

Dear Council Members,

We're unable to attend this evening's Council Meeting and are writing to express our views on Item 17/the matter of whether to request pedestrian safety barriers on El Camino Real. We understand that the need for these safety barriers arose because of the civic center construction plan to close the pedestrian path linking Ashfield and Maple, in anticipation of work needed to be done in that area.

First and foremost, there needs to be a safe way for Ashfield residents to get through to Station Lane. We live on Maple, one street over from Ashfield, and almost every day we see Ashfield neighbors walking, biking, or being pushed by wheelchair on Station Lane. These neighbors include people with severe disabilities, elders, and kids biking to school on their own. Many are going to the park, which has become an important refuge from the construction noise and dislocation.

There are significant safe routes to school issues raised by the El Camino alternative. Several Ashfield kids ride their bikes to school entirely on their own while their parents are at work, and even with "pedestrian safety barriers" on El Camino, we think the El Camino alternative is a disaster waiting to happen. We have the same concerns for others walking on that stretch of El Camino. It is NOT a safe place. We have walked there frequently and are able bodied and reasonably aware, and felt the need to almost hug the fence to keep as far away as we could from cars speeding by and jockeying for lane changes. That traffic is increasing as things open up, and it feels more like a highway than a city street.

While of course the civic center project must proceed, our neighborhood was led to believe that one of the guiding principles was to consider our needs given the long-term disruption and noise of the project around our homes. At a minimum, pedestrian and biker safety must be a priority, even if it means some project delay. We urge you to consider whether there is another way to link Ashfield with Station Lane so that our Ashfield neighbors will be safe on their way to school, work, or the park.

Thank you for your consideration.

Julie Quinlan