

Issue 5: Safe Egress - “Y” Residents

Overview:

About 15 years ago, the county was supposed to have addressed a major safety issue of residents along the eastern side of Santa Cruz at the “Y” intersection with Alameda de las Pulgas. Northbound Santa Cruz traffic does not stop as Santa Cruz splits at the “Y”. There is a significant turn in the road, residents attempting to leave their driveways do not have safe visibility, line of site measured in only seconds, and traffic virtually never stops.

The county⁴ was to provide these residences with the ability to activate the traffic lights at the “Y” to stop northbound Santa Cruz traffic so that vehicles could safely exit these properties. The county has either failed to install this provision or has let it lapse into disrepair and residents do not have a safe means of egress.

This also creates a very unsafe situation for pedestrians and cyclists since the resident has to concentrate on oncoming vehicular traffic and cannot observe others. The sidewalk is totally inadequate.

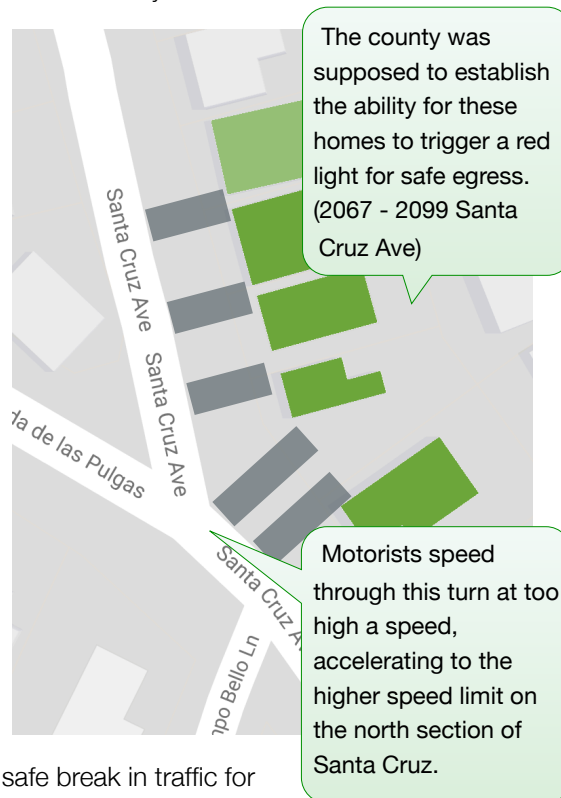
Proposed Solution Options:

The simplest solution would be for all northbound traffic on Santa Cruz at this intersection to stop on red — to eliminate the problematic ‘always green’ light for the right most lane.

This implementation provides a safe break in traffic for residents to exit their driveways. An additional option is for County to provide residents an effective means to trigger the stop traffic light so they can safely exit.

The speed of motorists drive at this northbound curve is dangerous and very unsafe and has been the cause of many serious accidents, out of control cars, and damage to properties and traffic control (hundreds of thousands of dollars). Removing the “always green” light calms traffic behavior — improves safety.

Residents request effective traffic control to reduce speed on curve and to prevent cars from entering the bike only area when they ‘cut’ the curve.



Problems:

- Traffic does not stop on Santa Cruz for residence’s at the “Y”
- County was supposed to maintain traffic signal activation by residents
- Extremely unsafe access from property due to blind curve
- Speed is a major factor
- Cyclists need to be warned of vehicles exiting from properties

Positives of Solution:

- Eliminates an extremely unsafe condition at the “Y”
- Restores residences with much needed safety solution
- Slower Advisory speed on curve (20 mph) could improve safety and a 25 mph speed limit for north Santa Cruz would help slow down traffic

Considerations:

- In addition to normal traffic light of all lanes stop on red, providing residents a way to trigger the light.

Impact:

Calmer traffic flow to allow safe egress. Since egress is low volume, impact on traffic is minor, even during peak hours.

Alternatives:

None that solves problem as well as this option. Considered Egress warning lights when exiting property, but these would not be a familiar traffic control for vehicle traffic, would not be easily seen because of the curve, and may lead to a false sense of safety. Traffic needs to stop and allow egress.

Scope and Cost:

no cost associated with changing the light to normal operation, where all northbound lanes stop on red and go on green. Minor cost for mechanism to provide residents a means to trigger the light for safe egress.