

# US 101/Peninsula Avenue Interchange Project

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Updated April 2021



Project website: [www.cityofsanmateo.org/peninsula](http://www.cityofsanmateo.org/peninsula)



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## Frequently Asked Questions

### About the Project

#### 1) Why is the project needed?

The US 101 southbound on and off ramps at East Poplar Avenue were constructed in a “buttonhook” configuration in the late 1950’s before the Silicon Valley boom when traffic volumes were not nearly as high as they are today. As a result, this places a large traffic demand on Poplar Avenue, and long delays on City streets that were not designed for the volume of traffic experienced today. The existing single-lane East Poplar Avenue southbound on- and off-ramps are relatively short and thus, have limited capacity to contain vehicle queues during peak periods. According to the City of San Mateo’s Police records, accidents also occurred within the intersection of the ramp terminus at North Amphlett Boulevard and East Poplar Avenue. They have involved collisions between vehicles traveling through or turning at this intersection, and with cars exiting the freeway off-ramp. The project would result in an improvement to the safety and traffic operations of the southbound US 101 ramps and the intersection of East Poplar Avenue and North Amphlett Boulevard. In addition, the project would provide improvements to the bicycle and pedestrian movements through the intersection of Peninsula Avenue and North Bayshore Boulevard as well as improvements to local streets to facilitate circulation and property access. Additionally, relocating the intersection would reduce the traffic in the vicinity of three local schools near the East Poplar off-ramp to help improve safety for students.



Aerial View of Buttonhook Ramps at Poplar Avenue

**2) What are the overall project benefits?**

The project is being designed to provide the following benefits:

- a. Reduces traffic on Poplar Avenue. This would not only improve the safety on Poplar Avenue but would improve the safety of the intersections with North Amphlett Boulevard, North Idaho Street, and North Humboldt Street.
- b. Provides more direct access to business districts in the cities of San Mateo and Burlingame, such as those on Peninsula Avenue, El Camino Real, California Drive and Burlingame Avenue.
- c. Improves the safety and operation of the on- and off-ramps and the freeway itself. The Peninsula ramps would be designed to current geometric standards. The existing off-ramp has a sharp (nonstandard) exit radius.
- d. Consolidates the northbound and southbound ramps at a single location (Peninsula Avenue and Airport Boulevard).

**3) How is this project going to improve pedestrian and bicycle access?**

The project proposes to add buffered and vertically separated bike lanes on Peninsula Avenue within the project limits. Pedestrian access improvements at North Bayshore Boulevard are also included in this project to improve bike and pedestrian access to Coyote Point Recreation Area. These improvements would make access across the freeway more pedestrian and bicycle-friendly and provide safe routes to schools in the project vicinity.

**4) When would this project be constructed and how long would it take?**

This project would be constructed after it has an approved environmental document, secured full funding, and completed final design and right-of-way acquisition. Construction could begin as soon as late-2024 and construction of the project would take approximately 24 months.

**5) Would this project close the ramps at East Poplar Avenue?**

A Project Study Report-Project Development Support (PSR-PDS) was approved by Caltrans in May 2015, allowing the proposed project to move forward into its current Project Approval and Environmental Document (PA&ED) phase. The PSR-PDS included the proposed project to close and relocate the US 101 southbound ramps from East Poplar Avenue to Peninsula Avenue to eliminate the partial interchange condition and create full interchange at Peninsula Avenue. The existing East Poplar Avenue ramps, as described in the answer to Question 1, are not sufficient for the current demand and they do not meet Caltrans standards for highway design. The project proposes placing new ramps at Peninsula Avenue. If the existing ramps at East Poplar Avenue remain open as well, not only would the issues associated with high volumes on

short “buttonhook” ramps continue, but there would be two sets of ramps very close to one another on southbound US 101. Therefore, all alternatives currently being evaluated propose closing the ramps at East Poplar Avenue.

**6) Is the project fully funded?**

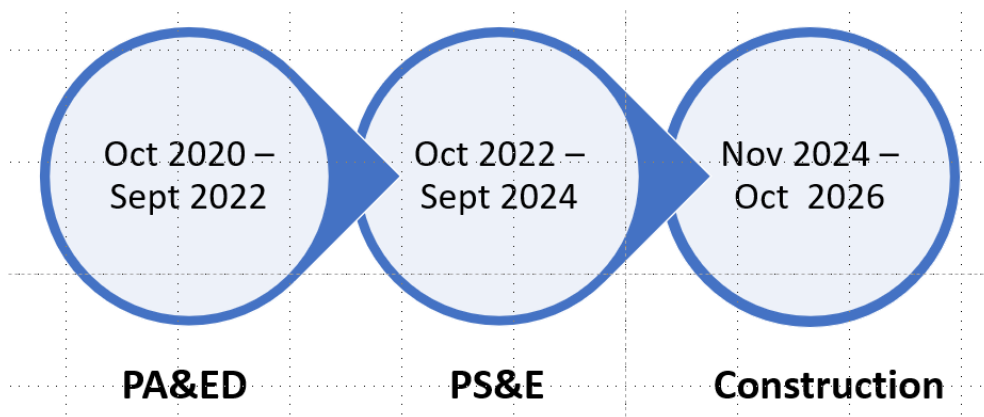
No. The project does not currently have full funding for final design, the purchase of right-of-way, or construction. The project is funded to complete the Project Approval and Environmental Document (PA&ED) phase. Given the cost of the project, which was estimated in 2017 at \$120 million, it is unlikely that the project would be funded solely using local funding sources and state and federal would also be needed.

**7) What is the project schedule and what are the next steps?**

The project is currently in the Project Approval and Environmental Document (PA&ED) phase. During this phase, preliminary engineering occurs, and an environmental document is written and circulated to the public for comment.

The next phase is Plans, Specifications, & Estimates (PS&E). During this phase of the project, final design and specifications are completed and right-of-way is acquired.

The last phase is project construction.



**About Public Outreach**

**8) What was done to date to inform the public about the project?**

Public meetings were held in San Mateo and Burlingame in 2017. Following those meetings, additional traffic analysis was performed in response to the feedback provided. Preliminary traffic analysis was presented at the San Mateo City Council in February 2020, where public comments were taken. More recently, the City of San Mateo hosted a meeting for property owners that could be affected by the project and a public meeting for community members in January 2021. This outreach preceded the Caltrans-led outreach that is required as part of the project’s compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Environmental Policy Act. The City of San Mateo also presented at a study session with the

Burlingame City Council on April 19, 2021. A Caltrans formal environmental project scoping meeting as required by the California Environmental Quality Act and the National Environmental Policy Act was held on April 28, 2021.

**9) How can I get updates on the project progress?**

Project information will be updated periodically on the project website at:

<http://www.cityofsanmateo.org/peninsula>.

**10) Who should I contact if I have a question about the project?**

The Project Manager for the City of San Mateo is Bethany Lopez. She can be contacted via email at [blopez@cityofsanmateo.org](mailto:blopez@cityofsanmateo.org) or by phone at (650) 522-7313.

## About Right-of-Way

**11) What are the potential right-of-way impacts of the project and what is the process to acquire the land?**

The Build Alternatives under consideration would require the acquisition of private properties to accommodate the construction of new southbound on- and off-ramps at Peninsula Avenue. This includes the potential for both partial property acquisitions and full property acquisitions. Commercial properties on Amphlett Boulevard north of Peninsula Avenue and the multi-family residential property south of Peninsula Avenue could be affected with all of the Build Alternatives, to varying degrees. The actual extent of the right-of-way needed for the project would depend on the preferred alternative chosen at the end of the Project Approval & Environmental Document (PA&ED) phase. Accordingly, the soonest the property acquisition process could begin would after the PA&ED phase is completed.

Answers to specific questions regarding the acquisition process can be found here from Caltrans' website: <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/right-of-way/acquisition-condemnation>

## About Traffic and Noise

**12) The project is being designed to improve traffic and safety, but how could it affect Peninsula Avenue and local street parking?**

This project proposes to close and relocate the existing US 101 southbound ramps from East Poplar Avenue to Peninsula Avenue. A portion of the traffic that currently uses East Poplar Avenue, especially north of E, Poplar Avenue and Peninsula Avenue is expected to shift to Peninsula Avenue. Others would use the Third Avenue interchange based on the proximity to their destination. Future traffic volumes with each of the Build Alternatives is being evaluated in this phase of the project. Should the project be found to impact local street circulation, the project design would be expanded to include local road improvements to

mitigate any potential traffic operational impacts resulting from the change in traffic volumes on local roadways near the project.

### **13) What is being done to study traffic for the project?**

- Based on public input and discussions with City of San Mateo, City of Burlingame, San Mateo County Transportation Authority, and Caltrans, intersection Turning Movement Counts (TMC) during the AM and PM peak hours and 24/7 Average Daily Traffic (ADT) Segments counts were collected at 31 intersections and 30 segments, respectively in 2016/ 2017.
- Freeway mainline volumes along US 101 for the segments between Hillsdale Boulevard to the south and Millbrae Avenue to the north along both northbound and southbound directions were extracted using PeMS data in 2017.
- Travel time runs were collected, and field observations were conducted to identify the existing traffic operational deficiencies such as existing bottlenecks, extent of queues, and signal timings concerns along the study area.
- These existing traffic volumes were used as a base to project the future demand for the opening year 2025 and design year 2045 conditions.
- The traffic projections were performed using the C/CAG-VTA Bi-County travel demand model, which includes all the land uses that are included in the latest approved City of Burlingame (adopted in Jan 2019) and City of San Mateo General Plans. It is important to note the same regional model has been used for highway projects in San Mateo County and Broadway Interchange Project in the City of Burlingame.
- As required by Assembly Bill 743, preliminary Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) analysis was performed based on the VMT results for the No Build and Build Alternatives from the travel demand model. Since this is an interchange relocation project and there is no increase in capacity proposed to any of the study road segments, this project is not expected to increase regional travel, and therefore, it is not expected to increase VMT.
- A traffic operational analyses will be conducted at all the local study intersections and on the freeway for the forecasted 2025 and 2045 volumes. A Traffic Operations Analysis Report (TOAR) will be prepared as part of the current PA&ED project phase.

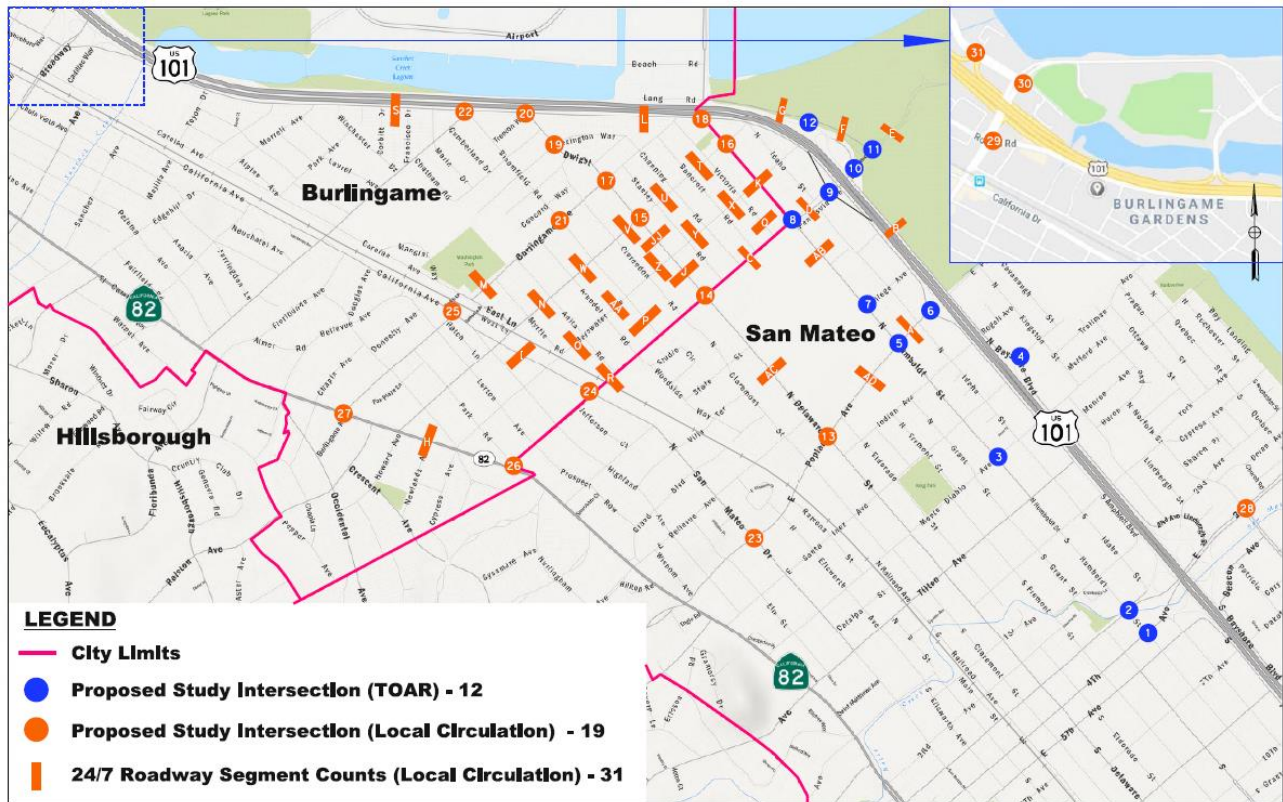
All traffic information will be summarized in the forthcoming Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment and available for the public to review and comment on.

### COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Since the traffic patterns have changed considerably since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project team (City of San Mateo, San Mateo County Transportation Authority, and Caltrans) has had extensive discussions about what data to use for the traffic operational analysis. Since this project had previously collected all necessary information in 2016, Caltrans has approved the use of 2016 data that is linearly projected to reflect the traffic volumes in 2019. This method is more reliable than using traffic counts made during the County’s shelter-in-place order or after the order has been lifted but traffic volumes haven’t returned to their pre-pandemic levels.

#### **14) What are the limits of the traffic study in San Mateo and Burlingame and how were those limits established?**

The local road traffic study limits were established based on input from the City of San Mateo, City of Burlingame, San Mateo County Transportation Authority, Caltrans, and residents from both cities. These limits inputs were suggested by residents and City staff through workshop meetings held in 2017 and through design coordination meeting held since 2017. The map below shows the limits of the local road traffic study within the City of Burlingame and City of San Mateo.



Traffic Intersection & Roadway Segments Study Map



**15) Would the project cause delays for the residents around East Poplar Avenue, especially when accessing southbound US 101?**

The project team is evaluating the changes in circulation patterns in the future for everyone in the study area. Some routes would be shorter, and some would be longer. Some residents that currently use the East Poplar Avenue ramps may choose to use the Third/Fourth Avenue ramps in the future, if this project is constructed. This information will be summarized in the forthcoming Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment and available for the public to review and comment on.

**16) Since the project would move traffic from East Poplar Avenue to Peninsula Avenue, won't more traffic cut through the Lyon Hoag neighborhood of Burlingame as a result of the project?**

The project team has conducted extensive traffic studies to evaluate the potential project impacts at various locations within San Mateo and Burlingame (especially at locations in the Lyon Hoag neighborhood, as shown in the answer for Question 14). Based on the preliminary analysis of the Build Alternatives for both 2025 and 2045, there is no data to suggest that cut through traffic is higher with the Build Alternatives than with the No Build Alternative in the future. The preliminary travel time analysis indicates that traffic is likely to stay on Peninsula Avenue, which would provide direct access to the new ramps at US 101, instead of going through smaller neighborhood streets because, even though there are more traffic lights on Peninsula Avenue, because the travel times are faster. In addition, the traffic calming measures recently implemented by the City of Burlingame for the Lyon Hoag neighborhood would further discourage cut through traffic, since travel times are expected to be even longer on neighborhood streets with the traffic calming measures.

**17) What other local circulation changes are being proposed?**

Any local circulation changes will be described in the forthcoming Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment. The following are some circulation changes being proposed.

- As part of the proposed project, the narrow alleyway one block east of North Idaho Street would be widened to accommodate the re-alignment of North Amphlett Boulevard, sidewalks, and street parking. This improvement would provide for local street circulation and local street access to the north and south sides of Peninsula Avenue, without local residents having to access North Humboldt Street.
- The project proposes providing additional on-street parking on the southbound side of North Humboldt Street just south of the North Humboldt Street/Peninsula Avenue intersection.

- The proposed project would extend the two westbound Peninsula Avenue through-lanes from the overcrossing through the North Humboldt Street/Peninsula Avenue intersection up to the Victoria Road/Peninsula Avenue intersection.

**18) Would North Amphlett Boulevard be reconnected after construction of the proposed project?**

The project proposes to remove the existing southbound on- and off-ramps at East Poplar Avenue and extend North Amphlett Boulevard through this space. This change would be implemented after the ramps are constructed at Peninsula Avenue and after the East Poplar Avenue ramps are closed. In addition, North Amphlett Boulevard would be realigned slightly west of its existing location as part of the project.

**19) Would this project make our neighborhoods noisier?**

As part of the project's compliance with State and federal environmental laws, the project area will be studied in a Noise Study Report. Engineers will be evaluating the existing noise levels as well as the potential for changes in the noise levels from either of the proposed alternatives in the future. This information will be summarized in the forthcoming Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment and available for the public to review and comment on.

**20) How has the project addressed input it has received to date?**

All comments submitted about the project have been shared with the entire project team. Public comments from community meetings and feedback from City of San Mateo, City of Burlingame, and San Mateo County Transportation Authority have been incorporated into the project design. To date, the following changes have been made:

- The proposed project design now includes pedestrian, bicycle, and local street improvements.
- The project team substantially increased the number of traffic study intersection (31) and segments (31) based on public feedback.
- The local street improvement designs were developed to minimize or avoid right-of-way impacts to residential properties within both the Cities of San Mateo and Burlingame. The project team continues to refine design alternatives in the hopes of avoiding structural impacts to any residential properties (especially the Bayview Apartments) based on inputs received on the project.

**21) Is there a way to compensate individual residents for having this new interchange?**

As part of the project's compliance with State and federal environmental laws, the project area will be studied for changes in the community's character in the Community Impact

Assessment. This study will review the potential for changes to the community's economic diversity and community cohesion. The focus of this study is on the community level changes and will not assess changes to the values of individual properties. In addition, all properties with the potential to be physically altered by one of the project alternatives will be identified in the Relocation Impact Study. Any property physically altered by the proposed project would be compensated to fair market price during the right-of-way acquisition process. Both the Community Impact Assessment and Relocation Impact Study will be summarized in the forthcoming Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment and available for the public to review and comment on.

**22) Explain what the area would look like in the “after” condition. Is there an opportunity for more greenspace?**

The City of San Mateo's goal is to create an aesthetically pleasing project. The project team will evaluate beautification options where space exists around the proposed project. Caltrans requires projects of this type to have landscaping following construction. These options will all be studied in the project's Visual Impact Assessment and will be summarized in the forthcoming Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment and available for the public to review and comment on.

**23) What happens to comments submitted to the project team?**

Comments provided to the City of San Mateo prior to the start of scoping have been shared with Caltrans and the San Mateo County Transportation Authority. Comments typed into the “chat box” during the public scoping meeting were read aloud to the project team during meeting. Comments submitted in writing by mail or email during scoping were shared with the members of the project team including Caltrans, City of San Mateo, and San Mateo County Transportation Authority and their consultants. These comments are reviewed in detail to inform all project design, technical studies, and the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment (including the range of alternatives and the purpose and need of the project).

Following the public release of the Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment, the public will once again have the opportunity to provide feedback. All comments received during the public review period will be addressed in the Final Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment.