

Roadshow: Removing lanes on El Camino Real draws outrage

By Gary Richards

g-richards@mercurynews.com

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Q About the plan to possibly remove lanes on El Camino Real in favor of express buses, there was fear of monumental traffic congestion when light rail was built on First Street and Tasman Drive and lanes removed. What was feared never materialized -- maybe because of the number of cars light rail took off the road, maybe because of the (futile) addition of lanes on Highway 237.

I would assume that alarm of the same sort on El Camino would come to the same end: No increase in traffic congestion because buses may remove a lot of the need for driving.

For example: A combination of bike and Bus Rapid Transit would make driving along El Camino to be of no advantage. With my Clipper Card and bicycle with 10-minute bus intervals, my trip to Palo Alto from Mountain View would no longer require me to drive.

John Carpenter

San Jose

A That is the idea, but your voice has been drowned out by the many who think the idea (and I'm being kind here) is nuts.

Q Everyone likes El Camino the way it is. No one thinks dedicated bus lanes are a good idea. This plan will never, never, never amount to anything, because it is simply and thoroughly a bad idea. About the only thing we want is more synchronization of traffic signals. Other than that, the design and landscaping of this beautiful boulevard is

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wonderful and a model for other high-traffic thoroughfares within the valley. It never fails to amaze me how wonks at the Valley Transportation Authority act like they are doing us some kind of favor trying to push us onto inconvenient, inefficient and poorly run public transportation. If you want to ride a bus, be my guest. But stay the hell away from me, my personal choice of transportation and my commute.

Wang Chu

Cupertino

A You have made your feelings very clear, as have others.

Q Just like traffic calming on Santa Cruz Avenue in Menlo Park and on Arastradero Road in Palo Alto, the bicyclists and public transportation liberals don't give one damn about the wasted time that the vast majority of the users of our roads, those in automobiles, will now encounter. ... I'm panicking about the proposed changes to El Camino Real. Reducing the lanes that cars can use from three to two in each direction is ludicrous. It's already taking me more time to get to and from work in Fremont due to the loss of my beloved yellow carpool stickers. ... Road Dude: Please oh please oh please do what you can to keep the VTA from screwing up El Camino. Traffic is bad enough; we don't need to make it worse. What are these morons thinking? ... Throw politicians out of office

who support such draconian policies. ... Worst idea ever. ... When is the insanity going to stop? ... This is a joke, right?

Norman Berger, Lara Ruben, Ray-the-Tow-Truck-Guy, Ed Buliavac, Steven Arnold, Vivian Nguyen and many more

A No joke. Cities along El Camino in Santa Clara County all must endorse narrowing plans by summer. If that happens, then the VTA will go to Caltrans and seek the state's blessing.

Q I imagine I am one of many who would appreciate clarity regarding the proposed changes on El Camino. Will the No. 1 lane be exclusively for buses?

Terri Goldberg

Mountain View

A Yes, for 10 miles from Lafayette Street in Santa Clara to Showers Avenue in Mountain View under the scenario that would generate the highest number of bus riders. Another option is to limit this to a three-mile stretch through Santa Clara.

Q How do drivers make left turns onto the many side streets with or without a signal? Currently there are left-lane pullouts where a driver waits for oncoming traffic to clear.

Terri Goldberg

A This has been a source of much confusion, says Kevin-the-VTA-Transit-Man:

"In terms of left turns for automobiles, today there are both signalized and free or non-signalized left turns at intersections or into some of the larger parking lots. With a median bus lane configuration, all left turns will have to be signalized so that buses traveling in the inside lanes would need to be held at a signal. We are willing to install signals at intersections and other locations to preserve left-turn access throughout the corridor and are asking the cities to provide guidance on which intersections and left turns will require signals. If they all require signals, then the project will install them everywhere."

There are no plans to close any intersections. That would happen only if cities want that.

Q What is the plan for El Camino from Mountain View to Palo Alto?

Alan Templeton

A Express buses would use the far right lane, as they do now.

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