

TWO CONNECTED/INTER RELATED PROBLEMS INVOLVING SCHOOL BUS AND THE PATH BETWEEN ALPINE AND SAND HILL ROAD

Problem 1. School bus for Las Lomas/La Entrada gets overtaken by vehicles when stopped at Stowe Lane in violation of Vehicle Code (similar problem with Recology vehicles)

Problem 2. The subsurface path "tunnel" between Alpine and Sandhill has been closed off with no alternative route in violation of agreement with Stanford, and without adequate public information as to potential resolution

This needs addressing ASAP since, in total frustration, people have taken to draining the water filled barriers and destroying or tossing the caution signs onto the golf course.

Both problems are dangerous and are of concern to residents in Ladera and Stanford Weekend Acres [SWA] but possibly for different reasons. SWA residents use the path to walk to Safeway and Santa Cruz Ave; SWA kids who don't take the bus to get to school also use the path; and many SWA residents use it to walk their dogs. Ladera residents are possibly unlikely to want to walk given the distance, plus there is the bus for the kids to get to school, so their use is perhaps by cyclists.

Given the excessive and dangerous vehicular traffic on Alpine, many cyclists from Portola Valley and Ladera seem to have taken to using the SWA **PATH** as a bi-directional bike lane to avoid the congestion at the lights. Recently there has also been an increase in electric motorcycles using the path in **both directions**. These cyclists are a constant danger for the SWA pedestrians and for residents leaving their driveways. There is absolutely NO dedicated trail or bicycle trail through SWA, and the concept was roundly rejected by the BOS after the 12 year pressure by Stanford to build the C1 trail. It was also objected to by every household but one in SWA.

Therefore there are conflicting desires regarding remedies as to both problems.

PROBLEM 1. SCHOOL BUS ISSUES:

A lot of new people have moved into SWA recently and there is an increase in kids. La Entrada has a school bus system that accommodates (at my last check with Joyce Massaro a few years ago) about 88 students, the majority of whom come from Ladera. Plus traffic, particularly to and from Stanford has escalated enormously. There are two main problems in getting this bus issue resolved:

(a) CHP Action: The school bus serves Ladera and Stanford Weekend Acres. There are/were two pick up points in SWA: one at Bishop Lane and one at Stowe Lane (both in county jurisdiction) For years impatient drivers have overtaken the bus at Stowe, crossing the yellow line into oncoming traffic when the bus is stopped, has the lights on, and the flag out. This is within CHP jurisdiction and very occasionally a CHP motor cycle cop has been there after I or others called them. I have reported the problem several times over the years. Often there will be a string of cars violating the Vehicle Code crossing over the yellow lines into oncoming traffic. This is a disaster waiting to happen. Plus vehicles have often swerved into the area where the kids wait for the bus

(Note: Vehicles do the same illegal passing of Recology trucks.)

Potential Solutions: It is no permanent solution to schedule a CHP officer every morning given their workload, but a temporary assignment of a CHP motorcycle cop at bus pick up times might get the message across to drivers who violate the Vehicle Code. A clearly visible **SCHOOL BUS** sign might help, (as would some warning signs posted by County Public Works) Perhaps parents could videotape violators.

(b) Other County Public Works Action:

In order to have a viable “pull in” for the bus, Public Works has asserted that they cannot put up bollards/curbs etc. in the area to protect kids and pedestrians from speeding cars. There have been many serious accidents at this very corner. One, a couple of years ago nearly killed two pedestrians when a speeding car went across the path, down the embankment, smashed into a big tree, ejected the passengers, and just missed the house on the corner. (I have photos) Another incident a few years ago involved one of the many cars doing a fast U-turn at Stowe slamming into an elderly man who was nearly killed, and was hospitalized for an extended period.

Potential Solutions:

1. County Public Works should be able to configure a safe pull in space and warning signs PLUS make the path safe for pedestrians with bollards. Previously the argument was that bollards prevented the bus pulling out.
2. There is extreme danger for both pedestrians **and cyclists** between Stowe Lane and the traffic lights. Heavy duty bollards with reflectors (like they have in Palo Alto along Middlefield Road or RWC along Alameda past Woodside Road) are needed protecting both the path and the bike lane since accidents are frequent: even a car fire. This would also mitigate the problems associated with the frequent “pelotons” comprising 50 or more racing cyclists that take up the entire road, snarling traffic and running average cyclists off the road (I have a video of that)
3. Another safety feature might be visible **NO U TURN** signs. At Stowe Lane. Stowe residents close to Alpine have to put out warning signs in the roadway to protect themselves and their kids from drivers making U turns.

PROBLEM 2: THE ‘TUNNEL’ IN THE GAP BETWEEN ALPINE AND SAND HILL

(a) Status: Closed off by barricades that are constantly drained of water and moved by people who ignore signs and/or toss them onto the golf course. The city has not explained that remediation is complicated and involves multiple issues. Presently the area is dangerous because of severe erosion.

(b) Problem: No pedestrian/bike access to Santa Cruz Ave from Alpine Plus, there is constant removal of barriers creating liability issues and possible significant injuries.

(c) History:

Stanford and Palo Alto negotiated a contract to widen the Palo Alto part of Sand Hill Road. However, Stanford refused to allow an extension through the shopping center to connect with Alma Street in Palo Alto.

After resisting for some years, Menlo Park approved a contract to widen the Menlo Park part of Sand Hill by shifting the road east, into the golf course and providing a berm and wall for the residents on the west of Sand Hill, opposite the golf course.

SU also built a multi use trail along the eastern side of Sand Hill, adjacent to the golf course.

The contract provided for construction of a cantilevered section of the part of Santa Cruz Ave between Sand Hill and Alpine on piers over the creek bank. This formed an additional lane for campus bound traffic and a bike lane.

There was also a contract with Stanford to widen the intersection at Alpine and Junipero Serra Blvd. [JSB] to provide a dedicated right hand turn lane and bike lane for access to Campus Drive West.

In order to build the massive extension of JSB/Santa Cruz, the “gap” between the two intersections, huge barriers were erected at the Alpine (and Sand Hill) intersection completely cutting off SWA residents access to Menlo Park for a year, for which SWA residents got **absolutely no compensation**, while MP residents along Sand Hill got improvements that added several thousands of dollars to their property values.

SWA residents had absolutely no means of getting to Palo Alto, Safeway or Menlo Park for the entire construction period, except by going south to 280 and then down Sand Hill Road. We

also had to endure constant construction trucks from Stanford's contemporaneous construction (Such as the Red Barn expansion) coming from Campus Drive West. (At one point these were clocked by a resident at 1 every 17 seconds) In addition there was constant noise from pile drivers and dust everywhere. Plus the constant stench of diesel fumes.

Prior to this construction **Alpine was not a Truck Route** and Stanford directed their deliveries to Sand Hill Road. Around this time a TRUCK ROUTE sign was erected on Alpine by Rural Lane. However, at my last checking, it was not on the State's list of approved Truck routes and Stanford now directs its vendors to Alpine despite the fact that the entirety of JSB, (even up to the Alpine intersection,) has signs banning large construction vehicles.

Alpine is totally inappropriate and dangerous for truck traffic, given that it has only two lanes, has blind curves, runs through an exclusively designated residential zone, with driveways, and trucks have a long braking distance. Plus the turn from JSB is highly problematic and semis sometimes hit the traffic light and endanger vehicles stopped at the light..

Part of the contract for the "gap" expansion and right lane extension of Alpine to JSB removed the surface level **pedestrian path** that had been in place for decades that allowed pedestrians (and in my lifetime, horses to travel down JSB to the Red Barn,) or for pedestrians to cross JSB and get to Sand Hill Road.

Larry Horton, on behalf of Stanford, met with SWA residents several times and promised a replacement path. Subsequently a "jerry rigged" non ADA compliant, poorly designed, and inadequately drained "path" was slapped together under the cantilevered section of Santa Cruz Ave, and an even worse path was jerry rigged from the Rural Lane gate to the end of Menlo Park's jurisdiction. This path ended up about 15 ft. below Alpine Road with no connection whatsoever to the road! Sometime later this path was extended up to Alpine by a severely bending and steeply inclined patch of asphalt that is in no way ADA compliant. It is bordered by a wire fence that has been hit by cars a few times and it is still bent over by one of the many accidents.

In addition, Stanford (without notice to residents) categorized the agreed upon **PATH** up to the end of Menlo Park city jurisdiction as a bidirectional **MULTI USE TRAIL**. This has meant that cyclists (even e motor bikes) continue in both directions along the neighborhood **PATH** endangering residents including children and dogs.

Santa Clara County's 2000 General Use Permit [GUP] with Stanford, required them to build two multiuse trails **on their own land** (C1 and S1) to allow for non vehicular access for campus personnel. Stanford absolutely refused to do this, despite their written commitment to do so. Eventually SU built the S1 trail not on their own land but on Santa Clara County's right of way in Los Altos,. For years they absolutely refused to build the C1 trail on their land because it would have been through the Golf Course. In a further attempt to avoid putting any trails on their own land, Stanford had offered a substantial amount of money to Portola Valley to improve their existing trail.

Santa Clara County gave up fighting SU for the C1 trail location and arbitrarily dumped the project on San Mateo County (without even consulting San Mateo County) based on a casual comment by someone in the County Planning office who bumped into Larry Horton who was wandering down Alpine Road) requiring it to be built on San Mateo County 's right of way alongside Alpine Road.

For about 12 years San Mateo County resisted Stanford's bribe of \$10 million to allow this on the basis that it was too invasive of residents' property, was inappropriate, and was dangerous. Every household in SWA except one had objected to this project. Finally San Mateo BOS rejected the bribe and referred the money back to Santa Clara County.

In a further attempt presumably to avoid putting any trails on their own land, SU removed the drainage ditch that ran alongside the existing path near the Alpine/JSB intersection and drained into the creek, and replaced it with a culvert. Then SU extended and fenced the golf course so

that it directly abutted the existing path, thus preventing any expansion of the Larry Horton pedestrian path to make it ADA compliant.

Problems that have occurred regarding the “tunnel”

Several accidents: one of my neighbors was hit by a cyclist, severely injured and hospitalized for a considerable period; also several bike accidents caused by erosion caused gaps in surface

Teenage Skateboarders endangering pedestrians – MPPD called

Homeless encampments and fence cuttings

Vandalism, tagging, lights broken

Falling rocks/soil caused by faulty drainage system that litters the path creating dangers

Constant erosion causing large fissures

There is no access for pedestrians coming from SU along the north side of JSB who want to get to Santa Cruz Ave, via the “tunnel no path along the cantilevered section of JSB and no crossing for them if they want to connect to the path along Alpine.

Possible Short Term Solutions to Avoid the Tunnel:

Filling the gaps in the asphalt **does not work, is not safe; and is a danger and liability issue.** Especially since the public is sabotaging the barricades and tossing the safety signs

Potential Option 1:

Perhaps Public Works could investigate the possibility of a light activated pedestrian crossing at the Alpine traffic lights so that pedestrians could use the path alongside the Buck Estate wall, provided some protective bollards were installed.

Potential Option 2:

When the Buck Estate was rezoned for the Hewlett Foundation it was suggested that as a condition of the Use Permit, a pedestrian/bike path be constructed from Alpine to Sand Hill through that property. This was rejected and the subsequent construction was designed such that it would be impossible in the future.

Potential Option 3:

South of the Hewlett Foundation and north of the Stanford Heights subdivision there is a very wide PGE easement on Stanford property for the PGE 109 gas line that runs between Alpine and Sand Hill ending opposite Safeway. This was suggested as a possible pedestrian/bike route, and was also rejected.

Problems that have occurred at the Gate to Rural Lane (Start of path):

Drivers have mistaken the point where the path dips below the road as a turning lane to Junipero Serra. I have photos of one incident where the driver of a stolen car veered down the path and crashed into the telegraph pole.

There are frequent large vehicles that enter/exit Rural Lane and block the path.

There is a steep incline of the path at Rural Lane that is not ADA compliant

The water mains are close to the surface of the path and there have been breaks and flooding of the entire area

Possible Solutions:

Clearly mark the entry to the **path as a path** not a traffic lane and partially block it so that cars cannot enter.

Problems that Occur where the subsurface path rises to Alpine at the end of MP

Jurisdiction within San Mateo County Jurisdiction:

It is very steep with an excessive curve and a blind corner: **all of which violate ADA** requirements and makes it highly dangerous for pedestrians since high speed cyclists have taken to using it. It is especially dangerous for people walking their dogs; pushing a stroller; walking with small children; or those who are mobility impaired.

Possible Solution:

Reconfigure the entire path so that it does not have a sharp drop off, possibly by taking more of Rural Lane to make the incline less steep. Need to make Stanford comply: either by eminent domain or other solution

Problems with the Surface “Gap” between Alpine and Sand Hill

1. Millions of dollars and major construction will obviously be needed to address the problem
2. Since it will involve riparian intrusion, permits will be needed from the county, city, State and Federal authorities.
3. Since the gap between the 2 intersections is vastly over used, (especially since Stanford built the new hospitals) the existing lanes are totally insufficient for the traffic at present, let alone further development, at least one extra lane will need to be built unless Stanford finds another way to direct traffic to the hospital and campus.
4. The bike lane on the cantilevered section is completely blocked by cars in rush hours
5. People walking from Stanford on the north side of JSB have no path and have to use the bike lane which is often blocked
6. Traffic from JSB heading towards upper Sand Hill trying to cross into the turn lane are blocked by the overly wide brick median creating a huge back up along JSB
7. There are now cracks in the cantilevered road surface possibly accentuated by all the heavy trucks, that might indicate that the road itself is in danger
8. There appears to be no traffic light synchronization
9. Emergency vehicles can frequently be heard honking because they are blocked and have no access
10. Bicycles are a hazard since they swerve in and out of cars in order to get from Santa Cruz or Upper Sand Hill to JSB. There have even been motor bikes splitting lanes
11. There is also a problem in that there is no MERGE sign at the Sand Hill intersection where traffic from upper Sand Hill turns right to get to Alpine or JSB

No Viable Environmentally acceptable Solution:

Even if there were an engineering solution it would take Stanford, local, State and Federal permits and involve closing off Alpine Road for at least a year, which is not feasible.

A Short term partial solution might be to direct all Stanford Hospital traffic to Campus Drive West instead of via the Gap.

One thing that could be done to improve back up from JSB that wants to make a left turn to Sand Hill Road would be to thin the brick median so that more cars can access the left turn lane to get to 280 via Sand hill Road.

One obvious solution is to create a light activated pedestrian crossing at the Alpine Road traffic lights. When Stanford requested a Use permit to rezone the Buck Estate to permit the Hewlett foundation to be built I requested that a condition be that there be a pedestrian/bike path through that property to connect with Sand Hill Road. Terry Burnes of the County rejected that. There is also a fire lane adjacent to the Hewlett Foundation that could be used as a bike/pedestrian access to Sand Hill Road. This location is over the 109 major gas line (that exploded in San Bruno) and cannot be built on.

Something needs to be done since SU is planning more residences along Alpine Road and the recent renovation of Alpine Inn brings hundreds of vehicles along Alpine road.

This is just a small sample of the horrendous problems at the two intersections. The major “player” here is Stanford who have balked at every suggestion to mitigate problems.. The design for the cantilever was inadequate and obviously faulty over time. Stanford did not comply with the agreement to provide continual access for SWA residents as promised by Larry Horton their representative on this whole project, plus that which was provided is not compliant with ADA and therefore, presumably not legal. Stanford’s subsequent actions restrict what can be done to ameliorate the situation. In the meantime Stanford has vastly increased their usage of the cantilevered section, particularly by the construction of the new hospitals and constant expansion of campus facilities.

At the very least the City and County need to provide residents with an update on what is happening or what is planned. It is unacceptable and unsafe or residents to have no

viable access to Menlo Park. It is blatantly obvious that someone is going to file a lawsuit.

Public outrage at the closure is resulting in sabotage of barricades and destruction of "CLOSED" signs which could possibly result in injury or law suits.

The city and County should be closely analyzing the latest proposed update to Stanford's GUP and objecting to any further Stanford construction along Alpine road.

Stanford's "No New Trips" assertion in their last proposed GUP revision was a total farce and any such future assertion should be rejected.

Perhaps there could be an Eminent Domain action to require part of the golf course and Rural Lane to make the paths ADA compliant.

Stanford is the major user of the Alpine/Sand Hill corridor, yet it has refused to offer solutions, and keeps adding traffic to Alpine and Sand Hill.