorta.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/SCT-schedule-brochure-March-2024.pdf>

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City staff and Village business owners had a productive conversation that included the following topics:

- Bridge Street backup caused by high school traffic in the afternoon.
- Potential impacts of the stop sign on Mason Street at Le Point.
- Removing parking on the south side of Branch Street rather than the north.
- Consideration of adding tables in front of Humdinger's if the parklet is removed.
- Bridge Street and Branch Street traffic signal timing to accommodate pedestrian traffic.
- Elevated enforcement.
- Adding a "keep clear" area on Bridge Street in front of Olohan Alley.
- Adding a "no right turn" sign from the Klondike's parking lot onto Bridge Street.
- Importance of communication.

Recreation Services

Several community events occur in or around the Village. While each event may not directly use Traffic Way Bridge, Traffic Way does serve as a detour route for several of the community events. Each of those events is listed below with the evaluation of potential impact.

- Harvest Festival Parade – the road closure map for the Harvest Festival Parade already includes street shutdown at Traffic Way Bridge. Therefore, the detour associated with the construction project will not negatively impact this event in 2025.
- Halloween – Halloween in the Village does not ordinarily involve street closure at Traffic Way Bridge. For this event to be considered in 2025, additional costs may be incurred to accommodate a larger road closure, like that for the Harvest Festival Parade, or alternate locations may be considered.
- Holiday Parade – the Holiday Parade does not ordinarily involve street closure at Traffic Way Bridge. For this event to be considered in 2025, additional costs may be incurred to accommodate a larger road closure, similar to that of the Harvest Festival Parade, or an alternate route can be considered.
- Farmer's Market – while a partial closure of Olohan Alley will exacerbate Village traffic congestion, no additional conflicts exist to accommodate this event during construction.
- Concerts in the Park – while events at Heritage Park will exacerbate Village traffic congestion, no additional conflicts exist to accommodate this event during construction.

Traffic Relief Opportunities

Several options were considered for potentially alleviating traffic congestion during Project construction. Each of these opportunities is discussed below.

Item 11.a.

- Allow LMUSD construction traffic access through the currently K-rail barricaded section of Crown Hill Road at East Branch/Huasna/Corbett Canyon intersection. This modification will reduce construction traffic through the Village and will be further reviewed with LMUSD staff. (Figure 4)

Figure 4: Crown Hill Road



- Open the fire gate on Miller Way at Emerald Bay Drive. This alternative was considered to provide an additional alternate path for some Paulding traffic. After further discussion, it was determined that this alternate path would not provide much relief to traffic congestion because it is parallel to James Way. (Figure 5)

Figure 5: Miller Way/Emerald Bay Drive



- Open the fire gate on Cerro Vista/Woodland. This alternative was considered as an additional alternate path for some AGHS traffic. After further discussion, it was determined that this alternate path would not provide much relief to traffic congestion and traffic would be better detoured to Halcyon Road. (Figure 6)

Figure 6: Cerro Vista/Woodland

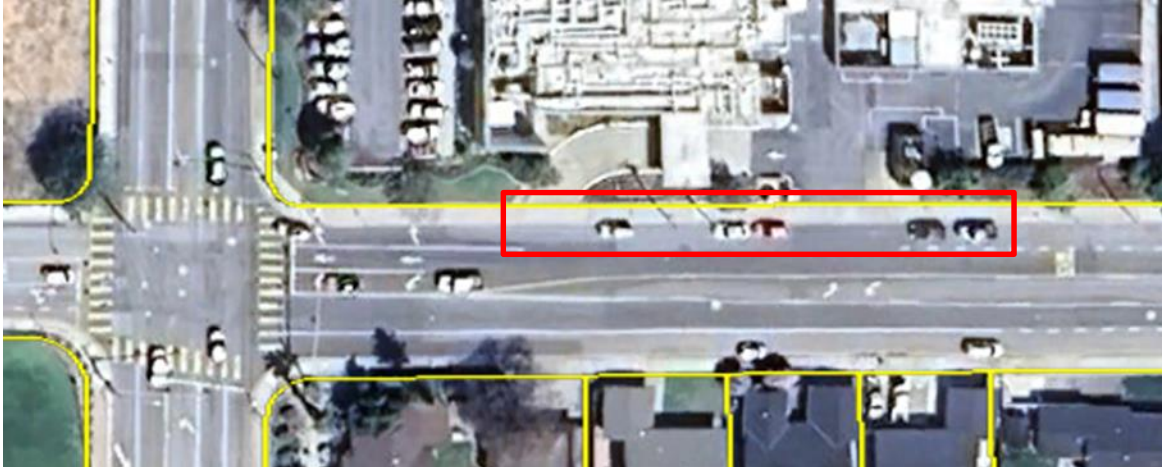


- Red curb the north side of Fair Oaks, just east of Halcyon Road. This removes eight parking spaces adjacent to Arroyo Grande Hospital. This change has already been discussed with hospital staff, who are amenable, but requested that City staff defer implementing this change until after they have completed their current construction project that impacts their parking lot. Removing these parking spaces can reduce congestion on westbound Fair Oaks Avenue by accommodating two

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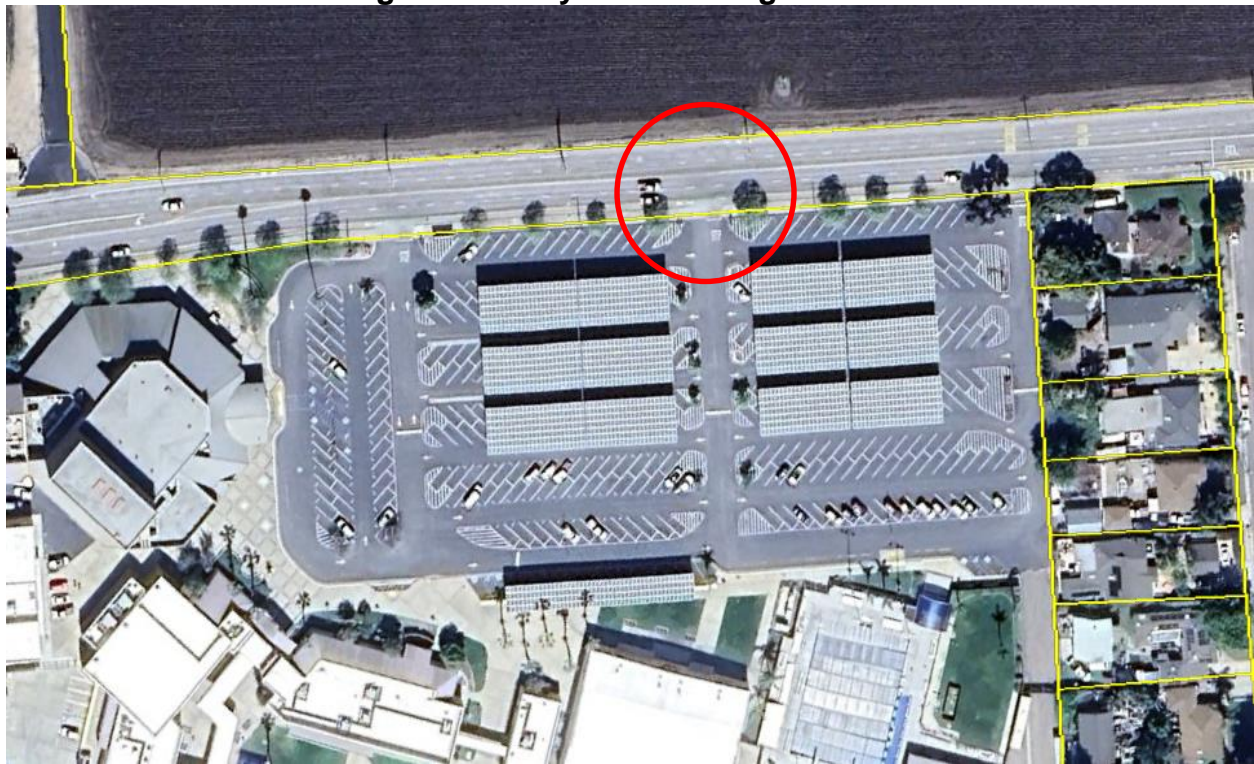
full lanes of traffic rather than traffic stacking behind parked cars. (Figure 7)

Figure 7: Arroyo Grande Hospital



- Adjust egress from AGHS. The City’s former Traffic Commission advised the prohibition of left turns from the AGHS parking lot in 2004. On January 24, 2012, the City Council adopted Resolution 4420 establishing a policy to prohibit left turns onto Fair Oaks Avenue from the AGHS parking lot. City staff is considering mechanisms for allowing westbound traffic onto Fair Oaks Avenue to alleviate anticipated congestion through the Village on school day afternoons. One potential alternative is a temporary traffic circle in the middle entrance/exit of the AGHS parking lot. Staff continues to evaluate such an option and is not yet certain of its feasibility. (Figure 8)

Figure 8: Arroyo Grande High School



Parking Impacts

During construction, some parking spaces will need to be temporarily removed to accommodate traffic lane adjustments. The potential parking space losses include:

- Ten parking spaces, a loading zone and an 80-foot parklet in front of Humdinger Brewing and Rori’s Artisanal Creamery will be removed on East Branch Street, west of Bridge Street to accommodate two westbound lanes on East Branch Street west of Bridge Street.
- Two parking spaces on the east side of Bridge Street will be converted to a loading zone (yellow curb) to address the loss of a loading zone on East Branch Street in the vicinity of Bridge Street.
- Three parking spaces on the west side of Bridge Street just south of Branch Street will be removed.
- One parking space on the north side of Branch Street just west of Mason Street will be removed to accommodate trucks turning left from northbound Mason Street to westbound East Branch Street.

In total, 16 parking spaces will be impacted. All parking spaces removed during construction will be restored back to their previous arrangement following construction.

At a recent stake holder meeting, Village business owners requested that staff consider shifting all travel lanes on East Branch Street just west of Bridge Street to the south to preserve the parklet in front of Humdinger Restaurant and Rori's Ice Cream. The north side of East Branch includes more storefronts, outdoor dining in front of Sidewalk Café, and a mini plaza adjacent to the clock tower. Focusing parking on the north side rather than the south side could reduce the number of pedestrians crossing East Branch Street, creating a safer environment. However, doing so will eliminate an additional four parking spaces. The design engineer is currently evaluating this option to ensure it is technically feasible from a lane transition and turning radius perspective.

While any reduction in parking is undesirable, the number of parking spaces reduced for the Project is less than the 25 parking spaces temporarily removed to accommodate the Swinging Bridge Retrofit Project in Summer 2024. To help alleviate parking concerns, clear parking signs informing the public of parking behind businesses north of East Branch Street are being installed as part of the Wayfinding Project and are scheduled to be installed before the Project begins in Spring 2025.

Buy Local Campaign

Additional opportunities are being investigated to support the community during the Project. Staff have been in discussions with the South County Chamber of Commerce to develop and administer a Buy Local campaign for Village businesses during the Project. More information regarding timing, duration, scope, and funding will be provided at a future City Council meeting.

ALTERNATIVES:

The following alternatives are provided for the Council's consideration:

1. Accept information provided regarding detour planned parking reductions associated with the Traffic Way Bridge Replacement Project;
2. Provide additional input to City staff for consideration or implementation to reduce negative impacts associated with detour plans and parking reductions currently planned for the Traffic Way Bridge Replacement Project; or
3. Provide other direction to staff.

ADVANTAGES:

Traffic Way Bridge is a critical element in City traffic circulation. Failure of this bridge will result in long-term repercussions that will be much more detrimental to the community than the short-term impacts associated with traffic detours and temporary parking reductions needed to accommodate project construction.

DISADVANTAGES:

The traffic detour and parking reduction will negatively impact the community, other agencies, and local businesses for approximately one year. City staff are evaluating opportunities to alleviate traffic congestion. City staff have opened dialogue with other agencies to discuss alternate routes and accommodations. City staff have also held

community meetings and reached out to local businesses to communicate impacts during the construction phase. In addition, the contract documents include signage to indicate to the public that all businesses will remain open during construction.

NEXT STEPS

Plans and specifications have been reviewed by City staff. The design engineer is finalizing plans and specifications for a planned bid date of September 18, 2024. Bid opening date is scheduled for November 7, 2024. Project award is scheduled for December 10, 2024. The goal is to have a contractor on site to address environmental issues prior to February 15, 2025. Construction is scheduled for April through December 2025. Meanwhile, the consultant and City staff continue to work with regulatory agencies to finalize environmental documentation.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

On September 26, 2023, the City Council adopted a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) for the Project (SCH No. 2022060452). The MND analyzed the environmental impacts of the Project in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act.

PUBLIC NOTIFICATION AND COMMENTS:

The Agenda was posted at City Hall and on the City's website in accordance with Government Code Section 54954.2.