

Subject: Menlo Park Facebook Campus Project Environmental Impact Report (EIR)
From: East Palo Alto Bicycle Club (EPABC)
To: Menlo Park Development Services Manager Justin Murphy
Date: May 26, 2011

Dear Justin Murphy,

This letter is in response to the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Menlo Park Facebook Campus Project, found online at http://service.govdelivery.com/docs/CAMENLO/CAMENLO_176/CAMENLO_176_20110419_en.pdf.

The East Palo Alto Bicycle Club (EPABC) is engaged in a variety of short-term and long-term efforts to improve conditions for bicycling in East Palo Alto, including:

- repairing donated bicycles and giving them to children and low-income workers
- encouraging children to bike and walk to school with the Ravenswood City School District's Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program
- teaching safe bicycling techniques to both children and adults through Bicycle Safety Education classes
- promoting bicycling as a safe and healthy transportation option at community events such as the annual Cinco de Mayo Celebration and Bike to Work Day events.
- organizing bicycle tours to show residents and city officials the benefits of future bicycle projects such as the Bicycle/Pedestrian Bridge over Highway 101 connecting Newell Rd with Clarke Ave.

Facebook's move from Palo Alto to Menlo Park is of great concern to East Palo Alto residents due to the potential for a significant increase in traffic along University Ave, which is already highly congested during peak commute hours. We believe that a large percentage of the 9,400 employees that Facebook plans to have working at their Menlo Park campus will drive on University Ave through East Palo Alto and not Willow Rd through Menlo Park because:

- Many Facebook employees currently live and will continue to live in Palo Alto and Mountain View, which are both entirely south of University Ave. Few Facebook employees live in Menlo Park and areas farther north (except for San Francisco, and many of them will drive to work on Bayfront Expressway from Marsh Rd, not on Willow Rd).
- University Ave connects with El Camino Real, and Willow Rd does not. This is significant because El Camino Real is the most heavily used north-south corridor in the area after Highway 101.
- University Ave connects directly to Facebook's Menlo Park campus via Bayfront Expressway.
- Willow Rd offers no greater traffic capacity than University Ave because the number of vehicle lanes it contains is exactly the same - one lane in each direction between Middlefield Rd and Highway 101, and two lanes in each direction between Highway 101 and Bayfront Expressway.

The Menlo Park Facebook EIR should not assume that most of the Facebook commuter traffic will occur on Willow Rd simply because it is the shortest route from Highway 101, Middlefield Rd, and El Camino Real. The EIR should consider the factors listed above as reasons why many Facebook commuters will drive on University Ave to get to work.

Traffic on University Ave already slows to a crawl and often stops completely between Bay Rd and Donohoe St in East Palo Alto during peak commute hours. Preventing the Level Of Service (LOS) on this two-thirds of a mile section of University Ave from being further reduced is of critical importance to East Palo Alto workers, most of whom commute daily to Palo Alto or Menlo Park.

Critical intersections in East Palo Alto along this route that will be impacted include University Ave and Bell Rd, University Ave and Runnymede St, University Ave and Bell Rd, University Ave and Donohoe St, the University Ave and Highway 101 interchange, and University Ave and Woodland Ave.

The traffic impact on all six of these intersections should be studied in the EIR.

The City of East Palo Alto is planning several bicycle projects which have great potential to mitigate the traffic impacts of Facebook employees driving to work along University Ave because each of them will increase the safety of bicyclists traveling to Facebook's Menlo Park campus, thereby resulting in some Facebook employees choosing to bicycle to work instead of driving. These bicycle projects include:

1. **Stripe bike lanes on the University Ave and Highway 101 overcrossing.** This overcrossing is dangerous for bicyclists because they must cross the paths of vehicles traveling at high speeds at 3 locations in the northbound direction and at one location in the southbound direction.
2. **Stripe bike lanes on the Willow Rd and Highway 101 overcrossing.** This overcrossing is dangerous for bicyclists because they must cross the paths of vehicles traveling at high speeds at 4 locations in the northbound direction and 4 locations in the southbound direction.
3. **Widen and restripe the bike lanes on University Ave.** These bike lanes are too narrow to safely bicycle in because many vehicles exceed the posted speed limit of 25 mph, and these bike lanes are wearing away and have already disappeared in many places, especially between Bay Rd and Bell Rd..
4. **Construct a bike path to fill an important gap in the San Francisco Bay Trail** from University Ave along the Dumbarton Rail line east to the Ravenswood Open Space Preserve, then south to connect with the existing Bay Trail which currently ends (in the northbound direction) at Runnymede St in East Palo Alto.
5. **Construct a bicycle/pedestrian overcrossing bridge over Highway 101 at Newell/Clarke** to create a safe route for bicycles to travel between Palo Alto and East Palo Alto. This would create a safe and continuous bicycle route from the California Ave Caltrain Station in Palo Alto to East Palo Alto.

All of these bicycle projects should be included as potential traffic mitigation measures in the EIR, not only because each one would contribute to a reduction of the traffic impacts on University Ave, but also in order to be consistent with several local plans, which is required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). These local plans include:

1. *East Palo Alto Bicycle Transportation Plan (2011), page 11.* Includes projects #3 and #5 above.
http://www.ci.east-palo-alto.ca.us/planningdiv/pdf/Bicycle_Transportation_Plan.pdf
2. *East Palo Alto General Plan, Circulation Element (1999), pages 18 and 21.* Includes projects #1, #3, and #4 above.
http://www.ci.east-palo-alto.ca.us/planningdiv/pdf/Economic_Circulation_Conservation_and_Open_Space.pdf
3. *The San Francisco Bay Trail Project Gap Analysis Study (2005).* Includes project #4 above.
<http://baytrail.abag.ca.gov/gap-analysis/GAP-ANALYSIS-REPORT-all.pdf>
4. *East Palo Alto Bay Access Master Plan (2007), page 16.* Includes project #4 above. <http://www.ci.east-palo-alto.ca.us/economicdev/images/BAMP%20Final%205%2023%2007.pdf>
5. *Menlo Park Comprehensive Bicycle Development Plan (2005), Figure 5-1.* Includes project #2 above.
<http://www.menlopark.org/departments/trn/bikeplan.pdf>

Sincerely,



Andrew Boone, President, East Palo Alto Bicycle Club (EPABC)