

# Los Altos Town Crier

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## Board of Supes allocates \$100K to improve safety on Homestead

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Help is on the way for Los Altos students who walk or bike to and from school along Homestead Road, a route that's proven to be dangerous as it crosses through six jurisdictions. The Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors this month allocated \$100,000 toward safety improvements along the corridor.

The route students who live in south Los Altos typically take to and from Cupertino Middle School and Homestead High School is controlled by six jurisdictions: the cities of Los Altos, Sunnyvale and Cupertino; Santa Clara County; Caltrans; and California Water Service Co. Along with bustling Homestead Road – accessed via the intersection at Grant Road and Vineyard Drive – students also encounter commuter-riddled Foothill Expressway as well as the on- and off-ramps to Highway 85.

In the past year, there have been three major traffic accidents involving students on their way to school between El Sereno Avenue in Los Altos and Sweet Oak Street in Cupertino – an area measuring less than half a mile. This area is known as the Homestead Road corridor.

The accidents attracted the attention of concerned parents and school officials, including Steve Puccinelli, Homestead High's dean of students. In March 2017, Puccinelli sent a letter to all of the jurisdictions expressing his concern and asking for immediate action and cooperation.

The letter reached Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian, who represents the local District 5, and he took action.

"It became clear to me that a big part of the challenge was that there were so many different jurisdictions involved," he said in a recent phone interview, "and while there are funds out there for which local jurisdictions can apply, typically that's done by an individual city. Where it



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**Santa Clara County approved funding for safety enhancements along the Homestead Road corridor, a route used by students that crosses six jurisdictions.**

gets a little more challenging is where you have a number of jurisdictions."

Simitian began to draft a plan for a one-time budget proposal to hire a technical facilitator for the joint effort – someone who would be able to implement improvements throughout the corridor, across all jurisdictions.

"What I ultimately brought to my colleagues at the Board of Supervisors is that the way I thought we could be helpful is by providing a professional facilitator to pull together folks from all three cities," he said.

Simitian hopes the facilitator will help the cities "identify what a safe route to school would look like, and pull together a joint application so that we can serve the kids of this area without worrying about which artificial boundaries they cross as they try to make their way from their homes to their schools."

### Creating a coalition

The proposal soon got the attention of local leaders of the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) movement. By June 12, in anticipation of the county board meeting the following day, letters of support were sent from Fremont Union High School District Superintendent Polly Bove and Homestead Principal Greg Giglio, Cupertino Union School District Chief of Engagement Leslie Maines, Cupertino Middle and Homestead High SRTS parent leaders and Los Altos Mayor Jean Mordo. The county

board unanimously approved Simitian's proposal, allocating \$100,000 to develop a plan for on-street safety improvements along the corridor.

The ability to create the multijurisdictional effort – compounded by the advocacy of parents involved in the SRTS movement for short-term solutions like crossing guards as well as long-term infrastructure changes – is expected to bring major improvements in the future.

"We are grateful and thrilled that the county Board of Supervisors is considering the improvements along the Homestead Road corridor, and we are especially appreciative of the attention and support from Supervisor Joe Simitian," Bove said. "This improvement will reduce traffic and keep our students safe while riding their bicycles to school."

Giglio said he's confident Simitian's plans will complement current efforts to increase safety.

"I have been working with our staff and members of the Safe Routes to School committees to increase safety in and around our campus, so I am excited about the plans laid out by Supervisor Simitian, because those plans will directly improve the paths of travel for our students, parents, staff and community members," he said. "Hopefully, with the successful implementation of this plan and the cooperation of our neighboring cities, we can begin

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## SAFETY

to see an improvement in the traffic flow and an increase in safety on our city streets as well.”

Until now, the area’s multijurisdictional nature has impeded any major improvements, despite efforts by the schools and parent advocates. Each city was only able to address problems within its own boundaries, hindering the creation of a unified route.

Simitian noted the unique challenge: “I have this saying in my office, ‘You can’t get what you want until you know what you want.’ In this case, you can’t access the necessary funding for Safe Routes to School until you’ve identified what it will take to create a safe route to school. Some of the existing infrastructure is fine as long as you’ve got kids going down a particular path, but in other cases it’s going to require some kind of physical infrastructure. What we hope to do is identify the list of on-street improvements that need to be made in order to keep kids safe.”

He confirmed that the authority for the contract was granted to

the county’s Roads Department, which is in the process of choosing a facilitator for the project. The budget was fully funded Aug. 1, and department officials hope to identify a facilitator in four to six weeks, according to Simitian. The contract term with the facilitator is expected to expire by the end of February, he added.

While the county continues to develop a plan for safety improvements, Puccinelli encourages students to keep walking and biking to school. He explained that by taking cars off the road, parents and students could decrease traffic along the paths to school.

“It is a motto of ours that ‘We are the traffic,’ so it is up to us to change the traffic patterns,” he said. “We hope that people continue to do that, and make sure that those who do obey all traffic laws and safety protocols. Most importantly, stay on the right side of the road, wear your helmet, don’t wear earbuds and give yourself plenty of room to stop at all intersections. Be aware when walking or riding your bike every time you cross an intersection—even if you have the right-of-way.”

May 29, 2019

## Homestead Road corridor report offers options to improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists

Town Crier Report

**S**anta Clara County officials recently released a report detailing a proposed expansion of the Safe Routes to School program along the Homestead Road corridor. The report includes proposals for near-term pedestrian and bicycle improvements on Homestead in the cities of Los Altos, Cupertino and Sunnyvale.

“Given the ever-growing danger of traffic to young pedestrians and bike riders, we really need to step up to ensure the safety of these kids,” said Santa Clara County Supervisor Joe Simitian. “This is a complex route. It covers multiple communities. It’s going to take everyone working together to make this plan a reality.”

The report details proposed on-street im-

provements along the Homestead corridor, including new traffic signals, high-visibility crosswalk markings, bike-lane buffers and sidewalk improvements.

The next step for the Homestead Road Safe Routes to School Project is to apply for grants based on the funding sources identified. Partner agencies will jointly apply for grant funding, with a “project champion” from each agency set to be appointed.

At Simitian’s urging, supervisors last year approved one-time funding to secure a consultant to develop a multijurisdictional conceptual plan for additional on-street safety improvements to the Homestead corridor, which serves students traveling to and from West Valley Elementary School, Cupertino Middle School and

Homestead High.

The conceptual plan will serve as the basis for subsequent multijurisdiction applications for state and federal funding to implement identified on-street improvements.

### Jurisdictional jumble

Homestead Road begins where Foothill Expressway, Vineyard Drive, Grant Road and El Sereno Avenue converge in south Los Altos. To reach this point, students from the northwest side of Foothill Expressway cross the expressway at St. Joseph Avenue or Arboretum Drive. They join with students exiting the adjacent neighborhoods on the northeast side of Foothill

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side of Homestead and Highway 85 on- and off-ramps on both sides of Homestead.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that the area is a jumble of jurisdictional boundary lines. The boundaries of the cities of Los Altos, Cupertino and Sunnyvale converge in the area and impact responsibility for Homestead Road.

The county has right-of-way related to Foothill Expressway. Caltrans has right-of-way related to Highway 85. In addition, Cupertino Middle School is located on the north side of West Homestead in Sunnyvale. Homestead High is located on the south side of West Homestead in Cupertino. The two schools are also in different school districts, Cupertino Union School District and Fremont Union High School District, respectively.

Students bicycling on Homestead Road Corridor Safe Route to School are therefore crossing from one city to the next with no unified route, facing inconsistent guidelines from the jurisdictions on where to be or what safety rules they should follow to stay safe.

### **Barriers to safety**

Safe Routes to School is an international movement that has taken hold in communities throughout the U.S. The concept is to increase the number of children who walk or cycle to school by funding projects that remove barriers that prevent them from doing so. Barriers include lack of infrastructure, unsafe infrastructure and lack of programs that promote walking and bicycling through education/encouragement programs aimed

at children, parents and the community.

Separate state and federal Safe Routes to School programs serve California. Caltrans distributes Safe Routes funding from the Federal Highway Administration. The California state budget provides roughly an equal amount of funding for the state's Safe Routes to School program. Funds are distributed in the form of grants.

In addition to state and federal Safe Routes to Schools grants, the study identifies several other potential funding sources, including 2016's Measure B through the Valley Transportation Agency. The Homestead Road Safe Routes to School Project is eligible for Measure B funding.

*For more information on the study, visit [sccgov.org/sites/rda/PnS/CP/Pages/Homestead-Rd.aspx](http://sccgov.org/sites/rda/PnS/CP/Pages/Homestead-Rd.aspx).*

# SUNNY VALE THE SUN

June 19, 2020

## Community brief

### VTA funds Homestead 'Safe Routes'

The Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) board of directors recently approved funding for the Homestead Safe Routes to School project. The funding will advance planned pedestrian and bicycle improvements on Homestead Road in Sunnyvale,

Cupertino and Los Altos. The VTA approved funding totaling \$1.17 million for environmental clearance and design. Once this work is complete, the project will be "shovel ready" and grant funding for construction can be pursued.

Homestead Road between Foothill Expressway and Hollenbeck Avenue serves West Valley Elementary, Cupertino

Middle, and Homestead High schools and typically sees heavy traffic during commute hours. Eight bicyclists and pedestrians have been hit along the stretch in the last five years.

The proposed project is intended to improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure and make it easier and safer for students to travel to and from the schools

along the corridor. It includes separated bike lanes, sidewalk gap closure, widened sidewalks, high-visibility crosswalks, curb ramps, and pedestrian and bicycle detection upgrades.

The three-city project has been championed by County Supervisor Joe Simitian at the behest of local community members and elected officials

in all three cities.

"Given the ever-growing risk of traffic to young pedestrians and bike riders, we really need to step up our effort to ensure the safety of these kids," Simitian said in a statement.

"This is a complex route. It crosses through multiple communities. It's going to take everyone working together to make this plan a reality."