



PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT



Council Meeting Date: November 6, 2007

Staff Report #: 07-185

Agenda Item #: F2

REGULAR BUSINESS: 1) Adoption of a Resolution Authorizing the City Manager to Submit a Joint Application with San Mateo County and the Town of Atherton for a Safe Routes to School Grant for the Improvement of Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety for Safe Routes to Laurel School; and, 2) Consideration of Continuing the Planning Process to Improve Pedestrian and Bike Safety on the Unincorporated Segment of Coleman Avenue.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council:

- 1) Adopt a resolution (see Attachment A) authorizing the City Manager to submit a joint application with San Mateo County and the Town of Atherton for a Safe Routes to School grant for the improvement of pedestrian and bicycle safety on Ringwood Avenue, Edge Road, Bay Road, Gilbert Avenue, Willow Road, and Middlefield Road for the Safe Routes to Laurel School, as outlined in Attachment B; and,
- 2) Consider continuation of the process of developing a Safe Routes to School plan to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety on the unincorporated segment of Coleman Avenue.

BACKGROUND

Safe Routes to School Program

Established in 1999 and administered by the Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the Safe Routes to School (SR2S) program came into effect from the passage and signing of Assembly Bill 1475 (AB 1475). Several bills have been enacted to extend the program, the most recent of which is AB 57, which extends the program until January 1, 2013.

Section 2333.5 of the Streets and Highways Code calls for the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), in consultation with the California Highway Patrol, to make

the Safe Routes to School grants available to local government agencies through a statewide competition.

The goals of the program are to reduce injuries and fatalities to school children and to encourage increased walking and bicycling among students. The program achieves these goals by constructing facilities that enhance safety for pedestrians and bicyclists on pathways, trails, sidewalks, and crossings.

Six cycles of project solicitation for the SR2S program have been completed. The application submittal deadline for the seventh cycle of the SR2S program is Friday, November 16, 2007. This call for projects covers Fiscal Years 2006-07 and 2007-08, for which the amounts available are approximately \$26.8 million and \$25.5 million, respectively.

Proposals are granted funding on the basis of the following factors:

- Demonstrated needs of the applicant.
- Potential of the proposal for reducing child injuries and fatalities.
- Potential of the proposal for encouraging increased walking and bicycling among students.
- Identification of safety hazards.
- Identification of current and potential walking and bicycling routes to school.
- Consultation and support for projects by school-based associations, local traffic engineers, local elected officials, law enforcement agencies, school officials, and other relevant community stakeholders.

The SR2S program is primarily a construction program. Costs for project design are not eligible for reimbursement under this program. The SR2S grant funds can be used for the construction of the following work components:

- **Pedestrian facilities:** Includes new sidewalks, sidewalk widening, sidewalk gap closures, curbs, gutters, and curb ramps.
- **Traffic calming:** Includes bulb-outs, speed humps, raised crosswalks, raised intersections, narrowed traffic lanes, lane reduction.
- **Traffic control devices:** Includes traffic signs, traffic stripes, in-roadway crosswalk lights, flashing beacons, pedestrian countdown signals, and vehicle-speed feedback signs.
- **Bicycle facilities:** Includes new or upgraded bikeways, trails, paths, and geometric improvements.
- **Public outreach and education:** Includes preparing and distributing safety awareness materials to school personnel, students, drivers, and neighboring home and/or business owners, and outreach efforts that promote walking and bicycling to and from school along the designated school routes.

Safe Routes to Laurel School Project

During the FY 2006-07 project priority-setting process, the City Council approved a project to develop a Safe Routes to School plan for Laurel Elementary School.

Laurel School is a Grades K–2 elementary school located in Atherton, near the intersection of Ringwood Avenue and Edge Road. Laurel School is part of the Menlo Park City School District and serves students from Menlo Park, Atherton, and San Mateo County. Currently, there are approximately 525 students enrolled at the school. Approximately 80 percent of the students are from Menlo Park. The Menlo Park City School District plans to reconfigure Laurel School to a Grades K–3 elementary school, with an enrollment of approximately 400 students. This reduction in enrollment is due to Encinal School, currently a Grades 3–5 elementary school, being reconfigured to a K–5 elementary school and enrolling some of the students who would otherwise be going to Laurel School.

The Laurel School area, which includes streets and neighborhoods in Menlo Park, Atherton, and San Mateo County, has been identified as a location needing improvements to facilitate safe pedestrian and bicycle movements and to encourage bicycling and walking by Laurel School children. On several occasions, City staff has met with residents and members of the school's Parent and Teacher Organization (PTO) to identify specific concerns and deficiencies with the current transportation facilities in the vicinity of the school.

At the joint Transportation Commission and Bicycle Commission meeting on November 16, 2005, the City heard specific concerns from residents and parents, including the following:

- High-speed traffic.
- Lack of speed limit enforcement on Coleman Avenue and Ringwood Avenue.
- Lack of safe routes to Laurel School, particularly on Coleman Avenue through the unincorporated San Mateo County area.
- Vehicles parking in the bike lanes on Ringwood Avenue.
- Traffic congestion at the intersection of Ringwood Avenue and Edge Road near the school.

The purpose of this project is to develop a Safe Routes to School plan for Laurel School that will be acceptable to all the project stakeholders: City of Menlo Park, County of San Mateo, Town of Atherton, Menlo Park City School District, law-enforcement agencies including the California Highway Patrol, and the surrounding neighborhoods.

ANALYSIS

On January 9, 2007, the City entered into an agreement with Kimley-Horn Associates to assist staff in developing a Safe Routes to School plan for Laurel School. A steering committee was formed to provide guidance to the consultant and ensure that the project

goals and objectives were being met during the process of developing the plan. The steering committee is comprised of representatives from the City of Menlo Park, Town of Atherton, San Mateo County, Laurel School, Menlo Park City School District, San Mateo County Sheriff's Department, California Highway Patrol, Menlo Park Bicycle Commission, Menlo Park Transportation Commission, and Laurel School PTO. To date, there have been four steering committee meetings.

Three neighborhood meetings were held for this project: March 15, June 6, and October 3, 2007. The surrounding neighborhoods were notified by mail of all three meetings. At these meetings, the neighborhoods were provided the opportunity to learn about the project goals and objectives, provide their comments, issues, concerns, and suggestions, evaluate the potential improvement alternatives, and ultimately, review the draft Safe Routes to Laurel School plan for the study-area roadways that include Ringwood Avenue in San Mateo County, Edge Road in Atherton, and Willow Road, Bay Road, Middlefield Road and Gilbert Avenue in Menlo Park.

Improvement alternatives were presented to the Bicycle Commission on June 11, 2007, and to the Transportation Commission on June 13, 2007. At the Bicycle Commission meeting, the Commission decided not to adopt any of the options until it conducted its tour of Coleman Avenue in September, when school would be back in session. The Transportation Commission also wanted to look at the proposed improvements more closely.

At this point, the comments received by staff during the neighborhood meetings and commission meetings indicated that there was general support for the improvement alternatives except on Coleman Avenue. The Laurel School principal and school district have indicated general support for improvements that would enhance the pedestrian and bicycle desirability and safety.

In late August 2007, staff received a notification from Caltrans of a call for projects for the seventh cycle of the SR2S program. In order to meet the deadline for submitting the grant application, and realizing that the Coleman Avenue portion of this project would require more time for discussion and comment from the community, the steering committee agreed to split the project into two phases: 1) Development of improvements along Ringwood Avenue, Edge Road, Bay Road, Gilbert Avenue, Willow Road, and Middlefield Road, and 2) development of improvements on unincorporated Coleman Avenue.

On October 10, 2007, Kimley-Horn and Associates presented to the Bicycle Commission the draft Safe Routes to School plan that was presented at the third neighborhood meeting and included the neighborhood comments from this meeting. The Bicycle Commission unanimously recommended that the City Council do the following:

1. Approve the draft plan with amendments
2. Continue to process the development of a Safe Routes to School plan for the unincorporated portion of Coleman Avenue.

On October 12, 2007, the draft Safe Routes to School plan was presented to the Transportation Commission. At this meeting, the Transportation Commission unanimously recommended that the City Council do the following:

- 1) Approve the draft plan with the Bicycle Commission's amendments; and,
- 2) Continue to process the development of a Safe Routes to School plan for the unincorporated portion of Coleman Avenue.

Attachment B outlines the proposed Safe Routes to Laurel School improvements that are recommended by staff. These reflect the improvements recommended by both commissions with one exception. Staff has excluded the proposed speed tables on Ringwood Avenue due to a recent communication with the County which occurred after the commission meetings. In this communication, County staff indicated that speed tables could not be used on Ringwood Avenue because the posted speed limit is 30 mph and the County does not install speed tables on roadways where the posted speed limit is greater than 25 mph.

San Mateo County and Town of Atherton Requirements

Approximately 90 percent of the proposed Safe Routes to Laurel School improvements are in San Mateo County. As a condition for County support of the Plan, County staff established the requirement that the improvements be supported by at least 51 percent of the affected residents. Consequently, on October 19, 2007, staff mailed a survey to the impacted County residents on Ringwood Avenue to ask them whether they support the proposed improvement measures on Ringwood Avenue. The residents were asked to return the survey by November 2, 2007. If the County's requirement is met, County staff will process Board of Supervisors resolutions for the following measures on Ringwood Avenue: 1) no parking zones; 2) mid-block crosswalk; and 3) non-standard improvements such as curb extensions.

Since the north side of Ringwood Avenue is bordered by Atherton residences, Atherton staff indicated that its residents also need to be surveyed. Therefore, staff mailed the same survey to the affected Atherton residents on October 19, 2007, and asked for return of the surveys by November 2, 2007.

Without support from both communities, the City can not apply for the Safe Routes to School grant.

Safe Routes to School Grant Application

Staff proposes to apply for a joint Safe Routes to School grant with San Mateo County and the Town of Atherton to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety at Laurel School. The project will consist of improvements on Bay Road, Willow Road, Middlefield Road, and Gilbert Avenue in Menlo Park, Ringwood Avenue in unincorporated San Mateo County, and Edge Road in Atherton, as outlined in Attachment B. The school-site proposed improvements are not eligible for SR2S funding and would, therefore, not be included in the application. Laurel School has the final approval in implementing the suggested school-site improvements.

The maximum percentage for reimbursement of any SR2S project, which fund only the construction cost of the project, is 90 percent. The grant requires a local matching share of 10 percent of the project construction cost. The estimated construction cost of the proposed project is \$300,000, resulting in a 10 percent local match of \$30,000. The estimated project design cost is \$45,000, including staff time. Staff recommends that the City Council approve funding the full 10 percent local matching share in the amount of \$30,000 and the project design cost in the amount of \$45,000 through Measure A funds, for a total of \$75,000 if the grant is approved. County staff indicated that funding for this project was not included in the County budget and therefore, could not commit on the matching funds at this time. Atherton staff has not responded on this. But staff will continue to pursue matching funds from Atherton and San Mateo County.

In the event that staff is unsuccessful in obtaining the SR2S grant for this project, staff will have an opportunity to propose this project for the Federal Safe Routes to School (SRTS) program grant. The call for projects under this Federal Program should occur within the next few months.

Coleman Avenue Proposed Improvement Alternatives

At the second neighborhood meeting, the Bicycle Commission meeting of June 11, 2007, and the Transportation Commission meeting of June 13, 2007, the following improvement alternatives were proposed for the unincorporated segment of Coleman Avenue:

1. Close Coleman Avenue at the City/County Line.
2. Make Coleman Avenue one-way southbound.
3. Install bicycle lanes on both sides of Coleman Avenue.
4. Install a multi-use path on the east side of Coleman Avenue.

At these meetings, there was no consensus reached with the County residents on Coleman Avenue as to which improvement alternatives they wanted to see on the unincorporated portion of Coleman Avenue. The residents' preference was to leave the current configuration on Coleman Avenue. After these meetings, on August 10, 2007, staff received petition letters from the County residents on Coleman Avenue opposing

any changes on the unincorporated portion of Coleman Avenue. The letters are included at Attachment C.

On October 15, 2007, staff met with the County residents to discuss further the proposed improvement alternatives on Coleman Avenue. The residents again did not offer support for any of the improvement alternatives, for the following reasons:

- They did not perceive the unincorporated Coleman Avenue area as unsafe for bicycling and walking. There have been no reported accidents on this portion of Coleman Avenue in recent years.
- They are concerned about the impacts of the alternatives on the trees adjacent to their properties, private frontage improvements, and traffic management measures, *i.e.*, traffic circles, that are already in place.
- They are concerned that Coleman Avenue would lose its rural ambience.
- They are concerned that the creation of bike lanes on Coleman Avenue would possibly increase vehicular speeds on their street.
- They are concerned about the safety of school children walking or bicycling on Coleman Avenue when residents are exiting their driveways.

The Coleman Avenue residents appeared, however, to be receptive to timed-turn restrictions onto Coleman Avenue (No Left Turn during school drop-off times) instead of the proposed alternatives.

Staff understands that it is important to continue the process of developing a Safe Routes to School plan on Coleman Avenue because Coleman Avenue provides a direct path for students from the Willows Neighborhood to either walk or bike to Laurel School. Staff understands, however, that because of neighborhood concerns and jurisdictional issues, it will be a challenge to propose Safe Routes to School improvements on Coleman Avenue that will be acceptable to the County residents. Also, the options of closing Coleman Avenue or making it one-way southbound would need a traffic study and possibly require an Environmental Impact Report due to the potential impacts to other streets.

If the City Council decides to continue this process with Coleman Avenue, additional funds in the amount of \$35,000 would be needed, broken down as follows: \$25,000 for the City's consultant's fees and \$10,000 for staff time. These additional funds would cover additional traffic studies for the Coleman Roadway Closure Option and Coleman One-Way Southbound option and additional meetings with the steering committee, the neighborhood, Bicycle and Transportation Commissions, and City Council.

These options were selected because they would not require physical roadway changes adjacent to County residents (something that County residents have clearly opposed).

It is not certain, though, that the Coleman Avenue residents would support either option. If these changes shifted significant volumes of traffic to other Menlo Park streets, an Environmental Impact Report could be required. Environmental review costs would be in addition to the costs above.

IMPACT ON CITY RESOURCES

The total construction cost of the project proposed in the grant application is \$300,000. The local matching share is \$30,000 — 10 percent of the total cost. If Caltrans approves the grant funds, staff will return to Council with a budget amendment at the time of contract award in order to budget the grant revenues and appropriate the local matching share as well as the project design costs in the amount of \$45,000 from the City's Measure A Fund. Staff will know at that time what, if any, matching funds have been committed by Atherton and San Mateo County.

To continue with the process to develop a Safe Routes to School plan on Coleman Avenue, an additional amount of \$35,000 could be appropriated from the City's Measure A Fund. The additional staff resources needed to continue working on this project will require that another Transportation Division project be temporarily postponed. If Council chooses to proceed, staff recommends that work for the traffic study on Sand Hill Road between Addison Wesley and I-280 Off-ramp be postponed until the additional work on Coleman Avenue studies is completed. A separate budget amendment would be brought back to Council if the additional work on Coleman Avenue is approved by Council.

POLICY ISSUES

This project is consistent with several policies in the 1994 General Plan Circulation and Transportation Element. These policies seek to enhance the safety of school children who walk and bicycle to school.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The proposed project is categorically exempt under Class 1 of the current California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines. Class 1 allows for minor alterations of existing facilities, including existing highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle and pedestrian access, and similar facilities, as long as there is a negligible or no expansion of use.

Rene Baile
Transportation Engineer

Charles Taylor
Transportation Manager

PUBLIC NOTICE: Public Notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

- ATTACHMENTS:**
- A. Resolution of the City Council of the City of Menlo Park Authorizing the City Manager to Submit a Joint Application with San Mateo County and the Town of Atherton for a Safe Routes to School Grant for the Improvement of Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety for Safe Routes to Laurel School.
 - B. Maps of Proposed Improvements
 - C. Letters from Residents of Unincorporated Coleman Avenue

ATTACHMENT A

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF MENLO PARK
AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO SUBMIT A JOINT APPLICATION WITH
SAN MATEO COUNTY AND THE TOWN OF ATHERTON FOR A SAFE ROUTES TO
SCHOOL GRANT FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF PEDESTRIAN AND BICYCLE
SAFETY FOR SAFE ROUTES TO LAUREL SCHOOL**

The City of Menlo Park, acting by and through its City Council, having considered and been fully advised in the matter and good cause appearing therefor,

BE IT AND IT IS HEREBY RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Menlo Park that the City Council does hereby authorize the City Manager to submit a joint application with San Mateo County and the Town of Atherton for Safe Routes to School (SR2S) grant funds to the California Department of Transportation to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety for safe routes to Laurel Elementary School;

BE IT AND IT IS HEREBY FURTHER RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Menlo Park that the improvements will be made as needed on Ringwood Avenue, Edge Road, Bay Road, Gilbert Avenue, Willow Road, and Middlefield Road; and

BE IT AND IT IS HEREBY FURTHER RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Menlo Park that the City Council does authorize and direct the City Manager to execute any and all agreements to obtain said funds on behalf of the City and the City Clerk to attest thereto.

I, SILVIA M. VONDERLINDEN, City Clerk of the City of Menlo Park, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing Resolution was duly and regularly passed and adopted at a meeting by said Council on _____, by the following vote:

AYES: Council Members:

NOES: Council Members:

ABSENT: Council Members:

ABSTAIN: Council Members:

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Official Seal of said City on this _____ day of _____, 2007.

SILVIA M. VONDERLINDEN, City Clerk

① INSTALL "NO PARKING" BETWEEN SIGNS

② INSTALL BIKE PARKING RACKS

③ INSTALL ASPHALT CURB TO DELINEATE PARKING AREA AND "PARK AGAINST CURB" SIGNS, AND TRIM BUSHES ALONG FENCELINE

④ WIDEN SIDEWALKS FOR IMPROVED TWO-WAY TRAFFIC (COMPLETED)

⑤ NO PARKING TO IMPROVE SIGHT DISTANCE FOR VEHICLES EXITING EDGE ROAD

⑥ INSTALL IN-PAVEMENT LIGHTED CROSSWALK

⑦ REMOVE BOLLARD (SCHEDULED TO BE COMPLETED)

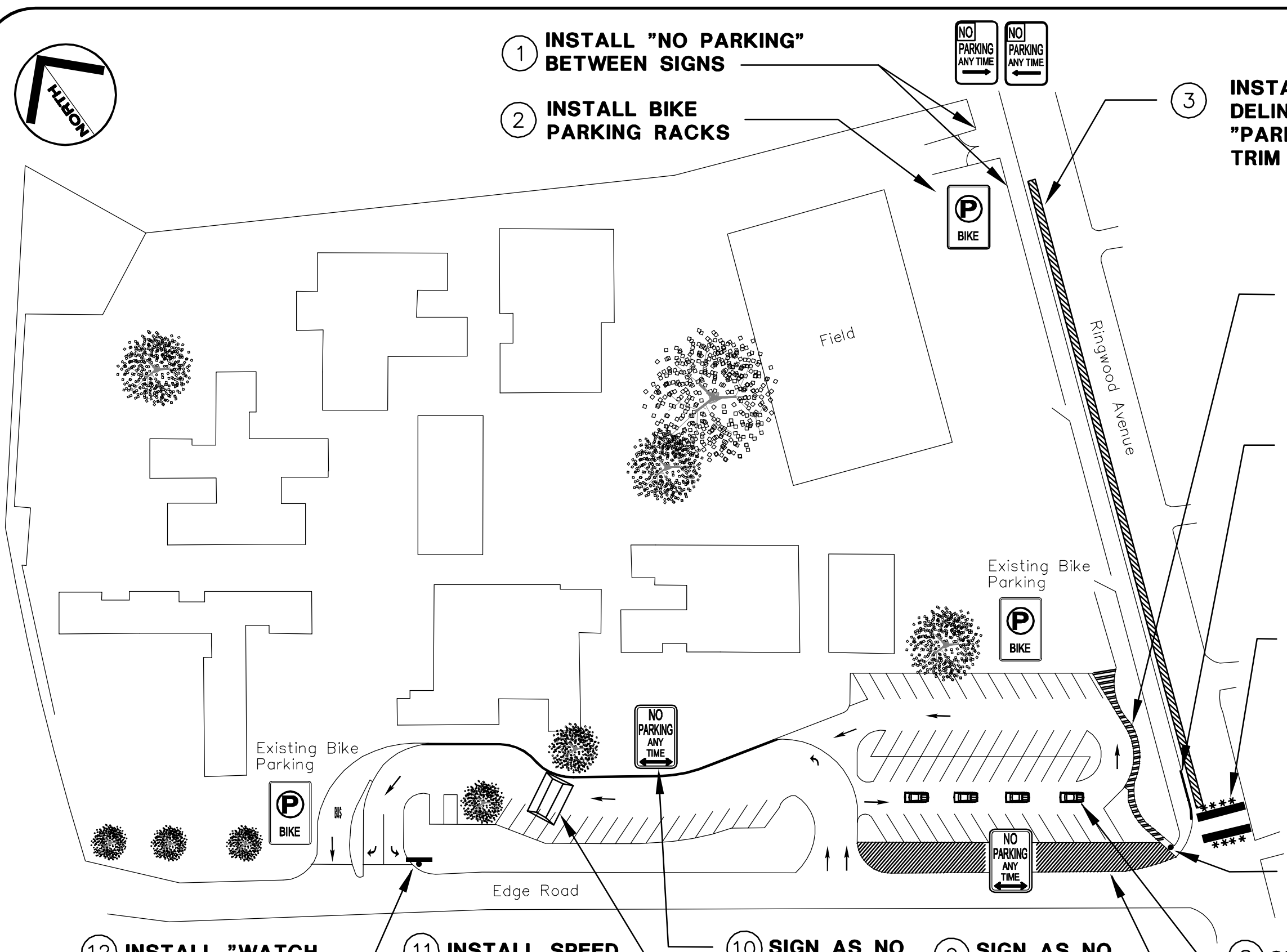
⑧ QUEUE THE PICKUP/DROP OFF VEHICLE TRAFFIC IN PARKING LOT

⑨ SIGN AS NO PARKING AREA

⑩ SIGN AS NO UNATTENDED VEHICLES

⑪ INSTALL SPEED TABLE

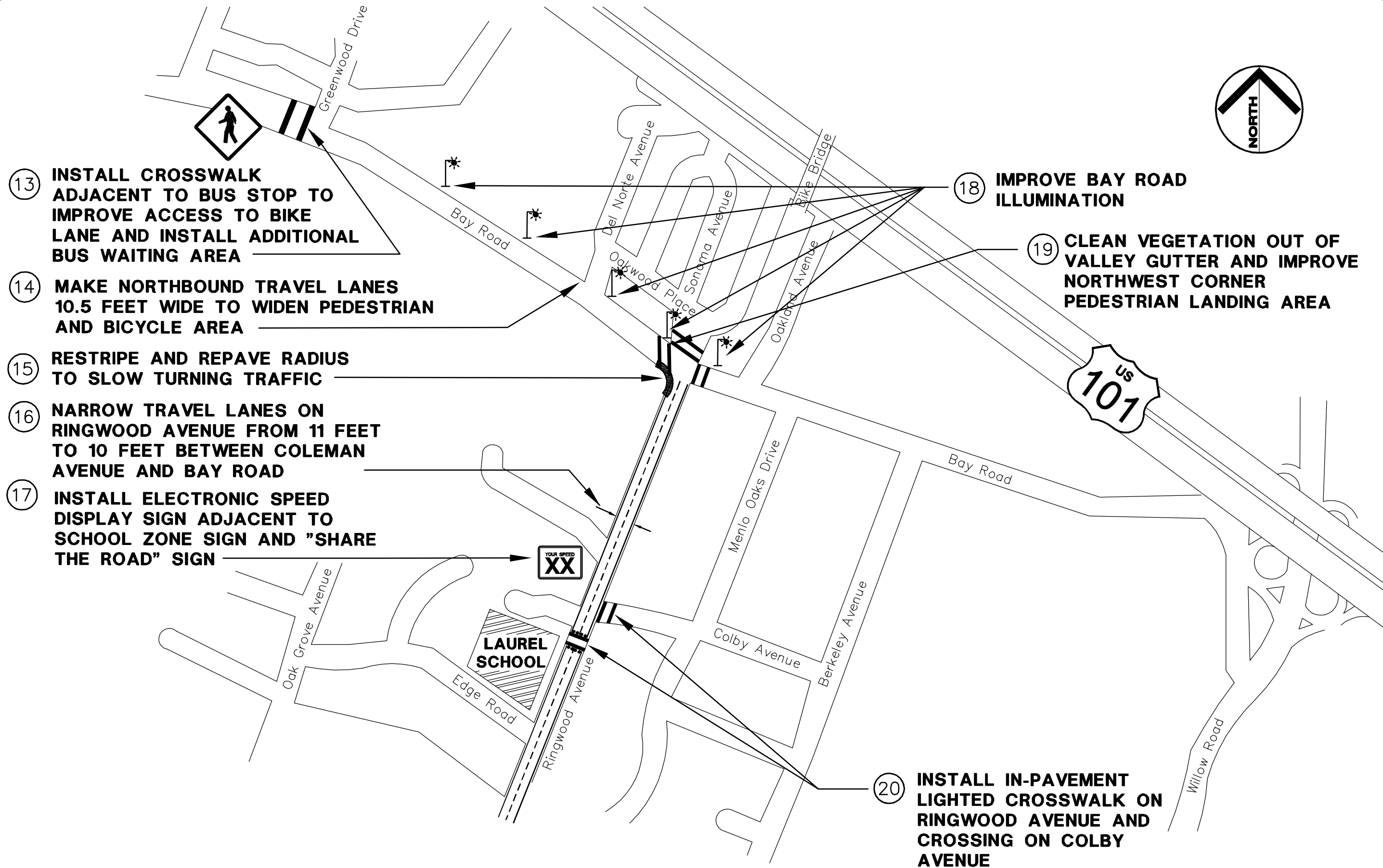
⑫ INSTALL "WATCH FOR BIKES" SIGN



LAUREL SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL DRAFT PLAN (NOVEMBER 1, 2007)

FIGURE 1 - SCHOOL SITE IMPROVEMENTS

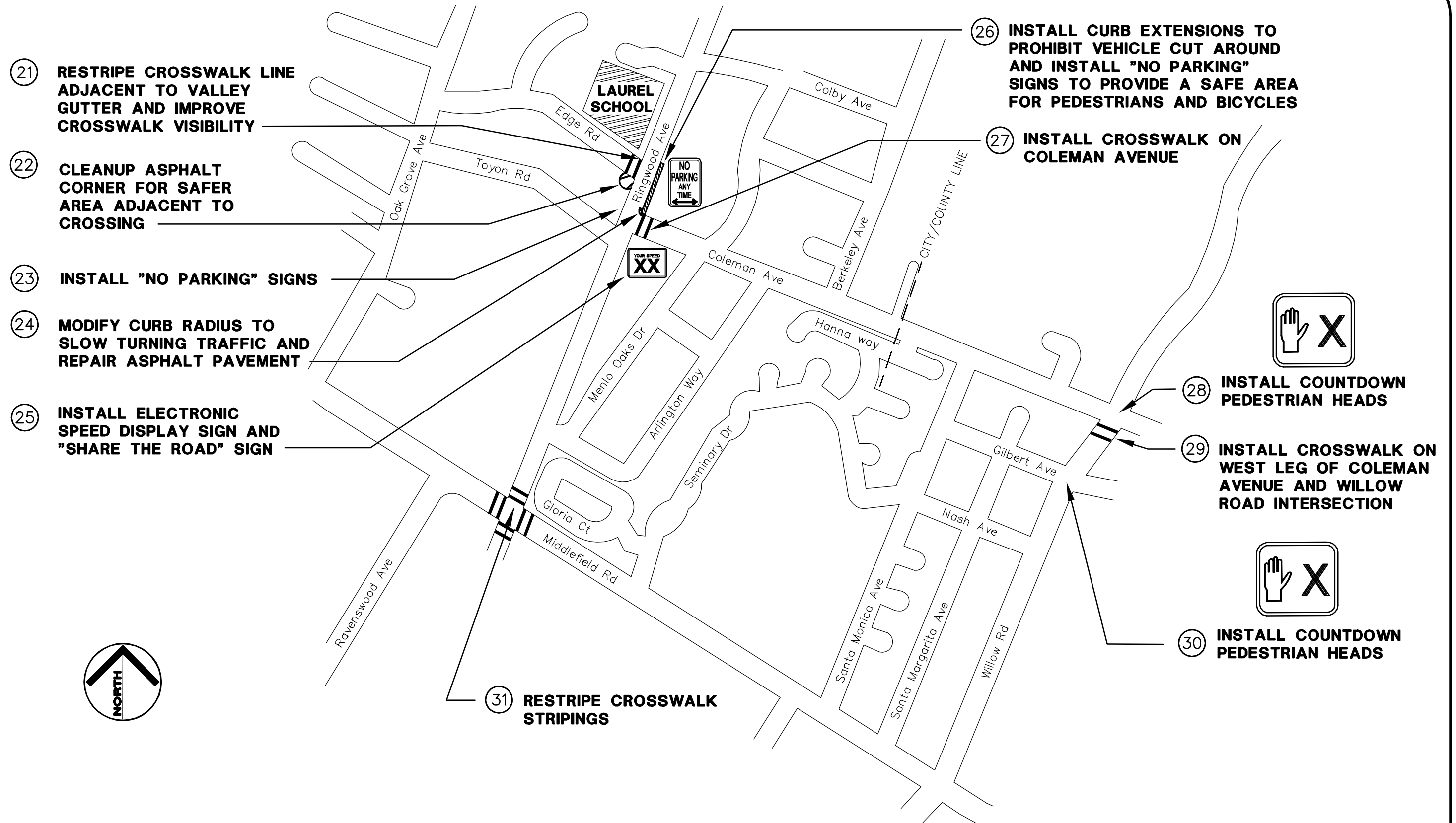
NOTE: NOT ALL EXISTING SAFETY FEATURES OR OTHER PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS ARE REPRESENTED ON THIS DRAWING.



LAUREL SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL DRAFT PLAN (NOVEMBER 1, 2007)

FIGURE 2 - BOUNDARY IMPROVEMENTS (NORTH)

NOTE: NOT ALL EXISTING SAFETY FEATURES OR OTHER PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS ARE REPRESENTED ON THIS DRAWING.



LAUREL SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL DRAFT PLAN (NOVEMBER 1, 2007)

FIGURE 3 - BOUNDARY IMPROVEMENTS (SOUTH)

NOTE: NOT ALL EXISTING SAFETY FEATURES OR OTHER PLANNED IMPROVEMENTS ARE REPRESENTED ON THIS DRAWING.

ATTACHMENT C

Petition is available for examination in the office of the City Clerk or the Transportation Division.