

Blossom Hill Road Overpass Eastbound Closure

On October 4th, a truck carrying heavy construction equipment on Highway 17 hit the underpass at Blossom Hill Road, causing structural damage to one of the bridge girders. Out of an abundance of caution, Caltrans requested that the Town close Blossom Hill Road in the eastbound direction to remove stresses from the affected girder.

Caltrans has a procedure for dealing with this type of situation which involves an expedited contract and engineering to repair the damage and return the bridge to full use. The Town has been actively engaged with Caltrans to help maintain a sense of urgency around this project so that the repairs can be expedited.

Here are some common questions the Town has received with responses:

1. How long will the east bound closure on Blossom Hill Road be in place?

Answer: Update as of 10/25/2018 - Caltrans owns bridge and the repairs and has a specific process for handling emergency repairs. They are currently finalizing a design and have already engaged a contractor to do the work. These two elements should be done by October 31. The following step is conducting the repairs, inspections, and post repair analysis. This should take another three to four weeks. If everything occurs without delay, we anticipate a total timeframe that would conclude about November 30.

2. Can the Town install a temporary traffic signal to allow for two-way traffic at the closure?

Answer: Staff considered this as an option. Given the volume of traffic and the proximity of schools and intersections, staff believes that one-way traffic control would make matters worse along the Blossom Hill Road Corridor.

3. Why is the left turn from Blossom Hill Road to Roberts Road closed?

Answer: This turn is closed to minimize the use of Roberts Road by traffic cutting through to University.

4. How do I drop off students going to Fisher?

Answer: Arrangements have been made with Vasona Park to enter the park for drop offs. The park has an ideal turnaround to facilitate this. Students should use the crosswalk on Blossom Hill Road to cross to the other side of the street.

5. Can the Town adjust traffic signals in areas such as Lark Avenue and Highway 9 to account for the additional traffic?

Answer: Some adjustments will be possible; however, every adjustment tends to have an impact on the other directions at the intersection. The closure of Blossom Hill Road has brought significant volumes of traffic to the other routes that these routes are not intended to handle. Meaningful retiming of intersections without a detailed traffic study can actually make the situation worse. Given the prospective timeframe for the closure, a traffic study is not realistic.

6. What is the Town doing to resolve the closure?

Answer: The Town has been working hard to help Caltrans maintain a sense of urgency around conducting the repairs. This includes communication to the Executive Director and a local member of the California Transportation Commission, top management at Caltrans, and Caltrans project engineers. This has brought the project to the attention of the appropriate people so as to ensure continued progress towards completion of the repairs.

7. What can I do as a resident or commuter?

Answer: Allow yourself some extra time. Remember that 1/3 of the daily volume of traffic crossing Highway 17 must now shift to one of the other two routes (Highway 9 and Lark Avenue) so those routes will be congested. You may also want to avoid peak travel times, especially in the afternoon.

8. Why aren't Los Gatos Police Officers directing traffic at the most gridlocked intersections due to the partial bridge closure?

Answer: The Town does not have the Police staffing resources to direct traffic at the affected intersections. Typically, a patrol shift includes three to four Officers. These Officers are focused on responding to calls for service and other priority work. It is not possible to call in additional personnel during the morning and evening peak traffic periods to staff the many impacted intersections along Winchester, Lark, Highway 9, and other local streets.

9. Can the Town change the flow of traffic in the evening to respond to commute traffic that is causing congestion on other routes, notably Highway 9 and Lark Avenue?

Answer: The Town looked at a couple of options for changing up the flow of traffic. Unfortunately, drivers don't really do well with continual change, let alone several times a day. Communicating the changes would cause confusion that would do more harm than good and implementing such changes twice a day is beyond the Town's resources.