

**STAFF REPORT****Transportation Commission****Meeting Date:** 7/13/2016**Staff Report Number:** 16-008-TC

Regular Business: **Recommend to City Council to Approve the Installation of No Stopping Zones in the Willows Neighborhood**

Recommendation

In anticipation of the opening of Laurel Upper School at 275 Elliott Drive for the upcoming 2016-2017 school year, staff recommends that the Transportation Commission recommend to the City Council to approve the installation of “No Stopping” zones near the school as illustrated in Attachment A.

Policy Issues

This Project is consistent with several policies stated in the 1994 General Plan Circulation Element promoting alternative travel modes and Safe Routes to School (e.g. II-A-12, II-E-4, etc.). These policies seek to maintain and strengthen a circulation system that provide for the safe and efficient movement of people and goods throughout Menlo Park for residential and commercial purposes. This project also complements one of the Capital Improvement projects identified in the 2016 City Council Work Plan, the Menalto & O’Connor Sidewalk Project.

Background

In 2014, the Menlo Park City School District initiated the development of a new school to accommodate student enrollment growth. Currently, Laurel School located at 95 Edge Road serves students in grades K-4, and older students attending Encinal or Oak Knoll Schools. However, starting in the 2016-17 school year, the District will convert the existing Laurel School to a Lower Campus to serve students in grades K-2 and create a new Upper School campus at the existing O’Connor site at 275 Elliott Drive to serve students in grades 3-5.

In anticipation of the new Laurel Upper School, the Cities of Menlo Park and East Palo Alto applied and received funding from the San Mateo County Transportation Authority’s (SMCTA) Measure A Program for the engineering design and construction of pedestrian and bicycle facility improvements in the Willows neighborhood in Menlo Park and Woodland neighborhood in East Palo Alto.

The Measure A funded project, known as the Menalto & O’Connor Sidewalk Project and illustrated in Attachment B, includes the installation of new sidewalks on Menalto Avenue and O’Connor Street, disabled access compliant curb ramps at two key neighborhood intersections, and shared-lane pavement markings (known as sharrows) on nine residential streets. City Council awarded the construction contract on June 7, with construction expected to commence in the late summer and complete before the Laurel Upper School October 17, 2016 opening date.

Analysis

The Laurel Upper School would mark the opening of the third school campus in the Willows neighborhood, along with Willow Oaks Elementary School and the German-American International School. While the grant-funded improvements would benefit students and residents walking and biking in the Willows neighborhood, safety concerns over the interaction between vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic during drop-off and pick-up times also arose.

To address the concerns, staff is proposing to install “No Stopping” zones during limited hours (drop-off and pick-up times) near the school to prevent drop-off or pick-up on streets with limited spaces for vehicles to maneuver and turn around. These streets include Elliott Drive, O’Connor Street, Oak Court, and French Court, and possibly Byers Drive and Falk Court. Elliott Drive provides direct access to the school site, with a 90-degree curve and limited width. The southern side of O’Connor Street between Menalto Avenue and Elliott Drive provides a paved pathway but is frequently utilized as parking spaces. Oak Court provides pedestrian access to the school site near the street closure and could encourage drop-off and pick-up activities, even though Oak Court and French Court are not suited to have these activities due to limited widths. Some residents on Oak Court between Menalto Avenue and the closure also expressed interest to establish a “No Stopping” zone. The City cannot fulfill that request since that section of Oak Court is a privately owned road, however, staff would continue to work with residents to install other signs at the entry point on Menalto Avenue. The school is currently evaluating the need for a second pedestrian access on Falk Court. Similar to Oak Court, if an access is provided, drop-off and pick-up activities may occur on Byers Drive and Falk Court. The implementation of parking restrictions on Byers Drive and Falk Court would be determined at a future time once the pedestrian access is determined.

Additional Proposed Safety Improvements

In addition to the proposed “No Stopping” zones, staff is also recommending the following safety improvements to highlight the presence of the Laurel Upper School, Willow Oaks School, and German American International School:

- Establish a school zone using school area signs
- Reduce vehicle speed to 15 miles-per-hour (mph) during school drop-off and pick-up times at key streets using school speed limit signs
- Designate school crosswalks at key intersections using yellow markings

The proposed school zone would include all three schools and is generally bounded by Donohoe Street to the north, Gilbert Avenue and Woodland Avenue to the south, Willow Road to the west, and Euclid Avenue to the east.

While all residential streets within the proposed school zone are signed or have a prima facie (default) speed of 25 mph, a reduction of vehicular speed to 15 mph on O’Connor Street (from Menalto Avenue to Euclid Avenue) and Elliott Drive (from O’Connor Street to school entrance) would have safety benefits as they carry the highest vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle school traffic and most interaction between these travel modes.

Finally, designation of school crosswalks at key intersections using yellow markings (standard for school crossings) would improve street crossing environment for students and residents by making the crossings more visible. The California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices recommends the installation of yellow crosswalk on streets within 600 feet of a school ground, but could extend up to 2,800 feet if it is a thoroughfare with no other intervening crosswalks to the school ground. Approximate residency locations of students were provided by the Menlo Park City School District to help inform likely travel paths to school and select key intersections for yellow treatment.

Impact on City Resources

The preliminary engineering estimate to implement the Project is approximately \$35,000, excluding typical project contingency and construction management costs. Staff is currently exploring funding options, including the Measure A Program mentioned above, to implement these improvements.

Environmental Review

The Project is categorically exempt under Class I of the California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines. Class 1 allows for minor alterations of existing facilities, including highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle and pedestrian access, and similar facilities, as long as there is negligible or no expansion of use.

Public Notice

Public Notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with the agenda items being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

Attachments

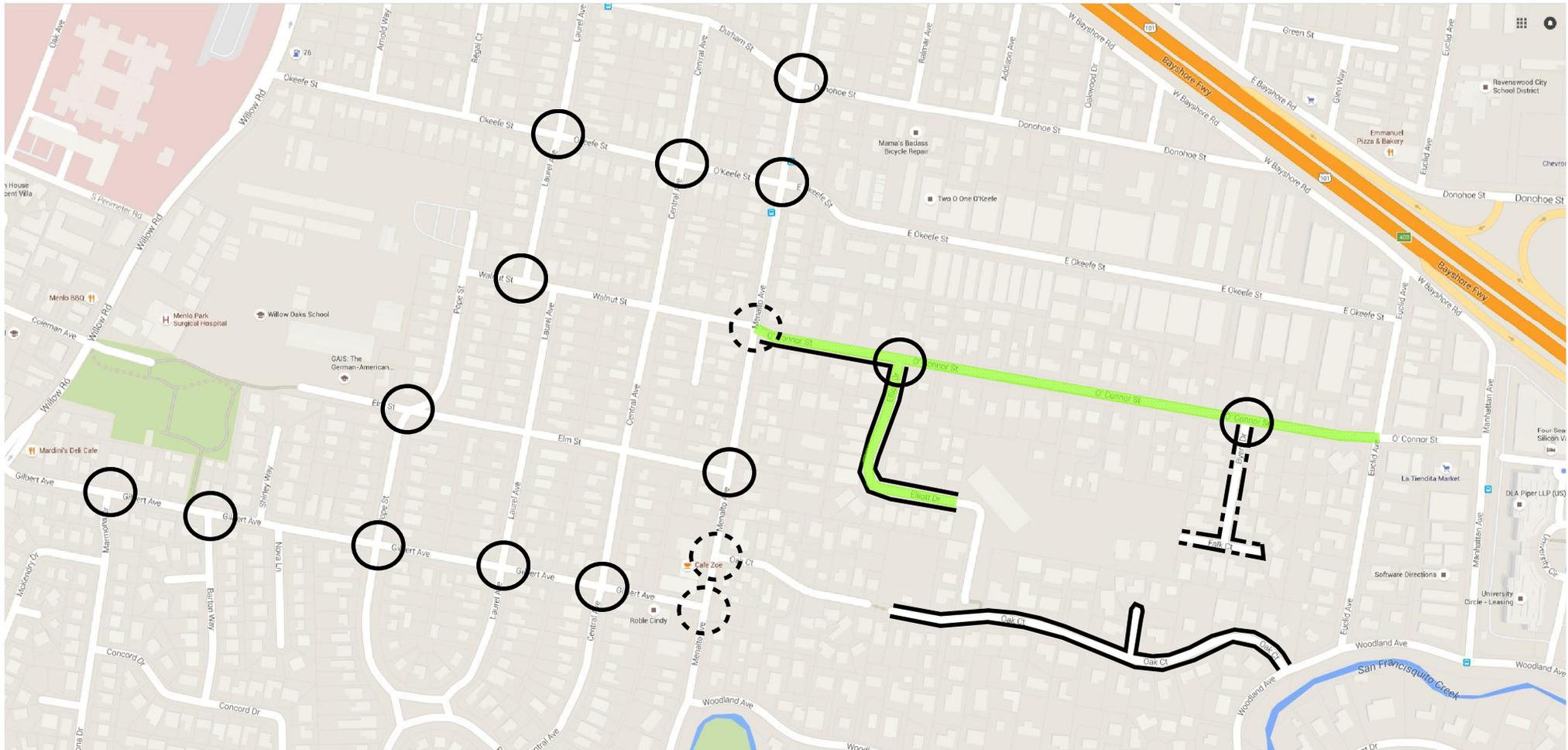
- A. Project Map
- B. Menalto & O'Connor Sidewalk Project Map

Report prepared by:
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Report reviewed by:
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ATTACHMENT A



LEGENDS:

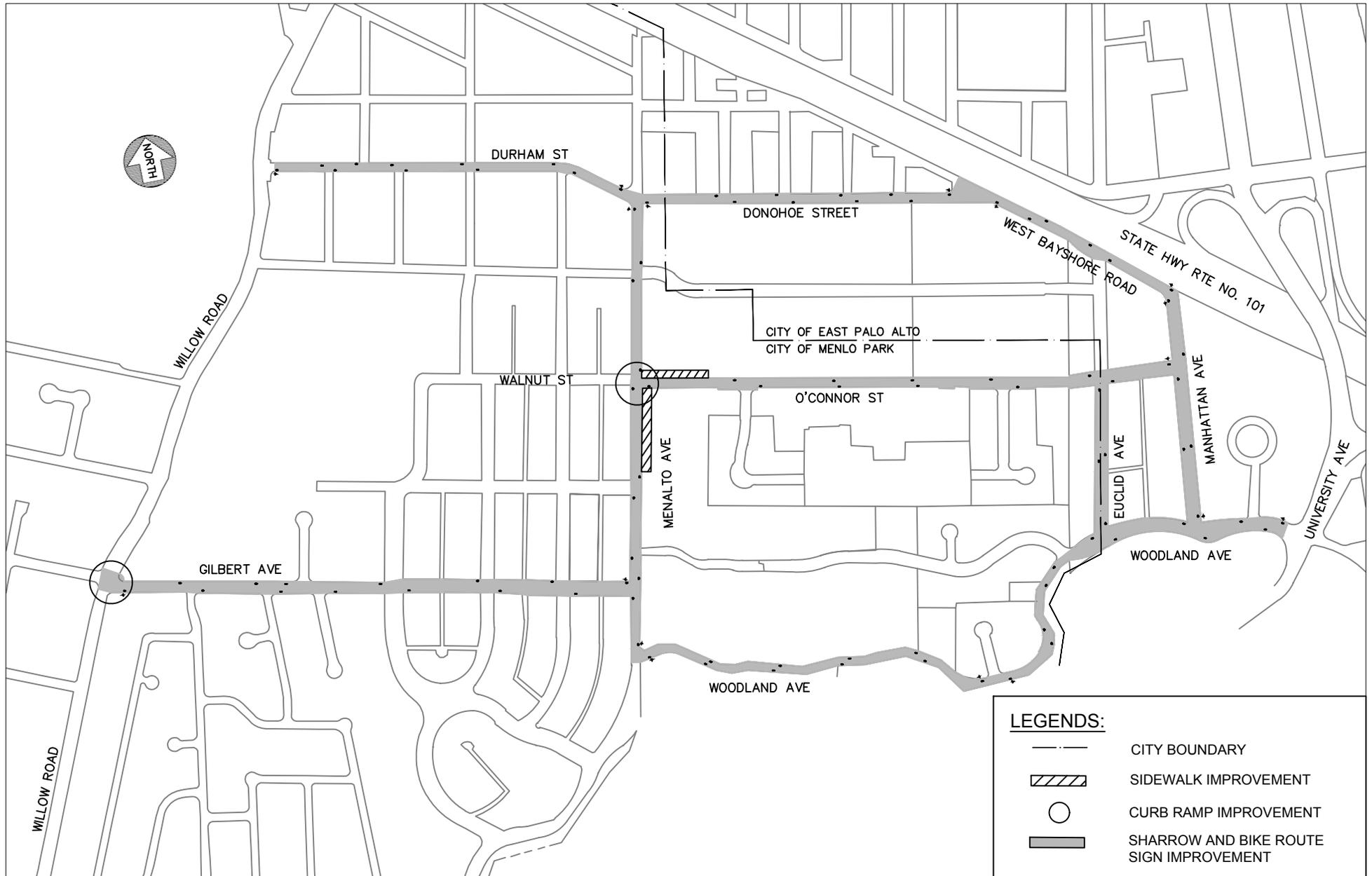
-  PROPOSED "NO STOPPING" DURING SCHOOL DROP-OFF/PICKUP HOURS
-  PROPOSED "NO STOPPING" DURING SCHOOL DROP-OFF/PICKUP HOURS (OPTIONAL)
-  PROPOSED NEW YELLOW CROSSWALKS
-  PROPOSED NEW SCHOOL ZONE SPEED - 15 MPH
-  EXISTING/TO BE CONSTRUCTED CROSSWALKS



POTENTIAL SIGNS

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ATTACHMENT B



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