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Sent: Monday, May 3, 2021 4:59 PM
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Cc: Lauren Davini <Lauren.Davini@cityofsanrafael.org>; April Miller <April.Miller@cityofsanrafael.org>
Subject: Third Street Rehabilitation

Dear City Council (minus Council Member Hill):

I am writing today to express my support for the Department of Public Work's updated recommendation to convert the driveway entrance to the City-owned public parking lot adjacent to Walgreen's to an "Exit-Only" lane.

The Exit-Only solution was a hard-fought compromise. Although not a "perfect" solution, (it still creates what, for many, are significant pedestrian and motorist safety issues on Lootens Pl.), it does represent the culmination of efforts of citizens not represented by special interest groups to work with the City to have our voices heard and our concerns met with serious consideration. It represents a compromise that seeks to improve safety conditions for as many San Rafael citizens as possible.

I would like to personally extend a generous thank you to the Department of Public Work's Traffic Division liaison, Lauren Davini, and Third Street Rehabilitation Project and Thrid Street Safety Project Manager, April Miller, who took the time to read through every single one of our many comments, meet us in the field to see first-hand and discuss our concerns, and to re- envision with their team a way forward that considered and integrated our perspectives. Without their willingness to genuinely look at use patterns, safety concerns, and access issues from the perspective of those who regularly use this area, no real solution that supported the community was possible. Many thanks for getting us back on the radar when it seemed that no one in the City was willing to pay attention and take our perspective seriously. I can't speak for everyone, but I know I certainly experienced being heard and listened to because of your efforts.

By far the loudest and most over-arching concern is that a total, permanent closure would force cars leaving the lot to confront pedestrians at multiple additional intersections thus increasing overall pedestrian/vehicle conflict and reducing overall safety. The exit-only solution mitigates this somewhat. The remaining concern is that the Exit-Only solution still increases motorist traffic on Lootens Pl because it makes that driveway the ONLY entrance to the City-owned lot, thereby significantly decreasing pedestrian safety for those walking to downtown. Instead of entering the lot directly from Lindaro, more cars seeking to park in the driveway (all of them) now have to access Lootens Pl., a tiny two-way street with on-street parking, where there is no traffic signal at the driveway, and vehicles entering the roadway from the driveway to another

large City-parking lot directly across the street. This increased motorist traffic on a street designated in the General Plan 2040 as a PRIMARY PEDESTRIAN SPOKE to Downtown remains a significant concern, now and in the future as the BioMarin and other downtown projects increase pedestrian foot-traffic. Hopefully, the Council will encourage the DPW to install cameras at the Lootens driveway to monitor the impact of the Exit-Only change on pedestrian and motorist safety. We foresee chaos in this area.

The genesis of the proposed closure remains somewhat a mystery. The original recommendation to permanently close the driveway entrance was not based on any traffic studies. It was not the result of community concern or outcry. It was not on the radar of BPAC, Safe-Routes-to-School, or any other safety organization. At least none in the public record. The only mention of a closure came as a quick comment between the Deputy Director Raie and a Council Member at a Council Meeting in 2019 where the project was being discussed. For years prior and since, the community had been in conversation about the project and had the understanding that the Lindaro@3rd St. driveway would receive all the same safety upgrades that other intersections in the area were eligible for: new signals, defined curbs, clearly marked pedestrian crossing lanes, and, in general, upgrades that would yield greater pedestrian safety. A full, permanent closure was not discussed until Community Meeting #3 in September 2020 when we were blindsided with a slide showing the proposed total permanent closure of the entrance. As members of the general public found out about the proposed total closure, opposition grew. Despite an already growing number of public comments expressing opposition to the proposed closure, 5 weeks later, at the second-to-the-last meeting of an outgoing Council, the recommendation to close the driveway was presented to and accepted by Council November 2, 2020.

Many of us were told by various entities that it was too late to impact the project. The public was told by the Department of Public Works that the Council wanted the driveway closed. The Council, specifically the Mayor, said that the experts of DPW had recommended the closure. It was confusing! Many of us reached out to various organizations we thought may help represent our concerns, but we didn't seem to fit into any existing body of representation. Thankfully, we were instructed by DPW and other City Staff that the only way forward was to petition the Council. And so we did.

We will likely never know or understand how our concerns traveled through the upper echelon of City leadership at a time of such transition (a new Mayor, three new Council Members, a global pandemic, and world on fire), but thank you. Thank you for advising, instructing, allowing the Department of Public Works to work with the community to address our safety concerns. Whatever led to it, finally, in January 2021, the traffic and engineering team met to "puzzle through" the various and complex issues of this high-impact area, including the driveway. This time, the conversation included voices of those in the community who live, work, walk, bike, and drive here. THANK YOU.

We hope in the future that others not directly associated with special interest groups can have an easier time participating in City projects that matter to them. Some of us are already in conversation with our Council Members to create such opportunities.

I hope you vote to accept the new Exit-Only recommendation and vote to release TAM funds for the Third Street Rehabilitation Project.

Respectfully,

Lisa Merigian