Frequently Asked Questions

Why don’t you install speed bumps instead of reconfiguring the lanes?
Speed bumps are not used on arterials that are meant to carry a high volume of traffic, transit vehicles, and emergency response vehicles because:

- Speed bumps can divert traffic to alternate routes. The goal of the project is to keep the traffic on Farm Hill and Jefferson, but for those vehicles to go slower.
- They are not recommended for streets with speed limits over 30 mph due to the potential for cars to lose control if they go over the bumps at a high speed.
- They are not recommended for streets with more than 2 lanes.

Also, although speed bumps slow cars down, if installed in isolation (without a lane reconfiguration) they do not reduce exposure for people trying to cross the street or provide dedicated space for people on bikes.

Why don’t you install more traffic signals instead of reconfiguring the lanes?
We are considering installation of a signal at the Emerald Hill/Farm Hill intersection. Traffic signals do not inherently slow down traffic, but synchronizing signals to the speed limit can encourage drivers to follow the speed limit by providing continuous green lights for those traveling the speed limit. However, drivers can still travel at speeds higher than the speed limit, even when signals are coordinated. People crossing the street at a signalized intersection may feel safer crossing than at a stop-controlled intersection.

Adding traffic signals along the corridor wouldn’t reduce exposure for people trying to cross the street at locations between signals and if installed in isolation, they don’t provide dedicated space for people on bikes.

Why don’t you just post police officers all the time, they would cover their cost in tickets?
At this point, we simply don’t have the staff resources to constantly enforce this corridor. Police resources are needed throughout the city and for different initiatives. Enforcement can be effective when in it’s in place, but poor behavior and compliance returns when enforcement tapers off. Additionally, dedicating an officer to the area is far more expensive than the cost of the roadway changes. Although tickets issued might generate revenue, our officers enforce traffic violations with the goal of creating a safer traffic environment, not for the purpose of making money. Changing the way the road is designed can increase the safety of people using it – which can be paired with periodic enforcement to address unsafe driving behavior that might continue.
Why not install roundabouts to slow down traffic?
Roundabouts can be an extremely effective way to slow traffic speeds while maintaining the flow of traffic. Given that all of the major intersections (except for Emerald Hill/Farm Hill) are already signalized, a roundabout could be considered for that intersection or as a retrofit for existing signals. The intersection of Emerald Hill and Farm Hill poses some challenges for the installation of a roundabout:

- T-configuration of the intersection reduces space for westbound vehicles to be deflected – which could reduce the speed reduction benefit of a roundabout.
- Grades and curves in nearby limit visibility of the intersection, which is undesirable for a design that may be unfamiliar to many drivers.
- For an arterial street carrying a large volume of traffic and transit vehicles – the inscribed diameter of the circle for a single-lane roundabout should be 100 to 130’ – roughly 80’ is available within the existing roadway.

Another reason why it might not be the best choice for this location is that it wouldn’t provide gaps in traffic to help people getting out of driveways that you would get with a traffic signal.

Did we consider the growth in Downtown when all the new projects are open?
Yes. Even with the 3-lane design, we expect the streets to be able to handle planned growth and to operate at an acceptable level. This project seeks to balance the safety and livability for those who live on or near the street with the access and mobility of those who use it to get to and from other locations. If, at some point, the traffic impacts outweigh other needs of the roadway, it can be restriped to the 4-lane configuration.

Why put bicycle facilities on Farm Hill Boulevard where it’s so steep and no one rides?
Commuter cyclists and cyclists that have a destination in the area, that are comfortable riding in traffic use Farm Hill Boulevard and Jefferson Avenue. Recreational riders and those less comfortable riding in traffic may choose different routes that are less busy – but there are few alternative routes for people to take, particularly if they live south of Farm Hill Boulevard. For example, a Woodside High School student living on Eden Bower Lane would ride down Farm Hill Boulevard and Jefferson in order to turn south on Alameda de las Pulgas to get to school.

I’m worried about fire engines getting stuck in more traffic, will this make it harder for them to respond to emergencies?
No. In emergency situations all traffic is required to pull to the side of the road to allow emergency vehicles to pass – with cars pulled into the bicycle lanes there is plenty of space for them to pass. In extreme situations they may choose to drive in the center turn lane which should be completely clear of vehicles.