



TA Board of Directors

Meeting of December 4, 2025

Correspondence as of December 3, 2025

Subject

1. item #11.b Alpine Rd project
2. Alpine Rd corridor proposed improvements

From: [John Langbein](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Cc: [Patrick Gilster](#); [Jessica Manzi](#); [John Langbein](#)
Subject: item #11.b Alpine Rd project
Date: Friday, November 28, 2025 8:11:29 AM
Attachments: [Comments 2 TA Nov2025 JL.pdf](#)

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Board members:

Attached are my comments to the TA about the Alpine Rd Corridor project that is requesting a grant. My comments are directed towards the "effectiveness" of the two proposed alternative designs. However, given that the grant request is for an environmental study, the staff at the TA did not evaluate the effectiveness. I am concerned that the flawed concepts promoted in the grant request will be carried forward into the post-environmental phases (PS&E, ROW, and CON).

As a long-time bike rider, both for commuting and recreational riding, the concepts fail at two points: 1) The conceptual plans increase the number points of conflict between motorists and bikes and 2) The class IV facilities are too narrow to accommodate riders of different speeds from 5 mph to in excess of 25 mph.

Assuming that the County is provided a grant for environmental phase, the TA should instruct the County that they need to do a better job accommodating bike riders through the freeway interchange on this well-used route for cyclists.

John Langbein

**Alpine Rd Corridor project: Comments to Transportation Authority of San Mateo County;
A bicycling perspective**

John Langbein

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650 421 1589

November 26, 2025

Conceptual plans for improving the Alpine Road Corridor for all users have been formally evolving over the last 9 years with two reports, one completed in 2017¹; and a second report issued a few months ago², which I identify as the Project Initiation Document (PID). Now, the Department of Public Works for San Mateo County (DPW) is requesting a grant for the environmental phase. I shall be commenting on the current configuration for bicycling and two alternative concepts provided in the grant proposal for the next phase (environmental) of the Alpine Rd project. Although the older reports examined the entire corridor from the Junipero Serra/Sandhill to the Portola Valley (PV) town limits (Ladera), I will focus my comments on the RT280 interchange – many of my general comments can be extrapolated to the two intersections in Ladera. My conclusion, at least from the point of view of a cyclist, is that the current layout of the interchange is *better* than any of the proposed changes. That's not to say that the current layout couldn't be improved.

Along the way, DPW has allowed the public to comment during two sets of outreach, one for the 2017 report and the second prior to writing the PID. Cyclists have either written or spoken about the flawed conceptual designs provided to the public. Yet, the current PID, when going over a checklist for its required Complete Streets assessment, stated that there was no opposition by “stakeholders” to the project – in spite of negative comments provide by the cycling community to DPW (are cyclists not “stakeholders”?)

Current configuration: Although the perception of the current layout of the 280 interchange could appear dangerous due to sandwiching a buffered bike lane between two motor vehicle lanes, it works OK. It works because the stop sign meters the traffic in the PV³ bound direction prior to the buffered bike lane. Consequently, at most only three vehicles enter the area beyond the stop sign which makes it easy for each driver (and cyclist) to monitor the other two. And all vehicles are leaving a stop sign at a slow speed. With the existing, green, buffered bike lane, the route of the cyclist is well defined. Motorists can change lanes across the bike lane, but, with the designated bike lane, they know where to expect a bike rider.

The Grant Proposal: The current grant proposal includes two alternative concepts: 1) A pair of traffic lights and 2) A pair of two-lane roundabouts. (See the attached figures.) Bike riders are expected to be either diverted on to narrow, 5-ft wide side paths, as in the case of the roundabouts, or sandwiched

¹ <https://www.smcgov.org/media/41141/download?inline=>

² <https://www.smcgov.org/media/155788/download?inline=>

³ Because providing north/southeast/west directions can be ambiguous at the 280 interchange (Alpine RD runs NS and RT280 runs NW/SE), I use four other cardinal directions being San Francisco (SF) and San Jose (SJ) for RT280 and Stanford University (SU) and Portola Valley (PV) for Alpine Rd.

between “Caltrans approved separators” (bollards? K-rails?) on a 5-ft wide bike lane in the PV direction. Note that bicycling speeds can be variable, from a leisurely 5 mph to easily more than 20 to 25 mph. With narrow pathways, safe passing is not possible given the mix of riders, lane positioning, and their bike handling skills.

The other problem with the two concepts is the inevitable crossings where bike and cars must negotiate. For the side path option shown with the roundabouts, the concept has bikers crossing the freeway exit and on-ramps using pedestrian crosswalks⁴, coupled with having bikes making 90° turns⁵. In total, bikes will need to cross 4 lanes in the PV direction and 3 in the SU direction. I suspect that many of the current cyclists using Alpine Rd will skip using the side path in favor of navigating the roundabouts⁶. However, two-lane roundabouts are difficult for cyclists to navigate safely with motorists jockeying for position.

With the dual traffic-light concept, any motorist headed in the PV direction with the intention of using RT280 will need to be correctly positioned prior to the first stop light. The current usage indicates that more than 50% of traffic using Alpine Rd in the PV direction turns onto RT280 and will need to cross the bike lane prior to reaching the light (denoted by XX in the “traffic light” figure). When the light is green, I can imagine that many motorists will speed-up to get through the intersection before the light turns red; the cyclists could become “collateral damage” from motorist impatience.

I suggest that the Transportation Authority stipulates that DPW consider other designs for this interchange that better accommodate bike riders as well as motorists. After all, the goal is to improve traffic operations and improve safety for all users, including cyclists and pedestrians. The proposed two alternative concepts, along with the prior concepts in the two previous reports do, at best, nothing to improve cycling safety – they likely decrease cycling safety. It also isn’t clear to me that the roundabout option (both in the current proposal and in previous reports) helps residents from the Stanford Weekend Acres make their left turns onto Alpine Rd during the two commute periods. My suggestion to DPW is to evaluate a compact diamond interchange like the one at the RT280/RT84 (Woodside Rd) interchange. The compact diamond reduces the number of direct points of conflict (those being the on/off ramps). I also question the necessity of having two travel lanes in each direction on Alpine between

⁴ There is also a legal issue with bike riders riding their bikes in crosswalks: see <https://bayareabicyclelaw.com/safety-laws/do-cyclists-need-to-walk-their-bikes-in-the-crosswalk-in-the-bay-area/#:~:text=California%20law%20doesn't%20require,walk%20it%20through%20the%20crosswalk> for an extended discussion. Consequently, cyclists who want to have the law in their favor in a civil case would walk across each crosswalk, which one might consider prudent, but certainly not convenient.

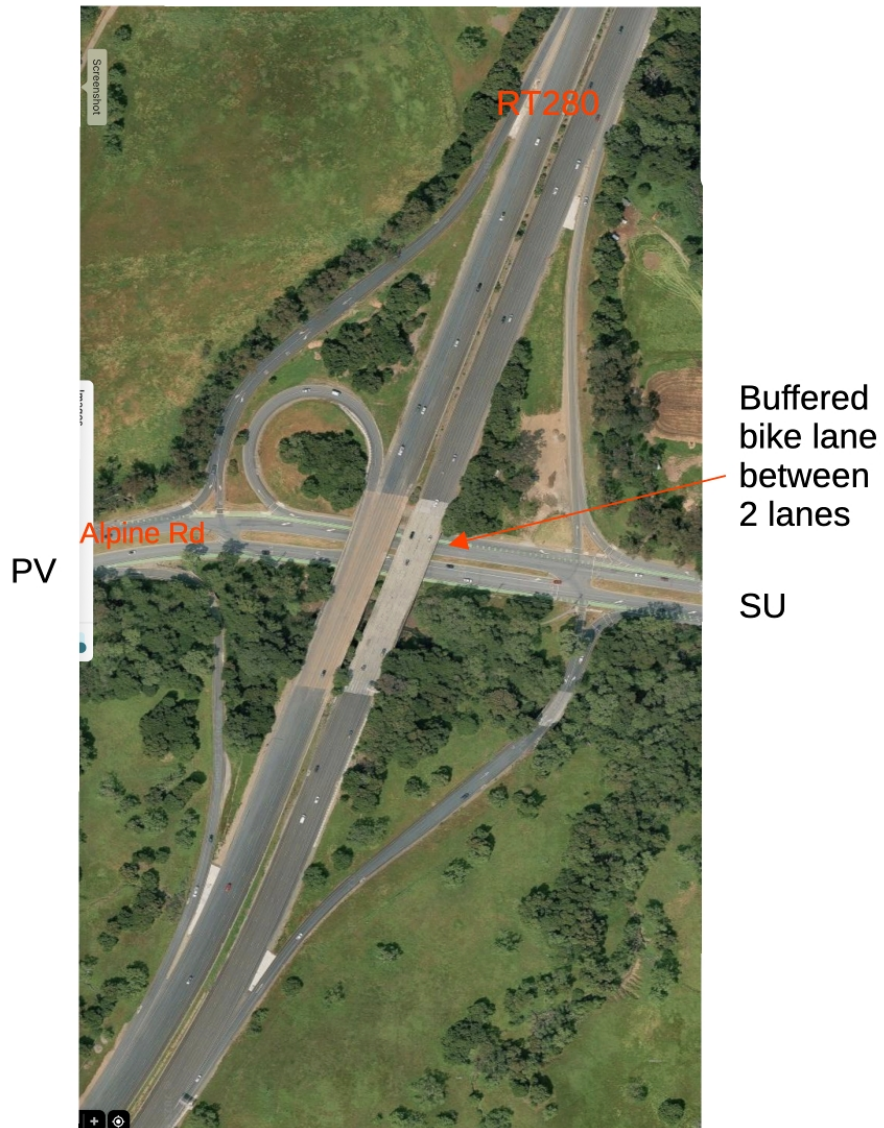
⁵ With pedestrian crosswalks that span freeway on or off ramps, there is potential for poor line of sight while the motorist is turning the corner and concentrating on merging with other motor vehicles and not noticing the person in the crosswalk. On the other hand, the motorist might stop for a person in the crosswalk, but the next motorist might not stop in time causing a rear-end crash.

⁶ Quoting from an old copy of the Caltrans Highway Design Manual, 1993, 1000-5; “Bike paths immediately adjacent to streets and highways are not recommended. They should not be considered a substitute for the street, because many bicyclists will find it less convenient to ride on these types of facilities as compared with streets, particularly for utility trips.” Unstated is that some motorists may expect that the bike rider should be using the side path if one is available, and this expectation may become an invitation for harassment. I realize that Caltrans now recognizes these facilities, but that doesn’t warrant their use.

either the roundabouts or traffic lights. Given that Alpine Rd is a two-lane road outside of the interchange, is a 4-lane divided roadway necessary for the segment that passes under RT280?

Current Configuration

SF



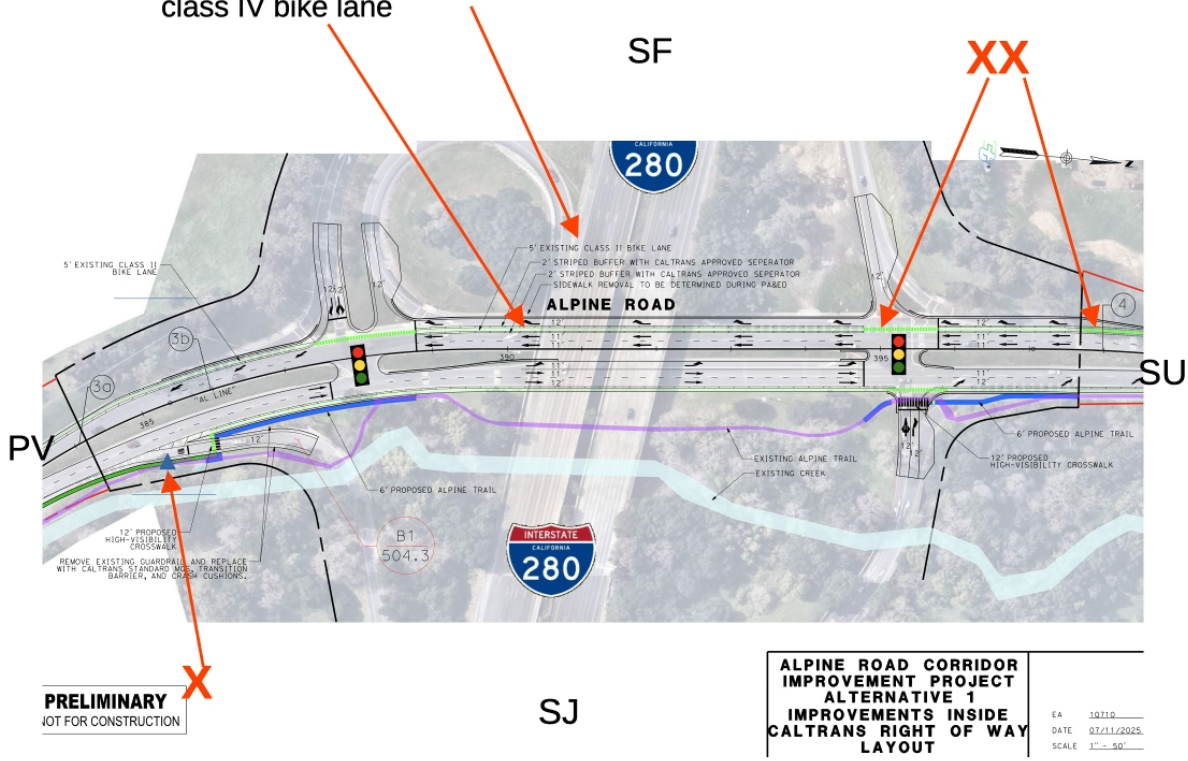
Buffered
bike lane
between
2 lanes

SJ

⁷ The extra room provided by reducing the number of lanes could be used to widen the class IV bike lane in the traffic light alternative.

Traffic Light Concept; Nov 2025

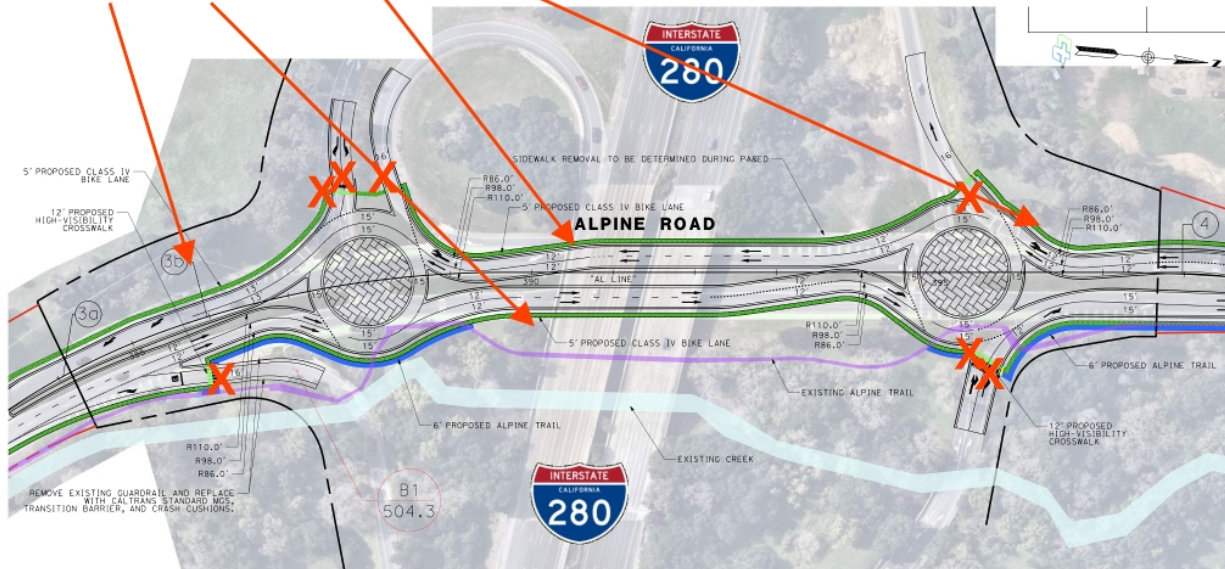
Note – separated, narrow, 5-ft wide class IV bike lane



X – conflict area

Roundabout Concept; Nov. 2025

5-ft wide side path;
too narrow to
accommodate
bikes going at
different speeds



PRELIMINARY

ALPINE ROAD CORRIDOR
IMPROVEMENT PROJECT
ALTERNATIVE 2

X – Conflict zone; cross-walks (two X dual lane crossing)

From: [Jonathan Blum](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: Alpine Rd corridor proposed improvements
Date: Sunday, November 30, 2025 9:15:00 PM

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Dear County Transportation Authority,

I am writing regarding the proposed plans for improvements along Alpine Road near Highway 280. I attended both public meetings earlier this year, and have reviewed the plans in detail. Two alternatives are proposed for cyclists crossing route 280. Both are inferior to the current situation, and neither of them should be built.

The common concept of both plans is that cyclists will be diverted onto narrow pathways, making multiple crossings of freeway ramps, and making multiple 90° turns along the way.

The uncontrolled ramp crossings are unsafe, and 90° turns are impractical. Most of the cyclists using this popular corridor are relatively experienced and often fast-moving, because this area does not attract slower-moving cyclists. This is not snobbery, it is reality. The plans appear to emphasize access for people who are unlikely to use the area, because the road approaching from both directions is not the kind of road they would use. Unfortunately, the proposed plans would create safety hazards for the users.

At the two public meetings, multiple cyclists gave extensive feedback explaining the deficiencies in the plan; notably, no cyclists spoke up in favor of the plan. There's a reason for that. It is very disappointing to see that no changes at all were made in response to a lot of feedback.

The current configuration is not perfect, but it works. I can safely predict that if either of the plans described in the report is implemented, cyclists will not use them as intended. Instead, they will mix it up with the cars and take their chances. That's what I would do. There is not much point in building costly bicycle facilities that no one will use, when the current situation is actually better than the proposed facilities. I hope you will take this under consideration and insist on improvements before implementation.

Sincerely,
Jonathan Blum