



To: Irene Chiu, City of East Palo Alto, Associate Engineer,
Humza Javed, City of East Palo Alto, Public Works Director
Christopher Kao, Public Works and Transportation Commission, Commissioner/ Resident
Gabriel Anguiano Jr., Ravenswood School District, Coordinator of Family & Community Engagement
Liz Sánchez (she/her), San Mateo County Health, Community Program Specialist II

From: Kristin Haukom, Alta Planning + Design

Date: November 21, 2024

Re: Costaño School of the Arts School Travel Fellowship Project Report

Background

Project Brief

As part of the San Mateo County Office of Education School Travel Fellowship, the City of East Palo Alto (City) chose Costaño School of the Arts as its target school for a Safe Routes to Schools project. Based on the Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, the chosen school is situated in an area prioritizing pedestrians and equity. The City holds a high/higher priority status according to the Metropolitan Transportation Commission’s 2018 Equity Priority Communities. Through the fellowship program, the City aims to strengthen the bond between the City and the community, addressing concerns raised by parents, caregivers, residents, students, and staff. The issues faced in the neighborhood include speeding cars, disregard for stop and traffic signs, and vehicles overtaking buses with flashing hazard lights while students board. Additionally, there are concerns about cars speeding through narrow streets during school commutes. The project plan is to implement a quick build project at an intersection near Costaño School of the Arts. The quick build project would offer the school community the opportunity to collect data and evaluate the effectiveness of the traffic calming measure in enhancing the safety of walking and biking to school.

Project Ideation

Walk Audit

The next phase of the project was to perform a walk audit at Costaño School of the Arts. The project team invited city officials, parents, caregivers, teachers, and members of the community to take a walk around the school and discuss issues they have seen and brainstorm potential solutions together. The walk audit was conducted at Costaño School of the Arts in East Palo Alto during the morning arrival on April 18, 2024. Walk audit participants identified important locations to observe near the school, made observations during the morning arrival period, and reconvened to discuss their observations and identify challenges related to infrastructure and travel behavior near the school.

The assessment was attended by representatives from the City of San Mateo, San Mateo County Office of Education (SMCOE) staff, City of East Palo Alto staff, Public Works and Transportation Commission members, Alta Planning & Design, and Costaño School of the Arts staff, parents, and residents.

- Christopher Kao, Resident
- Lena Yasui, SMCOE
- Elizabeth Kerridge, Vice Principal at Costaño School of the Arts
- Ronda White, Principal at Costaño School of the Arts
- Irene Chiu, City of East Palo Alto
- Gabriel Anguiano, Ravenswood School District
- Carlene Foldenauer, SRTS School Travel Fellowship Support
- Colin Amos, Planner, Alta Planning + Design
- Daniela Vasquez, Planner, Alta Planning + Design

The main issues that were discussed during the walk audit included flooding at the school entrance, speeding along Fordham Street, difficulty crossing University Avenue, the prevalence of cut through traffic, and poor visibility at intersections, especially at the school entrance. There were also many discussions about the opportunities to develop projects in the neighborhood, including future connections to the Bay Trail, expanding the bike infrastructure on Fordham Street, and the upcoming City-led bioswale project at the entrance of the school.

Costaño Elementary School

Walk Audit Map



Figure 1: Walk Audit Map used for the school walk audit

Project Ideas

The project team worked together to compile the responses of the walk audit and the surveys disseminated to the parents and caregivers of Costaño School of the Arts and generate a list of potential projects. In addition to helping the project team identify projects for this current year of the School Travel Fellowship, the list can be used to help direct future projects and planning efforts. Potential projects were categorized by projects that can be accomplished in the short-term within the scope and timeframe of the School Travel Fellowship and long-term efforts that will need additional study and funding to complete.

Table 1. Project Brainstorm List

| Idea | Location | Infrastructure or Programmatic | Short Term or Long Term | Notes |
|--|--|--------------------------------|-------------------------|---|
| Bike Bus to School | A set route through the neighborhood | Program | Short Term | |
| Alternative School Entrance | Hetch Hetchy North Lot | Infrastructure | Long Term | |
| Roundabout Quick Build | Fordham St/Notre Dame Ave | Infrastructure | Short Term | Includes crosswalks |
| Curb Extension and Crosswalks Quick Build | Fordham St/Notre Dame Ave | Infrastructure | Short Term | |
| Walk to School Day | Costaño School of the Arts | Program | Short Term | |
| Bike Lane Extension Quick Build | Fordham St | Infrastructure | Short Term | |
| Bioswales and Flood Control | School Entrance | Infrastructure | Long Term | Ongoing |
| Alternative School Entrance | Redwood City School District South Lot | Infrastructure | Long Term | |
| Improve Crossings at University Ave and Kavanaugh Dr/Notre Dame St | University Ave/Kavanaugh Dr/Notre Dame Ave | Infrastructure | Long Term | |
| Bike Rodeo/Bike Classes | Costaño School of the Arts | Program | Short Term | |
| Group Bike Rides with Students | Costaño School of the Arts | Program | Short Term | Could include educational rides along the Bay Trail when the new connection opens |
| Improve Signage Surrounding School | Fordham St | Infrastructure | Short Term | School zone signs, speed limit signs |
| Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFB) | School Entrance | Infrastructure | | |

Project Implementation

The project team decided to move forward with a quick build project of a traffic circle at the intersection of Fordham Street and Notre Dame Avenue. This project builds upon previous efforts to create short term traffic circles in the neighborhood and create a network of traffic calming elements. However, to address community concerns about longevity and aesthetics, the team decided to use Rubberform rubber traffic circle curbs. This material will provide a cleaner and longer lasting look that will allow the City more time to create and construct permanent designs.

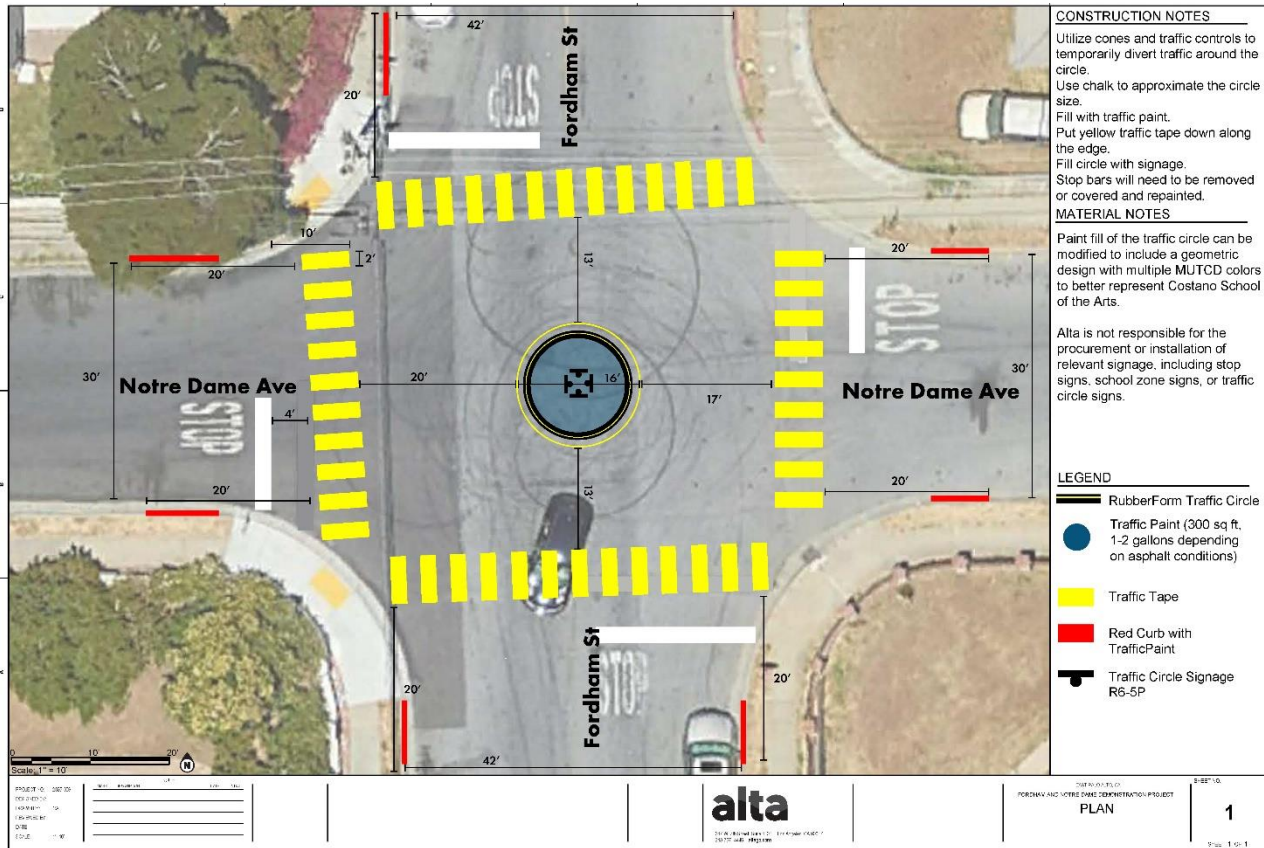


Figure 2: Installation plan for the traffic circle

On November 13 and 14, 2024, the project team built the crosswalks and traffic circle. During the installation, traffic was controlled with assistance from the City’s Department of Public Work. The streets were not closed during construction process to ensure limited impact on commuters and residents of the neighborhood. During the installation, the project team received many positive comments from drivers in support of the project, remarking how needed the infrastructure improvements are and how excited they were for the new crosswalks and traffic circle. Buses and garbage trucks were also able to navigate the traffic circle with little trouble.



Figure 3: Traffic circle demonstration looking north on Fordham Street



Figure 4: Traffic circle demonstration looking west on Notre Dame Avenue with the school to the north



Figure 5: A bus navigating the traffic circle demonstration

Next Steps

The City should continue to study and design a permanent traffic circle and crosswalks for the Notre Dame and Fordham intersection. This would build upon the ongoing permanent traffic circles being installed elsewhere in the neighborhood.

The City should also conduct a traffic study to look at speeds and stop sign compliance for the area. The City should also pursue community engagement in the form of community surveying and school events teaching students about the traffic circle and street safety to encourage walking and biking to school.