



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

CITY OF OJAI

Updated January 14, 2021

ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION PROJECT (ATP)

MARICOPA HIGHWAY DEMONSTRATION

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The Project is also known as the “Go Ojai Demonstration Project”, with grant funding from SCAG (Southern California Association of Governments) who administered the Consultant, Street Plans.



ojaicity.org/goojai

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1. GENERAL PROJECT INFORMATION:

- **What is a demonstration project?**

A demonstration project is a temporary installation of infrastructure in anticipation of a longer term, permanent project. A demonstration project allows for modifications and feedback before a permanent project.

- **What are the goals of the demonstration project?**

The primary goal of this project is to demonstrate the Council supported concept design for the permanent ATP Project for Maricopa Highway between Ojai Avenue (at the Y) and Cuyama Road. The plan provides safety and beautification improvements including reallocating the second vehicle lane, improved pedestrian crossings, and on-street protected bike lanes. The permanent plan includes adding concrete curbed landscape

pockets, and sidewalks and trees where missing, but these features will not be included as a part of the demonstration project.

- **When was the demonstration installed?**

The demonstration project was installed from December 7 to 12th, 2020. The project will be in place for a minimum six-month period, and extended as necessary to assure overlap with school back in full resumption for months to properly evaluate the demonstration with normal school and business traffic. The permanent project is planned for construction approximately a year after the demonstration ends, so roughly in the Summer to Fall of 2022. COVID-19 delayed the implementation of the demonstration project, which will delay the construction of the permanent project.

- **Will the demonstration project continue until Nordhoff High School is back in full in-person session?**

Yes! The demonstration will be extended to assure an extended demonstration occurs with the High School in full session. We hope that occurs soon, this Winter or Spring, but are ready to extend the demonstration until the Fall if necessary.

- **Where can I find information about the demonstration and permanent project?**

- The ATP demonstration project has a webpage on the City's website: ojaicity.org/goojai
- The permanent ATP Project has a webpage on the City's website: ojaicity.org/atp-grant-page/
- The project has an Instagram social media account: [@go_ojai](https://www.instagram.com/@go_ojai)
- The City is posting updates on its Facebook page: www.facebook.com/cityofojai/

- **What types of materials are used?**

Demonstration projects use temporary materials such as paint and installation methods that do not require heavy construction as opposed to the more permanent materials and installation methods (e.g. concrete curbs, sidewalk, and medians, moving curbs, etc.). This demonstration project uses materials that are approved by Caltrans including traffic marking paint, temporary low-profile delineators, and temporary surface-mounted planters. These planters will NOT be used in the permanent project, as the permanent project includes trees and landscaping in place of planters.

- **How does the lane take into consideration trolley stops?**

There are breaks in the bike lanes at every trolley stop to allow trolleys to pull in curbside for ADA access.

- **Where is the funding coming from for the demonstration project?**

The City received a \$430,000 grant from the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG). It can only be utilized to demonstrate safety improvements that enhance car, bike, and pedestrian safety as outlined in the grant application.

2. PEDESTRIAN & BIKE SAFETY:

- How does this benefit Cars, Pedestrians, and Bikes?**

The permanent project includes traffic calming (primarily the lane reduction), bike improvements (the protected bike lane), and pedestrian safety improvements (primarily the lane reduction – crossing 2 traffic lanes is much safer than crossing 4; and curb extensions – highlighting and protecting pedestrians off the typical curb alignment out toward the travel lane). These improvements are intended to increase the safety of all modes of travel, including cars. The Demonstration project is able to demonstrate the concept of a lane reduction and bike lane improvements, although it is recognized in a temporary/ demonstration form they are not as appealing as the permanent improvements with concrete curbs, landscaping, etc.

- What's the benefit of the 2-way bike lane?**

The lane was intended to enhance safety for school kids coming from housing behind Vons to the High School – to avoid making them cross Maricopa Hwy multiple times.

The safety benefits of a 2-way bike lane may outweigh the negatives, although each driveway or street crossing has some risk. Signs at driveways warning/reminding bikes and cars to be extra cautious such as the following will help:



- Why are there still bicycles riding on the sidewalk?**

It will take some time for habits to be broken. Some bicyclists are still using the sidewalk to travel north on the southbound side (school side), as the bike lane does not allow travel in this direction for most of the way – see Lessons Learned section below addressing this. Some bicyclists are still riding the sidewalk going southbound, as they developed the habit when they felt unsafe being on the highway shoulder.

3. PROJECT REVIEW & SUPPORT:

- Who has reviewed the project?**

The conceptual permanent and demonstration designs were developed by the City in consultation with several traffic engineering firms, reviewed and supported by the Ojai City Council, Caltrans, the Ventura County Sheriff/City of Ojai Police Department, the Ventura County Fire Department, the Ojai Unified School District, the Ojai Valley Community Hospital, and LifeLine Ambulance. Utility agencies including the Ojai Valley Sanitary District and the Casitas Municipal Water District have provided review of the plans. The demonstration project design has been reviewed by members of the demonstration project Technical Advisory Committee and comments have been incorporated. The final plans under review by Caltrans are being designed by Alta

Planning and Design, a transportation planning, design, and implementation consulting firm.

- **What entities have expressed support for the project?**

- Ojai Unified School District
- Ventura County Sheriff/City of Ojai Police Department
- Ventura County Fire Department
- Ventura County Health Care Agency
- Ventura County Transportation Commission
- Ventura County Board of Supervisor Bennett's Office
- Ojai Valley Bicycle Coalition

4. DESIGN INFORMATION & CHANGES:

- **Does the project allow for iterating adjustments from experience gained from initial implementation design?**

Yes! The benefit of doing a demonstration is that adjustments can be made to the permanent project. The City and ATP project team will evaluate input from the demonstration project (both public comment and technical function) and consider if any adjustments need to be made to the final design for the permanent project.

- **Can you describe what has been implemented at the intersections near Nordhoff High School?**

There is a dedicated right turn lane into the high school parking lot for the south/eastbound lane (driving toward Y), which merges alongside vehicles turning into the parking lot from the north/westbound left turn pocket using dashed guide lines across the intersection. There is a dedicated pick-up/drop-off zone in front of the high school between Church and Pirie Roads. Pedestrian crossing distances and the related exposure to a vehicle accident will be reduced for school students at Church Road by eliminating one lane in each direction and with curb extensions. U-turns at the Meadows Preserve to head southbound, for right turns into the school, are allowed to minimize use of the left turn.

- **What improvements have been made since installation of the demonstration project?**

The City and consultants are monitoring the demonstration project and public feedback to consider immediate and longer term changes. Note it will take time to cycle through receiving public feedback, adjusting the project, and for drivers to get used to the new layout.

The following is the primary constructive feedback and related changes:

A. The bike lane paint is too dark of a green.

The paint is being changed to the brighter lime green.

B. Drivers exiting driveways at the 2-way bike lane do not expect bikes coming from the right (the contra-flow direction).

Signage is being added at the driveways to look both ways for bikes, and the bike lane has signage cautioning of cars exiting driveways.

C. The planters are too close to park between.

The existing planters are spaced with a 40 feet gap between them, which is two standard parallel parking spaces. This should provide sufficient space to pull directly into the parking stall without a need to backup. Similarly, a car should be able to pull directly out. The City is considering removing every other planter to provide even more space, this will provide roughly 85 feet between planters, or 4 standard parking stalls.

D. Opening a car door in the parking lane is too close to the main travel lane.

The Demonstration project provides a 12-foot wide travel/drive lane plus an 8-foot-wide parking, which are Caltrans standards. This occurs throughout town, including Ojai Avenue through downtown. However, the concrete median on Maricopa Hwy does restrict the ability for cars to shift further left as provided downtown where there is an open median. We are considering options to widen the parking lane or create a buffer between the parking lane and travel lane to improve this situation.

Further, City staff has implemented or is considering the following changes on the project:

Immediate Modifications (already made or in process):

- Placed reflectors above planters on lathe to assure cars can see the planter as they backup or pullout.
- Adjust delineators (aka – “armadillos”) to better accommodate U-turns.
- Adjust delineators (aka – “armadillos”) to better accommodate right turns into side streets and driveways.
- Per above, add temporary signage warning bicyclists on the 2-way bike lane to look for cars exiting the driveways, and for cars to look for bicyclists, and where 2-way bike lane ends.
- Per above, brighter green paint for the bike lane conflict areas.
- Per above, remove every other planter to allow more space to maneuver while parking along the Meadows Preserve.

5. BACKGROUND STUDIES:

• What background analyses have been done for this project?

The demonstration project is adhering to the Council supported concept design for Maricopa Highway. The background studies that have been conducted for the project include: Pedestrian and Bike Safety Improvements Traffic Impact Study (2018), Supplemental Traffic Evaluation Report of the Functionality of Maricopa Highway (SR 33) during Emergencies, Caltrans Speed Zone Survey (2019) and 35% Design Plans for the Final ATP project (currently under Caltrans Review, 90, and 100% plans to follow). For the demonstration project, the project team produced an existing conditions summary, including, available on the ATP demonstration project webpage on the City’s website at ojaicity.org/goojai.

- Corridor land use maps
- Relevant existing policies, ordinances, and studies including:
- 2012 Complete Streets Policy with Resolution supporting active transportation including pedestrian and bike improvements.
- 2015 Council Action supporting the ATP Grant application.
- 2017 Complete Streets Master Plan Adoption (include lane concepts for Maricopa Highway)
- 2018 ATP Project Pedestrian and Bike Safety Improvements Traffic Impact Study
- 2019 ATP Project Supplemental Traffic Evaluation Report of the Functionality of Maricopa Highway (SR 33) during Emergencies
- 2019 Caltrans Speed Zone study
- Existing pedestrian and bicycle facilities adjacent to/on the project corridor
- Mode share and demographics of walking and biking in the census tracts
- Multimodal traffic volumes and traffic operations
- Collisions along the project corridor
- Traffic speeds along the corridor
- Connectivity: How safely and easily can all street users use the project corridor to access jobs, school, open spaces, and other destinations?

6. TRAFFIC MONITORING:

- **What type of data is being collected for this project?**

Vehicle, bike, and pedestrian counts will be collected during the evaluation period, as well as vehicle speeds. The project team has deployed data collection devices along the corridor that will monitor vehicle volumes and turning movements in real-time during the six-month demonstration. This will allow the project team to analyze potential traffic backups, spillover traffic onto adjacent streets, and truck turning movements. The project team will also be collecting public feedback, and speaking with the school and businesses along the corridor before and during the demonstration.

- **What Traffic Monitoring is occurring?**

A. For traffic speeds:

- Pre-Project: 3 weeks prior to the Demo start, speeds were monitored in 2 locations, in addition to Caltrans data going back decades.
- During Project: speeds are being monitored at the same locations throughout the remainder of the project.

B. Counts and turning movements:

Traffic counts/volumes and turning movements for cars, trucks, bicycles, and pedestrians are being monitored at the Y, ValleRio Ave, Pirie Rd, and Church Rd. This monitoring began on September 27 and will continue for at least 7 months.

C. Cut-through traffic:

Potential cut-through traffic on Cuyama Rd and Hermosa Rd are being monitored with a survey before and periodically after. Additionally, the counts with turning movement data can be used to monitor cut-through traffic.

- **What if cars avoid using Maricopa Highway, cutting-through on Cuyama Rd or Hermosa Dr?**

Traffic volumes for cars, trucks, bicycles, and pedestrians is being monitored at the Y, ValleRio Ave, Pirie Rd, and Church Rd. Potential cut-through traffic on Cuyama Rd and Hermosa Rd are being monitored for potential increase. While significant increases are not expected, there are measures that can be implemented to discourage cut through traffic.

- **How will this project effect the speeds and speeding on Maricopa Highway?**

Two lanes provide a lane to pass and promotes speeding. A single lane better regulates speeds as one car traveling the speed limit will govern the following cars. This is expected to reduce the amount of vehicles traveling above the 35 mph speed limit for this area.

- **With only one lane, cars slowing to turn into a street or driveway are slowing all cars in the only remaining lane.**

Where substantial traffic surges are expected, a turn lane has been provided, such as at the High School's Church Rd entry southbound. Additionally, a left turn lane into the High School at Pirie Rd and at the staff parking lot are being considered. The rest of the driveways have minimal traffic and do not appear to need a turn lane. As part of the demonstration and feedback, there is consideration for removing the planters in more areas and/or providing more turnout lanes.

7. EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS & RESPONSE:

- **Have emergency evacuations been evaluated as part of the project?**

Yes, an analysis of potential impacts of the project on emergency evacuations was conducted. The study was reviewed and supported by the Police/Sheriff and Fire Departments, Caltrans, and City Council. As a result of the study, some adjustments were made to the permanent project design, primarily lengthening the parking between landscaped areas to assure larger emergency vehicles can park or traverse into the bike lane in case an emergency detour lane is needed. The study found no impact on the ability to evacuate during an emergency, as a reconstructed 2-lane segment will have the same capacity as each of the six 2-lane roadways that provide ingress/egress for the valley, so a reconstructed 2-lane segment will not create a bottleneck for vehicles accessing the other 2-lane roads in the valley. The study found no significant impact on emergency evacuation procedures. The design of the bikeway allows for its use as a detour or second vehicle lane during emergencies and lane closures.

- **Will first responders be able to use the bike lane and buffer as an emergency access lane?**

Yes. The design of the bike lane and buffer allows use of the bike lane as a detour lane for emergency and regular vehicles in the event the one remaining travel lane needs to be closed for any reason. Also, trucks and emergency vehicles will be able to clear the low-profile delineators that will line the bike lane buffer.

- **Where do cars pull over if an emergency vehicle is behind them?**

The gaps between the planters in the parking lanes is 40 feet – ample room for most vehicles to pull over directly without a backup maneuver. Historically, the greatest demand for parking has been along the Meadows Preserve, and occasionally on the northbound side for school events (football games, 4th of July, graduation, etc.). Parking has not previously been legal in any of these areas, although not enforced. If an emergency vehicle needs to get through, this parking lane can be used to pull over, or the gaps between parking areas such as the school drop off zone and other non-parking zones can be used. There is consideration to increase this gap from 40 to 80 foot.

- **Where do emergency vehicles go if the one remaining lane is blocked?**

The bike path has been specifically kept wide enough to handle any emergency traffic. Similarly, the bike lane can be used for traffic if a utility is using the one lane, or if a tow truck had to access an accident. A demonstration using the bike lane as a detour with fire trucks was completed successfully.



8. PUBLIC INPUT/FEEDBACK/COMMENTS:

- **Will the demonstration allow for enough time for the public to provide comments before the permanent project is permitted?**

Yes, the public can comment on the project at any time while the demonstration project is occurring. Signs have been posted along the route with a link to an online survey to submit feedback. At the end of the demonstration the City Council will consider any lessons learned for incorporation into the final design before construction occurs. The survey is on

the City's Go Ojai Demonstration webpage (right side button), or directly at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FS6HXHM>

- **How is the team collecting public input?**

There was a **Community Advisory Committee (CAC)** that was open to the public, which met every other week prior to the project installation, over 15 meetings, **and will meet for a “debrief” meeting after the installation (TBD)**. The CAC is a hands-on working group that is involved in the implementation and evaluation of the project. All past CAC meeting recordings are on the project webpage. Please register on the city webpage for the debrief meeting. Additionally, several public Question/Answer sessions were held before the project installation.

Surveys were distributed both before and during the demonstration to gauge the public response to the project. You can now take the post-implementation survey on the City's Go Ojai Demonstration webpage (right side), or directly at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FS6HXHM>

- **How do I provide feedback?**

You can now take the post-implementation survey on the City's Go Ojai Demonstration webpage (right side button), or directly at: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/FS6HXHM>

- **Will the City consider the feedback I provide?**

The City and consultants are closely monitoring the demonstration project and public feedback to consider immediate and longer term changes. The City Council will periodically review the project including public feedback during the demonstration project for any final decisions on the permanent project. As noted above, feedback is already being incorporated.