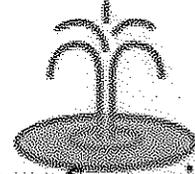




# Springs Municipal Advisory Council



Original Submission: March 2, 2022  
Update: May 10, 2023

Supervisor Susan Gorin  
Board of Supervisors  
575 Administration Drive Room 100A  
Santa Rosa, California 95403

*Via email:*

**RE: Urgent Request for Improvements to Traffic Safety in the Springs**

Dear Supervisor Gorin and Board of Supervisors,

The Springs Municipal Advisory Council (Springs MAC) is aware of ongoing meetings between Supervisor Susan Gorin and the following four agencies: Caltrans, Sonoma County Transportation Authority, City of Sonoma, and Sonoma County Public Infrastructure (SoCoPi) regarding improvements to traffic safety in the Springs along the Highway 12 (HWY 12) corridor. We acknowledge the time and energy spent on addressing these dangerous conditions and we are concerned with the limited progress that has been achieved.

The Caltrans Complete Streets program requires that the Safety and Accessibility of walking, biking, and taking public transit be prioritized on their roads whenever a project is undertaken. Due to recent improvements on Hwy 12 in the City of Sonoma, we have become aware of the possibilities in additional safety improvements that could be made for pedestrians and bicyclists in our community. We (The Springs MAC members) make an urgent request that Caltrans initiate action at the earliest possible time, on the following requests for pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular safety in the Springs.

**Highway 12/Verano Avenue Intersection/Verano Avenue & Main Street Crosswalk** We grant that the Hwy 12/Verano Ave intersection is the only portion of this request under Springs (County) and Caltrans joint jurisdiction. Caltrans personnel are aware of the death of three people and two girls in their early teens injured at that intersection. All these occurrences were within less than a quarter mile of the locations mentioned (see below chart for references). The deaths of two people, one in the City of Sonoma and two in Sonoma County (the Springs), highlight our awareness that conditions at the Hwy 12/Verano Ave intersection directly impact conditions at these two sites. It is our contention that improvements to the Hwy 12/Verano Ave intersections are highly indicated.

Our concerns are the inequity of designated turn signals and lanes at the Hwy 12/Verano Ave intersection that create confusion and increased danger. The critical point seems to be for vehicles turning left from the west on Verano to proceed north on Hwy 12.

**Recent Injuries and Deaths at Verano Ave and Highway 12 intersection**

Date	Location	Details	Article link
1/19/23	Crosswalk HWY12 near Verano Avenue	Fatality Pedestrian Julio Estrada hit by car	Sonoma Index Tribune

3/22/21	Bike Path—HWY 12 Maxwell Park	Fatality Pedestrian James Pendergast hit by work van	<a href="#">Press Democrat</a>
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## Springs MAC Safety and traffic improvements request to Caltrans

<b>2/14/21</b>	Crosswalk HWY 12 & Verano Avenue between Palms Cafe and McDonald's	Accident Two girls injured by car	<a href="#">Sonoma Index Tribune</a>
<b>11/24/20</b>	Crosswalk Verano Avenue & Main St	Fatality Pedestrian Ray Carrillo hit by car	Sonoma Index Tribune

### **Springs/HWY 12 Crosswalks**

There is a need for additional marked crosswalks throughout the Hwy 12 corridor from El Verano to Agua Caliente. The Springs Community is dense with businesses and housing along that stretch of highway. Many people, families and youth walk to shopping, other businesses, and parks throughout the Springs. Vehicles frequently take advantage of gaps in traffic to speed from stop signal to stop signal making unsafe conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists. There are few actual cross streets (only "T" intersections) in the area, increasing the need for more marked crosswalks. We request implementation of four pedestrian beacons. Three beacons at already marked crosswalks on Highway 12 located at Boyes Foods Center (18285 Sonoma Hwy), El Molino (11 Central Avenue)/Andy's Liquor (18002 Sonoma Hwy), and Parsons Hardware x Waterman (17800 Sonoma Hwy). The additional pedestrian beacon should be placed at the Verano Ave/Main Street crosswalk (SoCoPi area of responsibility). We ask that you consider alternatives to crosswalks on Highway 12.

### **Equity is the Issue**

The crosswalks and intersections within the Sonoma City limit with frequent foot traffic have lights, reflectors, and audible signals. The Springs, where many of the pedestrian deaths have occurred, do not. Maxwell Park received park improvements before Larson Park, another example of the limited value placed on the Springs. Maxwell Park requires members of the Springs to cross there without safety measures. Historically, the lives of Springs residents are being held in less value. It took 20+ years of an organized active community effort to get sidewalks on highway 12. This is an issue of equity. The lives in the Springs are seen as less than and this is not acceptable. The Donald St. Gap is an excellent example of the limited support for the Springs.

### **Donald Street Gap, Bike Lanes**

The Donald Street Gap along both sides of the highway, in the area between Lazzarottos (18925 Sonoma Hwy) and Baker and Cook (18812 Sonoma Hwy), has no sidewalk. Pedestrians must walk alongside traffic in the bike lane/shoulder. The bike lanes are more like bike gutters, and for pedestrians and biking to be safe, more space and protection than a line of paint needs to be given to both groups. These goals are in line with the Complete Streets Program and need to be undertaken sooner than later.

The Springs area of Unincorporated Sonoma County is recognized as a disadvantaged community. We are not wealthy. That does not mean we are not worthy. We ask that Caltrans work with PI and Supervisor Gorin (and the Board of Supervisors, as needed) as she advocates for us, to address the above safety needs along Highway 12. We want to minimize accidents and prevent further pedestrian fatalities. This conversation has been ongoing for several years and we urge you to address our concerns immediately, as these deaths and injuries were and are preventable.

Sincerely,



Maitte Iturri  
Chair, Springs Municipal Advisory Council

## Springs MAC Safety and traffic improvements request to Caltrans

### **PUBLIC COMMENT QUOTES**

*I think the Highway 12/Verano Avenue intersection will be dangerous for pedestrians until left-turn signals are added for traffic on Verano Ave. Without left-turn lights, drivers turning left from either direction on Verano have to focus on on-coming traffic to know when they can safely turn. Then they often have to hurry before more traffic comes to them. Their attention is not on the crosswalks. This problem is made worse because it's a sharper left turn than usual, so they have to look a little behind them for pedestrians. That's not possible when they're looking ahead for on-coming cars. Please make it a priority to add left-turn signals before someone else is killed.*

Roger Hamlyn  
Sonoma, California

*I am writing to you to give you my suggestion for improving the Verano HWY 12 intersection. I bike and drive through it on a regular basis. Put in a roundabout. Here's why:*

*1. 50% more traffic moves through a roundabout as opposed to a traditional 4 way stop. 2. There are for fewer deaths as the speeds traveled through a roundabout are greatly reduced. 3. It's more cost effective because you don't have to maintain the lights and pedestrian crosswalk signals. 4. We're fortunate to still have enough room at that intersection to put one in.*

*5. There are fewer emissions from cars and trucks idling while waiting for the light to change. 6. The accidents that do occur are also far less severe due to the reduced speeds at the intersection. 7. It reduces the noise at the intersection.*

William Hinder  
Sonoma, California

*Furthermore, it should be noted that it is mainly the residents north of the intersection that are not able to access Sonoma County's Regional Maxwell Park unless they navigate the killer intersection, which is an equity issue that cannot be overlooked. While Eastside Sonoma residents and children can safely make their way west on a dedicated bike path, Springs residents and children must navigate bike lanes along Highway 12 which narrow between the bridge and the intersection, increasing the danger. Enough is enough. We need action.*

Lisa Willet  
Sonoma, California

*This is familiar at other high-risk intersections, so it's puzzling that this is not already in place at this intersection which is clearly high risk--even though "Highway 12 is managed by the state while Verano Avenue is a county road." There needs to be some mutual cooperation of both entities to avoid serious accidents in the future!*

Pam & Robert Clair  
Sonoma, California

CC: Caltrans, Sonoma County Transportation Authority, Sonoma County Public Infrastructure, City of Sonoma City Council, Permit Sonoma, Governor Gavin Newsom, Congressman Mike Thompson, Congressman Jared Huffman, Senator Bill Dodd, Senator Mike McGuire, Representative Cecilia Aguiar-Curry, Senator Diane Feinstein, Senator Alex Padilla