

# Briefing Document:

## Community Feedback on Transportation Improvements in the Bellam Corridor

May 3, 2025

This briefing document synthesizes community feedback on proposed transportation improvements, primarily focusing on signalized intersections, traffic lights, and roundabouts along the Bellam corridor, as well as the 101-580 ramp project. The feedback highlights concerns, suggestions, and overall sentiment regarding safety, traffic flow, pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure, and local business impact.

### Overarching Themes

The community generally expresses **cautious support** for the proposed improvements, recognizing the urgent need for enhanced safety and more efficient traffic flow. However, this support is often contingent on the successful implementation and careful consideration of several key factors:

- **Prioritizing Safety (Especially Pedestrians and Cyclists):** This is the most consistent and emphatic theme. Residents frequently emphasize the current lack of safety for those walking, biking, or using wheelchairs, citing fast-driving cars, unlit crosswalks, and drivers who don't yield.
- **Improving Traffic Flow:** While some express skepticism, many hope the projects will alleviate existing traffic congestion, particularly at ramps and main thoroughfares.
- **Infrastructure for Active Transportation:** There is a strong desire for dedicated, well-marked, and safe infrastructure for pedestrians and cyclists, including wider sidewalks, clear crosswalks, and connected bike lanes.
- **Addressing Local Context (Canal Neighborhood):** The unique challenges of the Canal neighborhood, such as high pedestrian traffic, limited access, and specific driver behaviors, are frequently raised as critical considerations for project success.

### Key Ideas and Facts

#### A. Traffic Flow and Congestion

- **Skepticism about Roundabouts for Congestion:** Several participants voice concerns that replacing traffic signals with roundabouts might *worsen* congestion,

especially in the Canal area where "drivers are often not courteous and it's already difficult to merge." Some explicitly suggest "traffic lights would work better than roundabouts."

- **Importance of Lane Configuration:** There is a strong emphasis on ensuring "enough lanes leading into and out of roundabouts" and balancing traffic flow, particularly from Highway 101. The proposal to narrow Bellam to two lanes each way is a concern, as it "could increase congestion."
- **Traffic Signal Optimization:** When Caltrans signals fail, "congestion significantly worsens—sometimes causing delays of 30–45 minutes." Coordinating signals along Kerner and at ramp intersections is suggested.
- **101-580 Ramp Project:** The proposed ramp is widely seen as "very necessary" and a "great idea" to "reduce traffic" and "help everyone who commutes to work." Many believe it will improve traffic flow and ease "chaos."
- **Canal Neighborhood Access:** Kerner and Midway are identified as the "only exits from the Canal," leading to traffic backing up through multiple light cycles, exacerbated by buses and semis turning onto Bellam.
- **Traffic Calming:** While some worry about congestion, others hope roundabouts or narrower lanes will "help slow traffic" and "reduce speed" because "sometimes they don't stop."

## **B. Pedestrian and Cyclist Safety**

- **Urgent Need for Safety Improvements:** Repeatedly, participants state that "right now, it doesn't feel safe to walk." Improvements are "urgently needed" because "many people walk in the neighborhood."
- **Crosswalks as a Priority:** "Pedestrian crossings need to be made safer." This includes "improving the crosswalks and repainting them so that drivers can see people walking, those in wheelchairs, and cyclists crossing the street." Calls for "visible lights at night" and "flashing lights at crosswalks" are common.
- **Driver Behavior:** A significant concern is that "cars don't stop for pedestrians to cross", and "many don't follow the rules." Some suggest "more signs are needed to remind drivers to slow down."
- **Wider Sidewalks and Paths:** Many desire "wider sidewalks" to improve safety and comfort for pedestrians, including those with strollers and wheelchairs.

- **Dedicated Space:** The idea of "pedestrian overpass[es]" is raised as a potential solution for safer crossing and improved traffic flow in busy areas, with one participant suggesting a "sign above it saying 'Welcome to Canal.'"
- **Lighting:** "Improve the lighting—if we walk along Bellam, it should use solar power in case there's no electricity." Lack of lighting at bus stops and in the Canal area is a safety concern.
- **Cameras for Safety:** Suggestions include "crosswalks should have lights and cameras" and "more cameras to keep everyone safe" to provide "evidence—sometimes the drivers just drive away."
- **Roundabouts and Pedestrian Safety:** Some believe roundabouts will "protect pedestrians" and make it "safer to walk" by reducing vehicle speeds, while others express concern about how "traffic signals will work, who will be the priority, pedestrians or vehicles."

### C. Bicycle Infrastructure and Connectivity

- **Challenging Biking Conditions:** Biking in the area is challenging due to unclear, disconnected, or incomplete bike lanes, confusing intersections, poor signage, and narrow or blocked lanes, and a lack of intuitive transitions from roads or parking to bike lanes.
- **Negative Interactions with Drivers:** Some participants noted negative experiences with drivers while biking, especially where paths are shared or ambiguous.
- **Support for Bike Paths:** Participants desire "safer paths and wider for more secure bike paths" and believe the project "will help improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists."

### D. Local Business and Property Concerns

- **Gas Station Impact:** Concern is raised over the "potential loss of the multi-generational, family-owned gas station" due to its proximity to Caltrans right-of-way, with a suggestion to "pursue a non-standard approval to keep the gas station."
- **Car Wash Displacement:** A participant raises concern about "using eminent domain for property acquisition and the potential displacement of the family-owned car wash."
- **Street Vendors:** A unique concern is that if sidewalks are made wider, vendors might take over the space, potentially causing accidents and making the streets look messy. A designated area for vendors is suggested.

## E. Implementation and Future Considerations

- **Call for Implementation:** A strong sentiment is "what I want is for everything you're proposing to actually be implemented, because right now there's nothing." Participants express hope that the project "happens and gets done."
- **Solar Power Backup:** A practical suggestion is for "traffic lights... to have solar power as a backup" for power outages.
- **Public Education for Roundabouts:** Given that roundabouts are "not very common here," there is a need for "education on how to use roundabouts properly" to ensure they "work well."
- **Construction Impact:** A question arises about whether there will be more traffic during the construction of the roundabouts?

## Overall Summary

The community is largely appreciative of the effort to improve transportation infrastructure, with many expressing gratitude for the work being done. There is a clear understanding that the project "is a very necessary project and a benefit for the whole community." However, the feedback underscores the importance of an approach that addresses specific community needs, prioritizes safety for vulnerable road users, and mitigates potential negative impacts on local businesses and traffic flow during and after construction.