

Modern Transit Society

moderntransit.org

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September 4, 2007

To: Rajeev Batra, Director of Public Works, City of Santa Clara

Cc: Council member Will Kennedy, Chair, BAC, City of Santa Clara

From: Akos Szoboszlay, President, Modern Transit Society

Subject: Prompt solutions for pedestrian issues along three expressways.

Dear Sir,

Most of these six issues involve **safety**, and all are **violations of policy and/or law, including Vehicle Code 21949**. Since the cities have jurisdiction on the expressways, County staff has usually complied with any directive from staffs of cities.

For links below, first download this letter as a pdf or doc file, at:

moderntransit.org/expy/batra.pdf for pdf

moderntransit.org/expy/batra.doc for doc

1) Until 2005, pedestrians were able to walk on the shoulder along Central Expressway to reach De La Cruz. For example, someone taking the bus to work at BEA Systems must get off at the nearest bus stop, located at Central and Lafayette, then walk one block along Central. In 2005, County highway staff **eliminated the shoulders at the De La Cruz intersection, from both sides of the road**. There is no nearby alternative route. A sidewalk here is actually required for the entire block by County BOS policy due to the railroad crossing [1991 BOS policy, [see quote 8, attached](#)], but this policy was ignored by County staff.

Prior to final approval of the intersection design, which added lanes, Mr. Pitton had requested that the project include a sidewalk to connect the existing sidewalk at the SW corner to the existing shoulder, some distance from the intersection. Dan Collen of County Roads agreed. (This information is from John Sullivan, BAC member and VTA/County BPAC representative). Yet, that agreement was not complied with. Intersections are the most dangerous place to force people to walk in the traffic lane due to merging traffic.



Photos: Unsafe intersection redesign forces people to walk in the traffic lane of a blind turn (left photo, NW corner) or the fast right-turn lane (right photo, SW corner). [\[more photos\]](#)

Central Expressway here used to be named Kifer Road (and connected between De La Cruz and the existing Kifer Road). In 1966, the City Council prohibited pedestrians and bicycles along this road, but in 1982 repealed the prohibition of both pedestrians and bicycles on Central Expressway. Since then, County staff has not made any pedestrian improvements, as if pedestrians continue to be prohibited.

Action: Request County Roads to promptly create a dirt path from the intersection corner to where the shoulder line emerges [1991 BOS policy, [see quote 7](#)] This is still easily obtainable on the north side of the road.

2) In 2005, County highway staff **destroyed the sidewalk** on Montague bridge over Guadalupe River, on the south side. The north side had no sidewalk. This action was a multiple violation of County policy that:

- a) requires sidewalks on bridges [1991 BOS policy, [see quote #8](#)],
- b) prohibits destroying sidewalks [[quote #9](#)], and
- c) requires paths or sidewalks along “the entire expressway system” [[quote #1 and #2](#)].

The shoulder width was also cut in half (from 10 feet to 5 or 6 feet) and some paths were eliminated by road widening. This sidewalk, path and shoulder was **used by Santa Clara residents** living at the adjacent residential development (southwest of Montague & the river) **walking to the Light Rail Station** on First Street. Asphalt was recently added for walking on the north side of the bridge, but these Santa Clara transit patrons still walk on the south side to avoid crossing Montague Expressway twice, per trip.

Montague Expressway never had pedestrian prohibitions, and this portion was formerly named Montague Road. The 2003 Expressway Master Plan (and earlier Master Plans) show sidewalks on both sides of Montague for its entire length.

Action: Request County Roads to promptly complete a dirt path along that block [[quote 1](#)] and eventually **restore the sidewalk river crossing using the vehicle-lane-addition-budget**, since the pedestrian facility already existed and pedestrians get no benefit from adding vehicular traffic lanes. Historically, destroying pedestrian facilities first has been a method of using the limited TDA (pedestrian) budget to subsidize adding traffic lanes. Most of the block already has a dirt path, created by Santa Clara transit patrons by simply walking there. See photos at: moderntransit.org/expy-photos/bus-stop-path/

3) There are a large number of pedestrians walking to/from the **Decathlon Club, directly on Central Expressway** (between Bowers Ave. and Corvin Dr.). County staff needs to promptly comply with creating dirt paths, first at the “intersection areas” which are riskier, and then complete them the rest of the way in the block. Mr. Murdter and Mr. Collen, County highway staff, have, for the past year, made false statements that ADA law prohibits them from creating dirt paths. See *ADA-compliant dirt and gravel paths* ([attached](#)) which proves that their statements are false, using both actual federal quotes and photos of ADA-compliant dirt paths and gravel paths. County highway staff never quoted federal law or federal manuals.

Action: Request County Roads to promptly create a dirt path at the intersection (until shoulder line is reached) at Central and Bowers (SW corner) and to complete the path for the entire block as second priority.

4) The [Expressway Master Plan](#) explicitly shows opening the fence at San Tomas and El Camino, so that pedestrians can use a parallel residential street less than 100 feet from San Tomas. Two sidewalks almost touch, separated by the chain link fence. Mr. Pitton opposed opening that fence (and four others) at the BAC in June 2006, meeting in June 2006, but the committee recommended that access be provided. Photos, maps, and details are on this web page: moderntransit.org/expy/santomas-map.html

This action would solve the problem that you mentioned, of how a pedestrian route would cross El Camino. By providing access points recommended by the BAC, the *existing* pedestrian signaling and crosswalk at San Tomas could be used to cross. This would also provide a shorter, more efficient, north-south route.

San Tomas here was formerly named Los Olivos Drive, and had these street connections that were closed. The pedestrian connections need to be re-established to enable an efficient route for pedestrians and transit patrons.

Action: Request County Roads to promptly open this fence, citing the [Expressway Master Plan](#). Further fence openings, recommended by the BAC in June 2006, should go before Council as per City procedure.

5) A few years ago, a “pedestrians prohibited” sign was illegally posted at the southeast corner of Forbes and San Tomas. The City Council repealed the prohibition here in 1987, and the sign was removed at that time. State law only enables posting such sign if an ordinance or resolution prohibits pedestrians. Mr. Pitton and County highway staff ignored our repeated requests for compliance with the law. One year ago, a path was created from this corner to the pedestrian entrance gate of the condominium complex on San Tomas, simply by trimming shrubs. Still, the sign has not been removed. If County staff continues to stonewall, then the City Police can act to remove the sign, since they are empowered to remove illegal signs along roads. This is also a safety issue, because the sign forces crossing the expressway twice which is riskiest according to statistics.

Action: Request County Roads to promptly remove the “pedestrians prohibited” sign at the southeast corner of Forbes and San Tomas. If they stonewall, inform the City Police Department to enforce the law by removing the sign.

6) City staff should request **prompt path creation along San Tomas**. If County staff refuses to comply with the Board order to create paths [1991 directive, [see quote 1](#)] by falsely claiming that ADA prevents that, then city staff should quote ADA law and federal manuals. [[See attachment](#)] If that does not work, then the City Council should write a letter requesting compliance from the Board.

Action: Request County Roads to comply with the Board order to create paths along San Tomas.

Further information:

Our San Tomas web page has information about safety, policies and laws, Caltrans practice, and more, at: moderntransit.org/st

Comparison with existing facilities (or lack of) on other Santa Clara roads is important. A link to photos of Santa Clara pedestrian facilities (or lack of) is obtained by clicking [pictorial report](#) near the top. I can also show a slide presentation that clarifies issues. If we can meet again, please call me at 408 221 0694.

Sincerely,

Akos Szoboszlay, President

Attachments:

County Board of Supervisors policies and orders [[link, one-page](#)] [[link with sources, violations](#)]
ADA-compliant dirt and gravel paths [[link for viewing](#)] [[link for printing high-resolution](#)]