

March 26, 2025 - Meeting of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission

Metropolitan Transportation Commission
Bay Area Metro Center
375 Beale Street
San Francisco, CA 94105
info@bayareametro.gov

Subject: Programming and Allocations Committee, agenda item #6c.

Project: San Rafael 2nd and 4th Street Intersection Improvements

TIP ID: MRN230201 **FMS ID:** 10048

Project:

The San Rafael *Second and Fourth Street Intersection improvements* project is listed on the OBAG 3 County & Local Programs Project List with a total STP/CMAQ of \$3,051,000 (MTC Resolution No. 4505, updated December 2024).

Project Description:

Improve access to this multi-legged intersection for motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians by reconfiguring the intersection, improve traffic signals, extend the Bikeway, improve access and safety for pedestrians.

Important Project Goals:

- Improve pedestrian and bicyclist safety
- Maintain critical access to neighborhoods

Concerns about this project:

1. San Rafael is not following MTC's guiding principles for public engagement.
2. San Rafael has expanded the scope of the project beyond the stated description and goals.

Discussion:

San Rafael has modified the conceptual design to close the westbound left turn lane from Second Street to Marquard to vehicular traffic. Marquard provides critical access to our neighborhood with Marquard being the only access for homes further up the hill, on Fremont, Upper Fremont and Trost. I have lived in this neighborhood, at the same address for over 40 years, and closing this access for westbound traffic will create a severe hardship for residents living on Marquard, Fremont, Upper Fremont and Trost, including the Mariposa Bilingual School for children located at 1879 Second Street, at the corner of Marquard and Second Streets.

San Rafael was slow to communicate this change in conceptual design to local residents. According to meeting records, the City first presented this design with closure of the left turn lane to BPAC on August 7, 2024, and again on February 5, 2025. San Rafael staff waited until February 27, 2025, to schedule a "community event" to inform residents about the "new" conceptual design, almost 7 months after first presenting the plan to BPAC.

San Rafael has shown a consistent lack of open and transparent engagement with residents for this project, including a lack of answering questions in a timely manner or not at all.

The “Community Event” scheduled on February 27, 2025, at 6:00 pm, was held in the council chambers in City Hall. Residents could watch the presentation but could not participate via ZOOM. During the brief presentation, Grey Melgard, the project contact, declined to answer questions during or after the presentation, even though three people in attendance requested that questions and answers be addressed while seated in the council chambers so that all attendees could hear the answers and engage in the discussion. Instead, everyone was instructed to get up and go stand in the lobby and “chat” with staff.

I asked about the timeline for design of this project and was told the timeline would be posted to the project website. Here is what was posted:

Timeline

Design completion & Bid	2024-2025
Construction	2025-2026

Staff recommends the following two alternate routes for redirecting westbound traffic (see attached diagram):

1. To the east of the Marquard/Second St intersection, the first option suggests turning left from Second St onto West Street and driving uphill to Marquard. This forces traffic to cross the bike path and pedestrian crosswalk at an “unsignalized” intersection causing an unsafe condition. This route accesses Marquard from the steeper side and requires traffic to navigate a hairpin turn onto Fremont Road to access homes higher up the hill, causing added congestion and safety concerns. Only smaller vehicles can navigate this hairpin turn with most vehicles requiring a 3-point turn and larger vehicles, such as delivery trucks, being unable to make the turn at all. In addition, the narrow streets for this option don’t allow as much maneuverability for two vehicles to pass each other when traveling in opposite directions. DMV rules require the car facing downhill to back-up when two cars meet on a narrow road. There are many seniors (like myself) who live on this hillside and find it difficult to back uphill on a narrow road with compromised visibility, especially at night.
2. The second option routes traffic further west of the Marquard/Second St intersection, to the intersection of Greenfield and Second St, requiring vehicles to make a u-turn from Greenfield onto West End Ave and backtracking to Marquard. This route adds about ½ mile total travel distance and directs traffic down a street that doesn’t have a dedicated bike lane. Larger vehicles, such as delivery trucks and construction equipment will most likely use this option, sharing the road with bicycles without a dedicated bike lane, adding to safety concerns. In addition, this adds congestion to the Greenfield/Second St/West End intersection where vehicles waiting on Greenfield for the light to change, can block access to West End Ave for vehicles making this u-turn.

I’ve asked for roadway/traffic improvements for the alternate routes in order to accommodate additional traffic safely but was told that grant limitations require “how far away from the “center” of the intersection physical impacts can be made.” In other words, the grant for which they applied only includes improvements to the 2nd/4th Street intersection and does not cover improvements to other intersections as a result of their proposal to close traffic access at Marquard/2nd Street. Traffic traveling westbound along Second St is generally coming from Highway 101 or retail stores located in the eastern side of San Rafael, such as Trader Joe’s, Whole Foods, Home Depot and Target. Closing westbound traffic access to Marquard from Second St blocks the main access for residents to their

homes and for the Mariposa Bilingual School for children, at the corner of Marquard and Second, and diverts traffic from a main artery onto narrow hillside streets.

On March 3rd, I emailed the newly hired traffic engineer, and asked him to meet with me on-site, or communicate via email or phone, about the traffic changes proposed for this project. After not receiving a response, on March 17, I emailed him again and asked for him to meet me on-site to discuss the traffic issues. I thought I could help familiarize him with the neighborhood since he is new to the City. On March 18, he assured me in an email that he had “driven the project area” and collected all necessary data and that community feedback had ended on March 13.

While I support safety improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists with straightening the crosswalk and updated and improved traffic signals, I think the closure of the main access for local residents goes beyond the scope of this project and should be abandoned. Local residents support the plan presented to the Air Quality Conformity Task Force on July 25, 2024, that maintains the left turn lane from Second St to Marquard and allows downhill traffic on Marquard to turn left onto West End Ave or right onto Second St. This plan maintains full access at this critical intersection for residents and at the same time, improves safety for bicyclists and pedestrians. See attached plan.

I think the City of San Rafael has failed to follow MTC’s guiding principles for public engagement, such as engaging with the public early and often and answering all questions in a timely manner. I think the proposal to close the westbound turn lane on Second St should be abandoned because it is outside the scope of the project originally presented for the grant and blocks the main access for local residents, including a children’s school.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments.

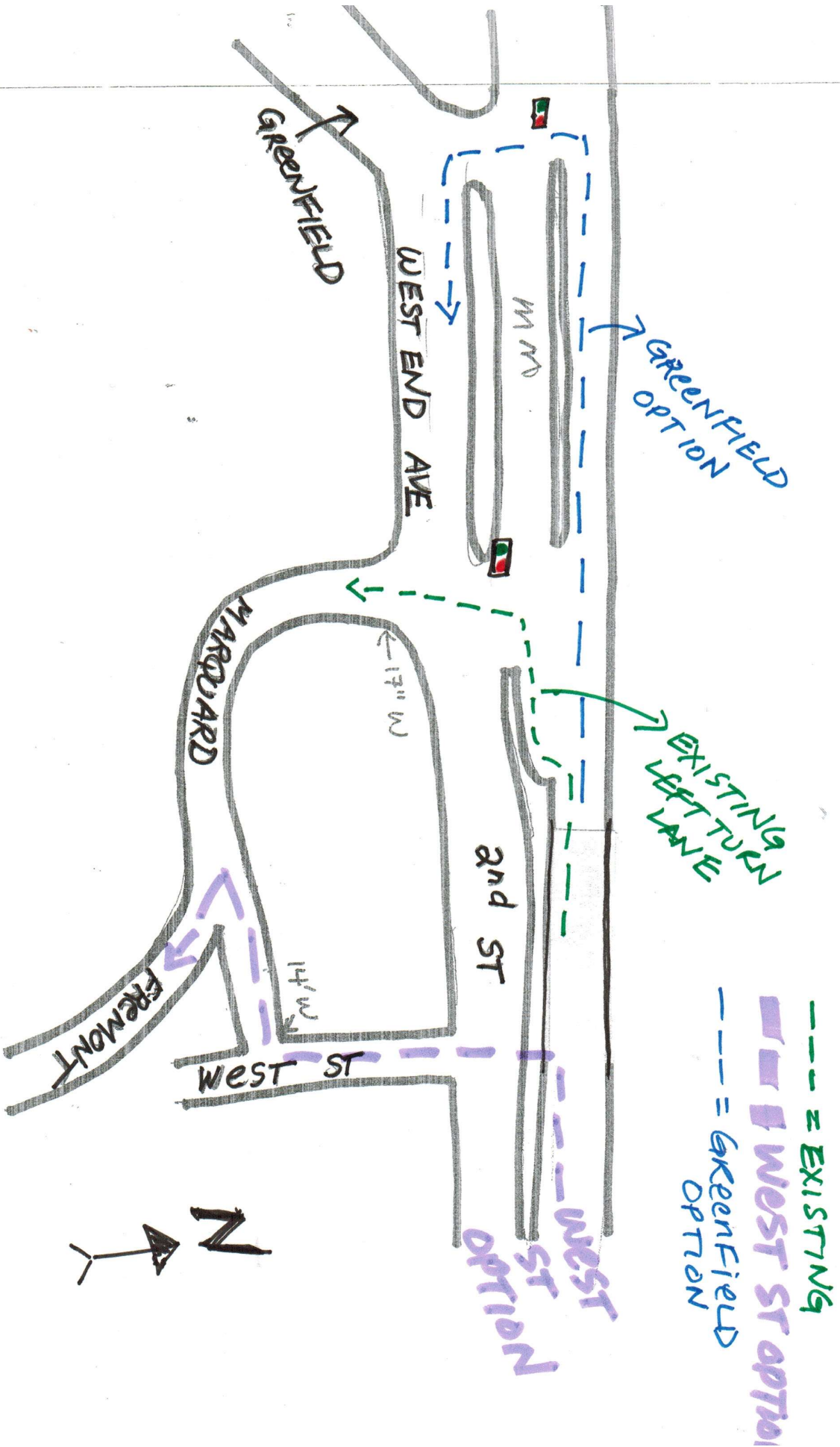
Sincerely,

Victoria DeWitt

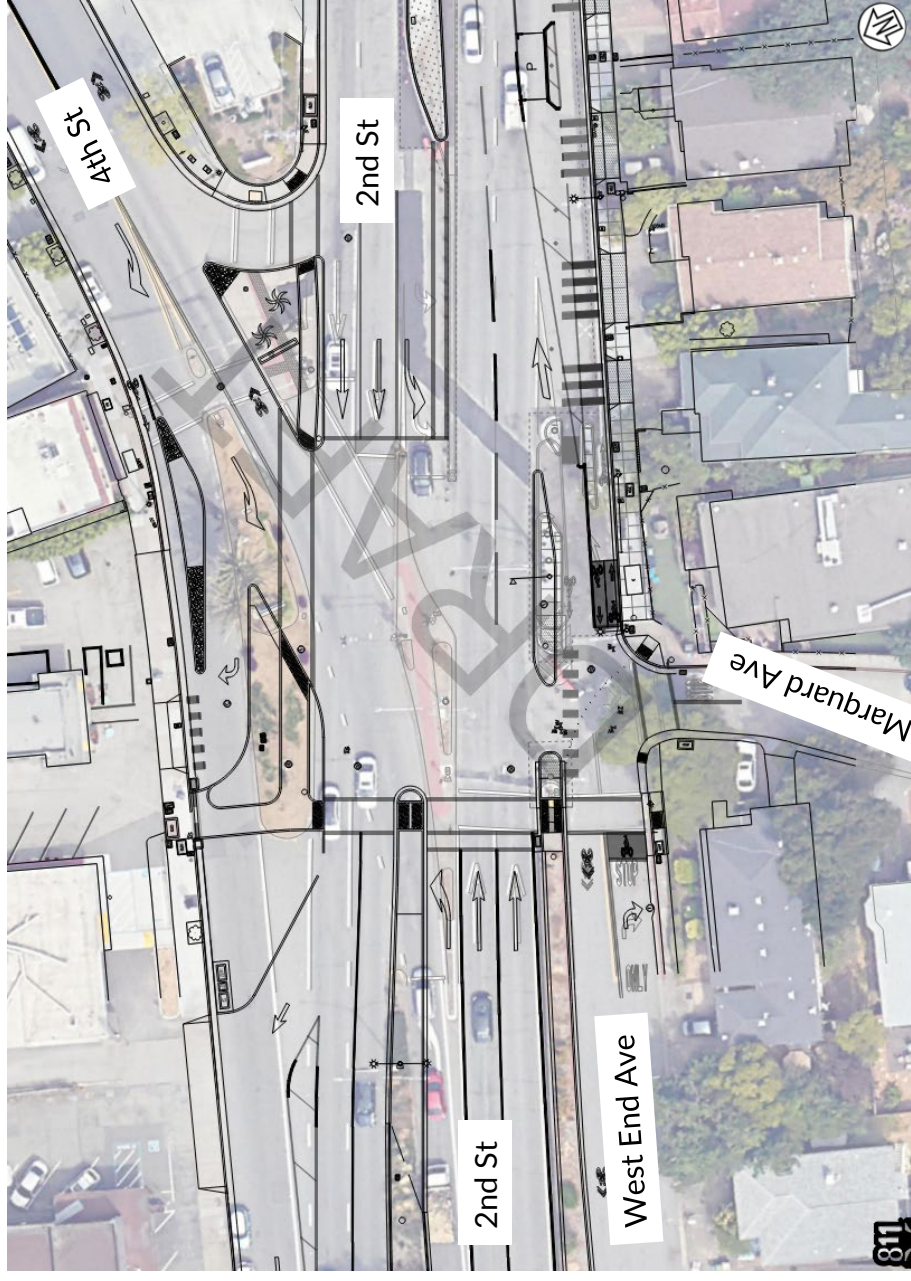
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*att: Project Plan submitted to the Air Quality Conformity Task Force on July 25, 2024
Street Diagram showing alternate routes*

2ND / MARQUARD INTERSECTION.



Project Plan – Current 65% Design



- Shorten and minimize Bike/Pedestrian crossings
- Complete Class IV bikeway connection
- ADA compliance