



COMMUNITY WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Workshop #1: Challenges and Opportunities

Date/Time of Meeting: Tuesday, November 12, 2019, 6:30-8:00 pm

Location: Los Banos Community Center

Project Team / City Staff Present: PlaceWorks: Bruce Brubaker, Abraham Sheppard, Allison Giffin, Eric Panzer

City Staff: Mark Fachin, Stacy Souza Elms, Jelene de Melo, Sandra Benetti, Rudy Luquin

Overview

The first community workshop for the Los Banos SR-152/Pacheco Boulevard Specific Plan and the Pioneer Road Specific Plan (Pacheco Boulevard and Pioneer Road Complete Streets) was attended by approximately 50 community members, many of whom were property owners along Pioneer Road and Pacheco Boulevard.

The meeting began with a PowerPoint presented by PlaceWorks that included project goals, an anticipated timeline, a preliminary description of existing conditions along each corridor, and a brief explanation of the small-group exercise conducted at tables following the presentation. Following the presentation, there was a short question and answer discussion. Questions centered around the planning process and the need for the project. Some participants are concerned about planning for Pioneer Road.

After the presentation and short discussion, attendees participated in exercises in groups of 5-8 people. Each table included a facilitator from the project team. Each group discussed challenges and opportunities for Pacheco Boulevard followed by challenges and opportunities for Pioneer Road. Participants used a large table map with an aerial view of Los Banos and both the Pacheco Boulevard and Pioneer Road Study Areas depicted as dashed lines. First, participants and facilitators were prompted to write notes and draw on the maps to indicate challenges for each study area, including corridor-wide and location-specific challenges. Participants then indicated opportunities by marking up the maps and using stickers depicting the following street improvements:

- Traffic roundabout
- More traffic enforcement
- Bike lane
- More lighting
- Landscaping
- Bus stop/line
- Improved intersection
- Enhanced crosswalk
- Wide sidewalks
- Gateway/Directional Signage
- Pedestrian overcrossing
- Roadway median

After approximately fifty minutes of time devoted to the small group exercise, one person from each table reported back to the entire workshop, highlighting the main discussion points and referring to their group's map. The following sections summarize broad themes resulting from this exercise, organized by challenges and opportunities for each Study Area. Some comments were not specific to either corridor and are noted below the Study Area-specific comments. Images of table map exercise results are attached to this summary.



Pacheco Boulevard: Challenges

- **Safety.** Safety, especially pedestrian safety, is a major challenge on Pacheco Boulevard. Vehicles often make illegal and/or unsafe left turning movements. Pedestrians often cross at night where there are no marked crossings, with little or no street lighting.
- **Sidewalk Gaps.** Pacheco Boulevard also has a disconnected sidewalk network along its length, either narrowing significantly or disappearing completely in some locations.
- **Limited Room to Accommodate Streetscape Improvements.** There are few opportunities to expand sidewalk widths and roadside landscaping without extending into private property. However, pushing back development off the street would allow for landscaping and wider sidewalks, as currently seen in some locations along West Pacheco Boulevard.
- **Limited Right-Of-Way for Bicycle Facilities.** Pacheco Boulevard is a necessary through-fare for automobiles. Given this necessity, and the lack of space for widening, accommodating bicycles is particularly challenging.
- **Caltrans Jurisdiction.** There is some concern about CalTrans jurisdiction along Pacheco, which limits the City's flexibility to propose changes.
- **Pedestrian Crossings.** Some participants view the pedestrian overcrossing at Pacheco and 7th as a redundant use of resources because most of the time, pedestrians (most of which are schoolchildren) use the signaled at-grade crossing beneath the overpass to avoid having to walk up and down the ramp.
- **Traffic Congestion.** General agreement is that traffic on Pacheco is getting worse during peak hours.
- **Travel Speeds.** Traffic speeds are often too high, especially during off-peak hours. Many participants expressed that a lack of traffic enforcement on Pacheco Boulevard contributes to the high speeds.
- **Ingress and Egress.** Ingress and egress for shopping centers and businesses along Pacheco Boulevard can be dangerous and slows traffic down significantly.

Pacheco Boulevard: Opportunities

- **Traffic Enforcement.** Increase traffic enforcement along Pacheco Boulevard, either with increased highway patrol presence or speed cameras at intersections.
 - **Adjacent Bike Facilities.** Focus bike improvements for north-south crossings along Pacheco, and a parallel route either north or south of Pacheco, but not along Pacheco itself, at least in the central section.
 - **Traffic Signal Synchronization.** Synchronize traffic signals to smooth and calm the flow of traffic.
 - **Intersection Safety Improvements.** Implement intersection improvements that increase pedestrian safety, particularly at the intersections with Badger Flat Road, Center Avenue, and Mercey Springs Road.
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- **Improved Parks.** Revitalize parks along Pacheco, like Pacheco Park.
 - **Landscaping.** Increase landscaping along Pacheco Boulevard, utilizing consistent aesthetic standards that contribute to a unique identity.
 - **Additional/Improved Signage.** Increase both gateway signage, like the gateway sign in Wolfsen Park at Pacheco and West I Street, and wayfinding signage, like the wayfinding sign just west of Wolfsen park at the entrance to the Main Canal multi-use path.
 - **Address Concerns About Medians.** Address concerns about the use of center medians. Many participants felt that roadway medians were not the best use of the limited right-of-way on Pacheco Boulevard, and that center turn lanes were preferred, at least in the central section where businesses have separate driveways.

Pioneer Road: Challenges

- **Poor Pavement Quality.** The paving on Pioneer Road is worn due to frequent use by heavy vehicles and would need repaving to accommodate increased traffic.
- **Increased Regional Truck Traffic.** Participants were concerned about diverting regional truck traffic (18-wheelers) onto Pioneer Road from Pacheco Boulevard.
- **Lack of Speed Enforcement.** Currently, there are just two speed limit signs along Pioneer Road in the Plan Area, and little traffic enforcement. Participants expressed that speeding is an issue on Pioneer Road.
- **Slow-Moving Vehicles.** Traffic along Pioneer Road includes slow-moving trucks (carrying cement or agricultural products), and slow heavy equipment like pickers, forklifts, and tractors.
- **Property Takings as a Result of Widening.** Many participants, specifically property owners along Pioneer, were concerned about the prospect of property takings to widen the right-of-way, especially if their property values were to decrease as a result of the project.

- **Changing the Character of Pioneer Road** Many participants expressed concern that improvements along Pioneer to accommodate more traffic will change the character of the rural-type road. Concerns included additional traffic congestion, potential loss of property values for roadway-adjacent properties, and noise.
- **Concerns about Decision-making.** Some participants were concerned that the property owners along Pioneer Road in unincorporated Merced County will be subject to decisions made by the City of Los Banos. (Note: the County will be a participant, along with the City and other regional agencies in this planning process).

Pioneer Road: Opportunities

- **Intersection Improvements.** Some wanted the following three intersections along Pioneer Road prioritized for signalization:
 - Ortigalita Road
 - Center Avenue
 - Mercey Springs Road
- **New Lighting.** Some wanted additional roadway lighting on Pioneer, particularly at the intersections listed above, at Cresthills Park (where there is a bus stop), and at the canal multi-use path used frequently by Los Banos High School students and path users who park at the path entrance on Pioneer Road.
- **Traffic Enforcement.** Increase traffic enforcement along Pioneer Road, either with increased police presence or with speed cameras at intersections.
- **Center turn lanes.** Some wanted center turn lanes on Pioneer to access properties without doing U-turns.
- **Sound Walls.** Include sound walls if Pioneer Road improvements are to increase traffic capacity.
- **Enhanced Streetscape Amenities.** Add wide sidewalks and landscaping along Pioneer Road, especially in areas with existing pedestrian traffic, like the entrance to the multi-use path and residential neighborhoods.
- **Use a Phased Approach.** Use Ward Road and the unimproved area between Mercey Springs Road and Ward Road (where Pioneer could be extended to connect with Ward) to implement a phased approach to street improvements. See how improvements are used and received by the public before implementing Pioneer improvements more widely.
- **Use Volta Road as a North-South Connector.** Consider using Volta Road as the western north-south connection between Pacheco Boulevard and Pioneer Road, instead of taking private property south of Merced Community College.
- **Consider the Feasibility of Roundabouts.** Consider roundabouts as a potential intersection option. Any roundabout would need to be designed for accommodating large, heavy farm vehicles and trucks.



General Comments

- **Support for a scaled-down north bypass.** In response to the issue of funding, some participants expressed that they would support a more scaled-down version of the north bypass that was more likely to get funded and did not feel that we needed an alternative route south of Pacheco Boulevard at all.
- **Safety and Crime on Existing or New Bike Paths.** Some participants expressed that there have been issues with crime and trash dumping along recently built bike paths and are concerned that these issues may increase if the City adds more trails and bike paths.
- **New Development without Adequate Traffic Mitigation.** Some participants felt that the City adds more housing without adequately evaluating the traffic impacts of additional housing or mitigating potential traffic impacts.

TABLE EXERCISE MAPS

TABLE 1- WEST

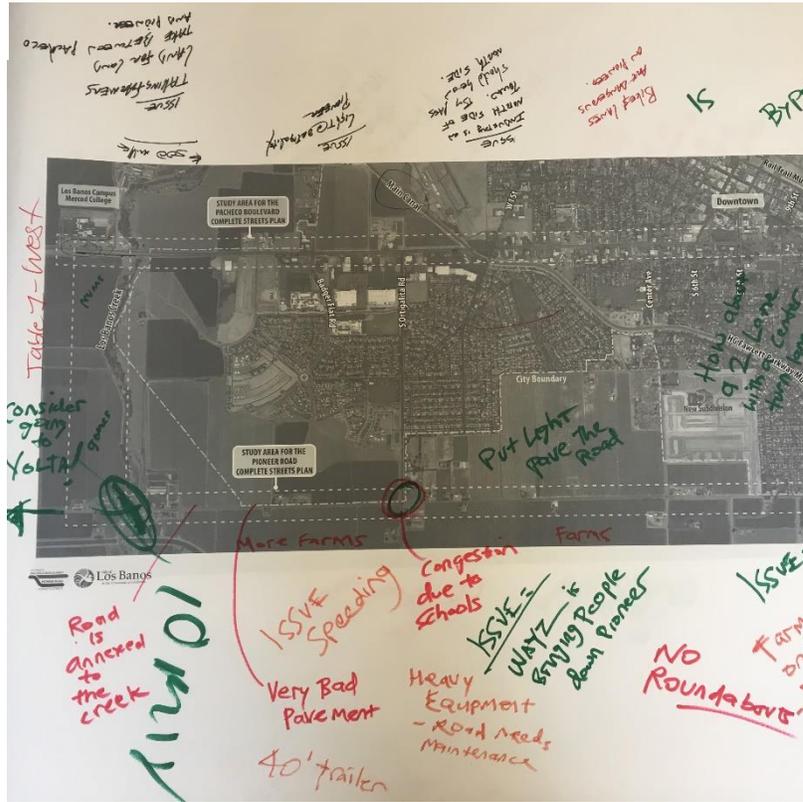


TABLE 1 - EAST

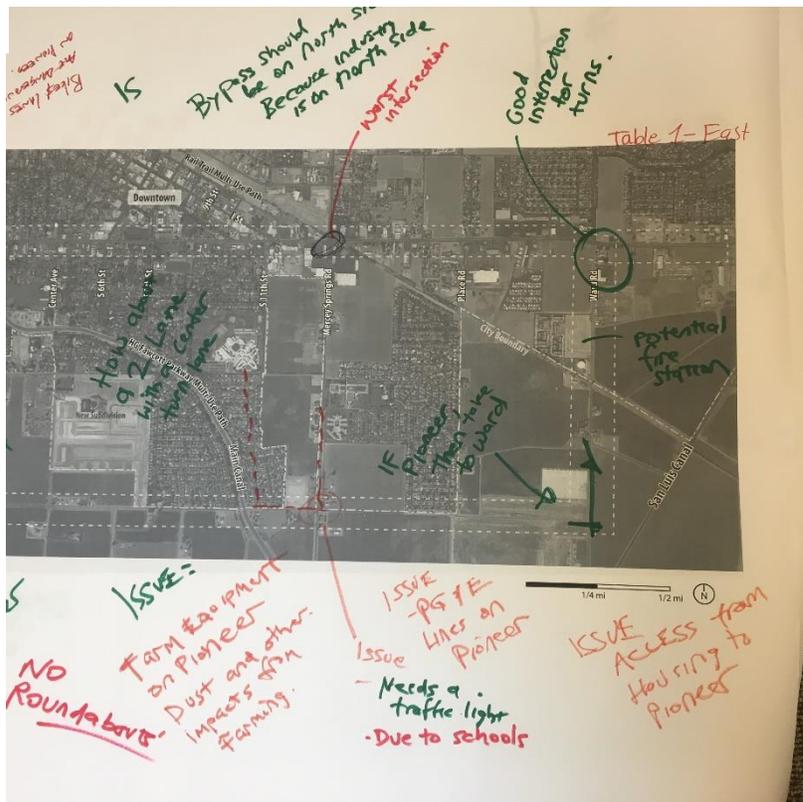


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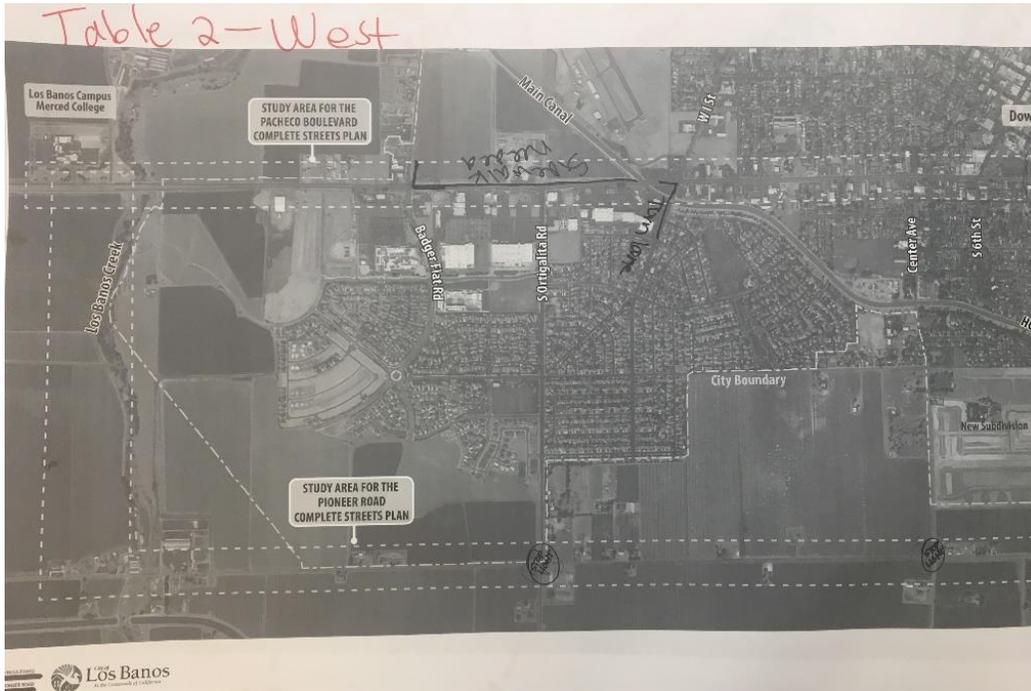


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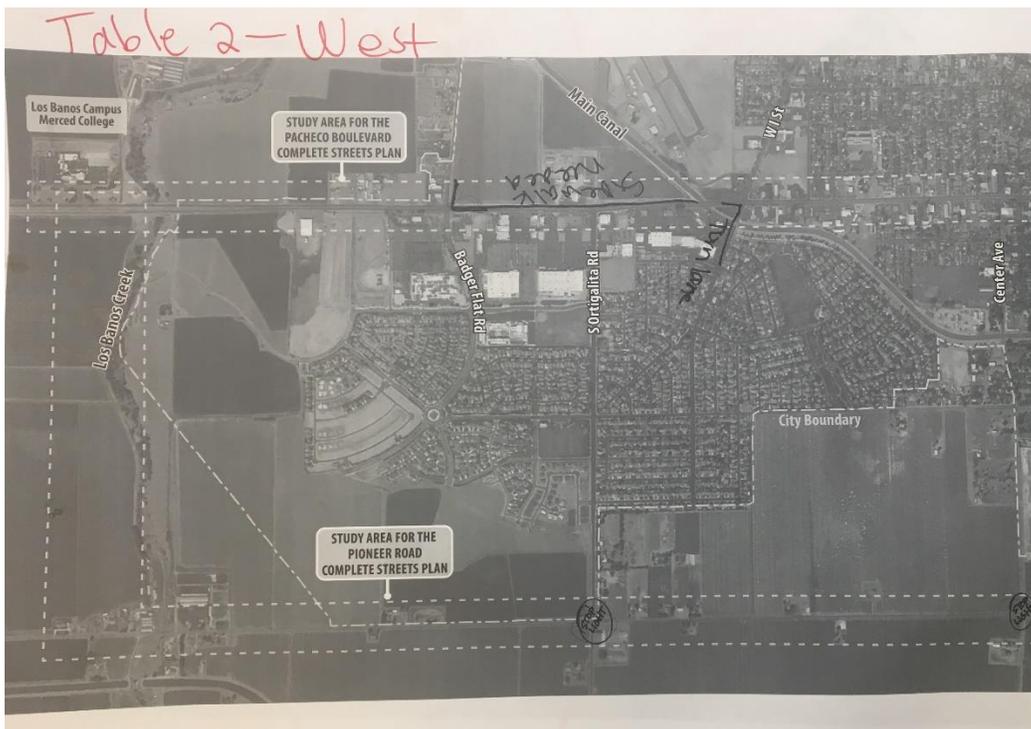


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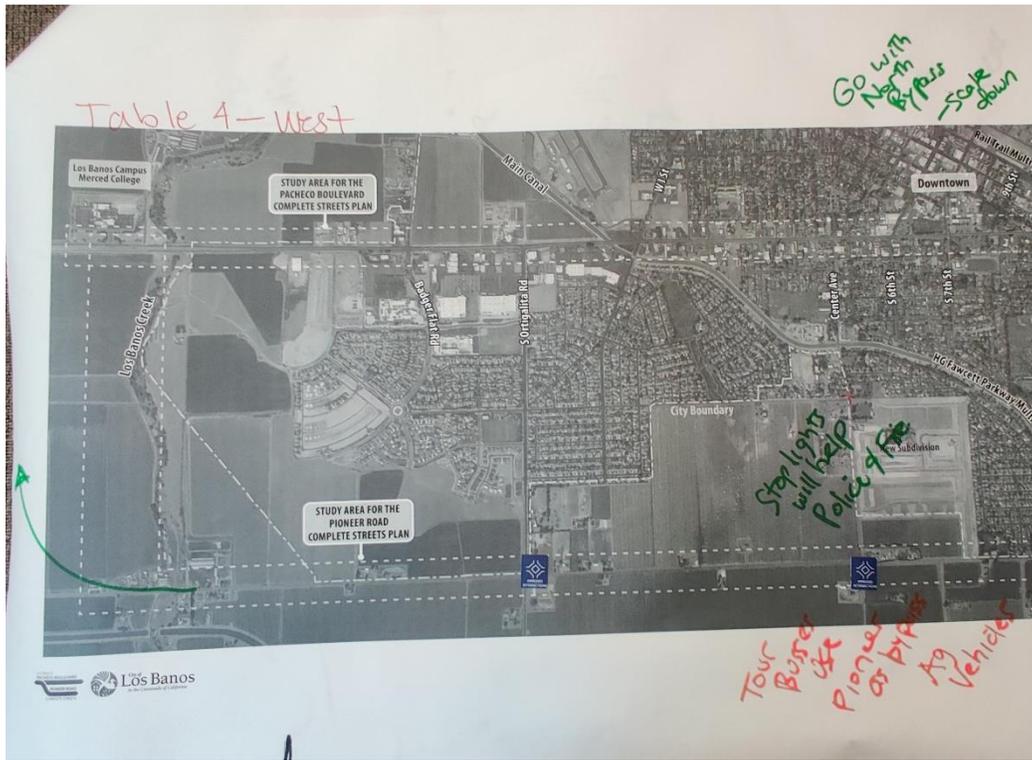


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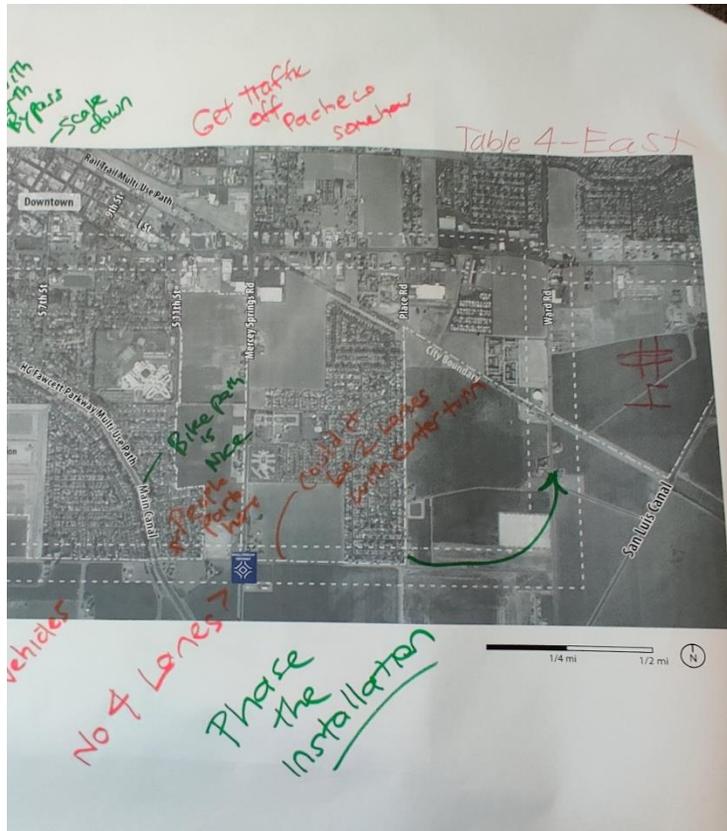


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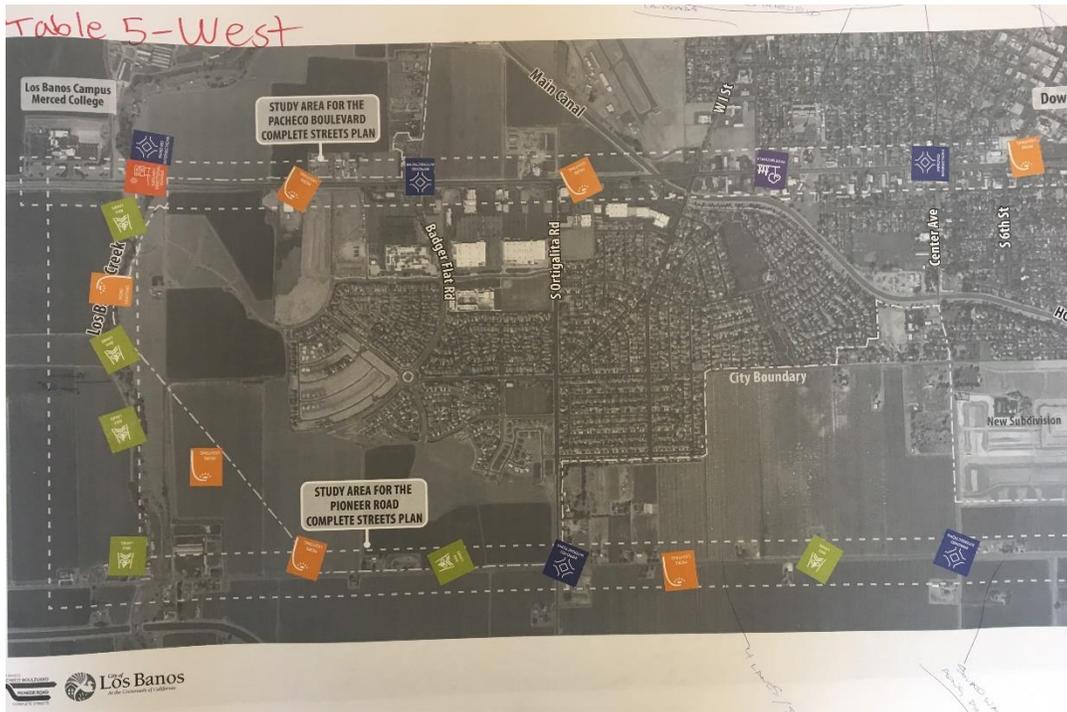


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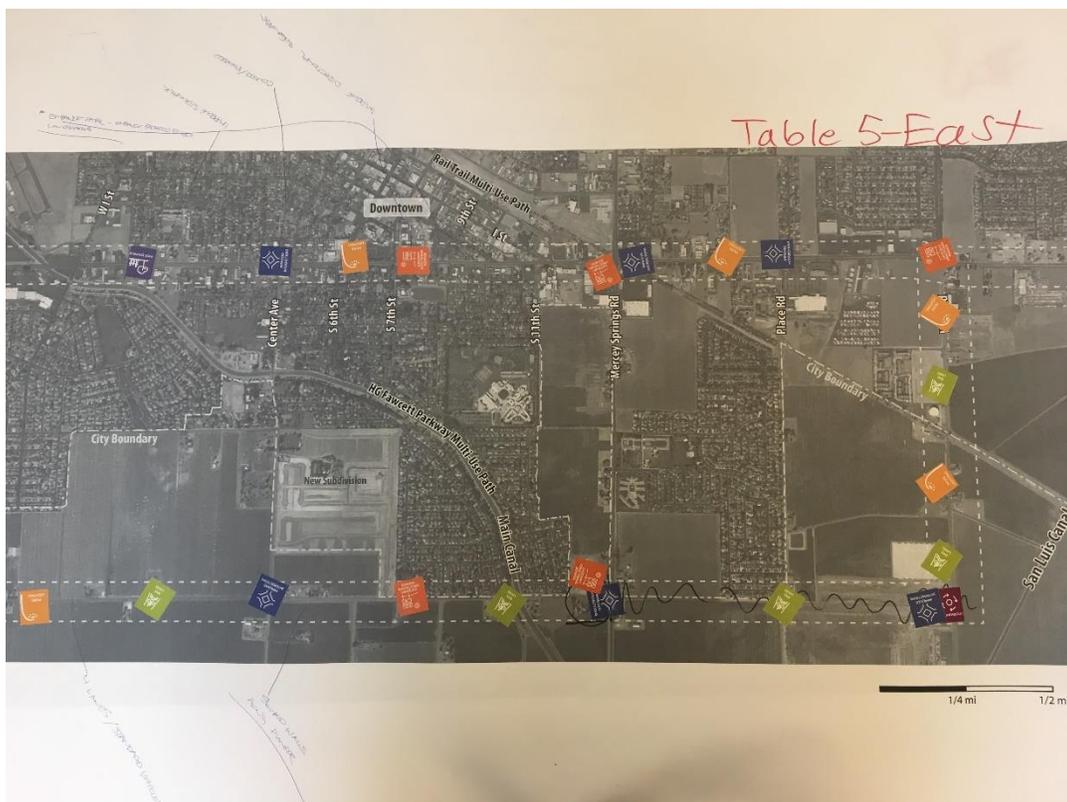


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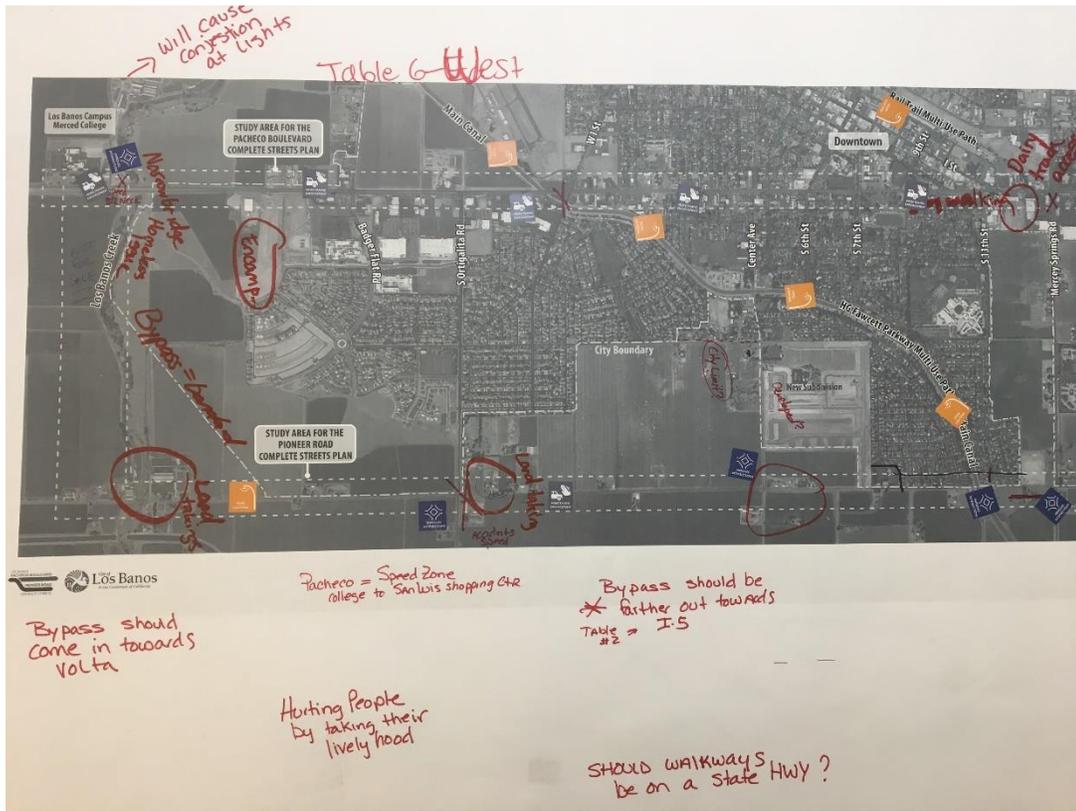


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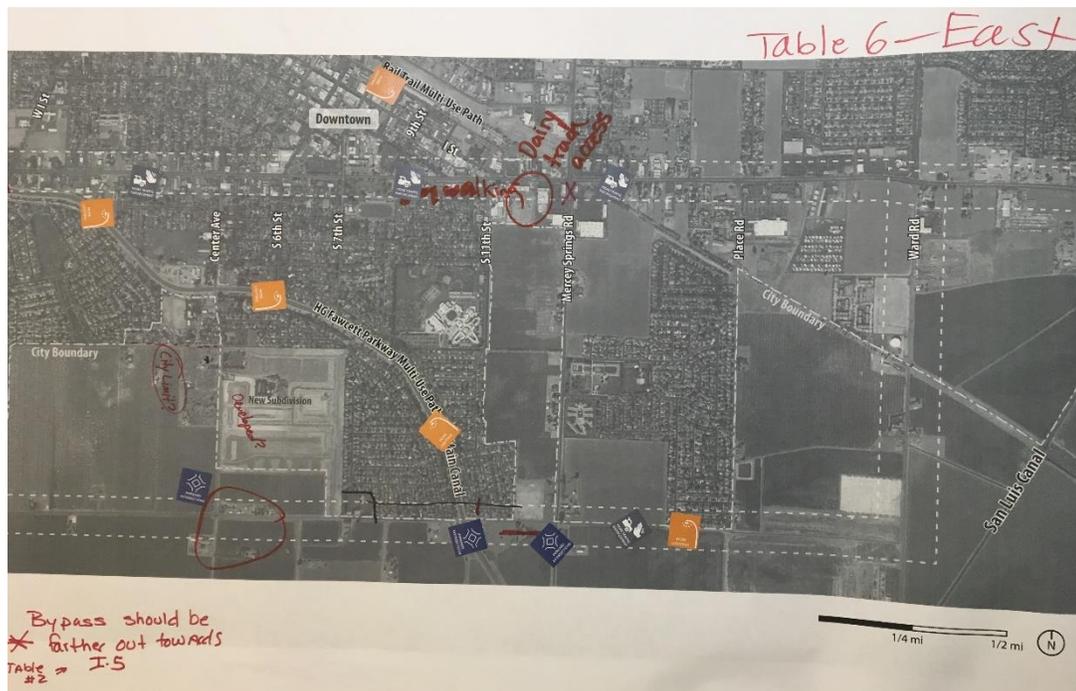


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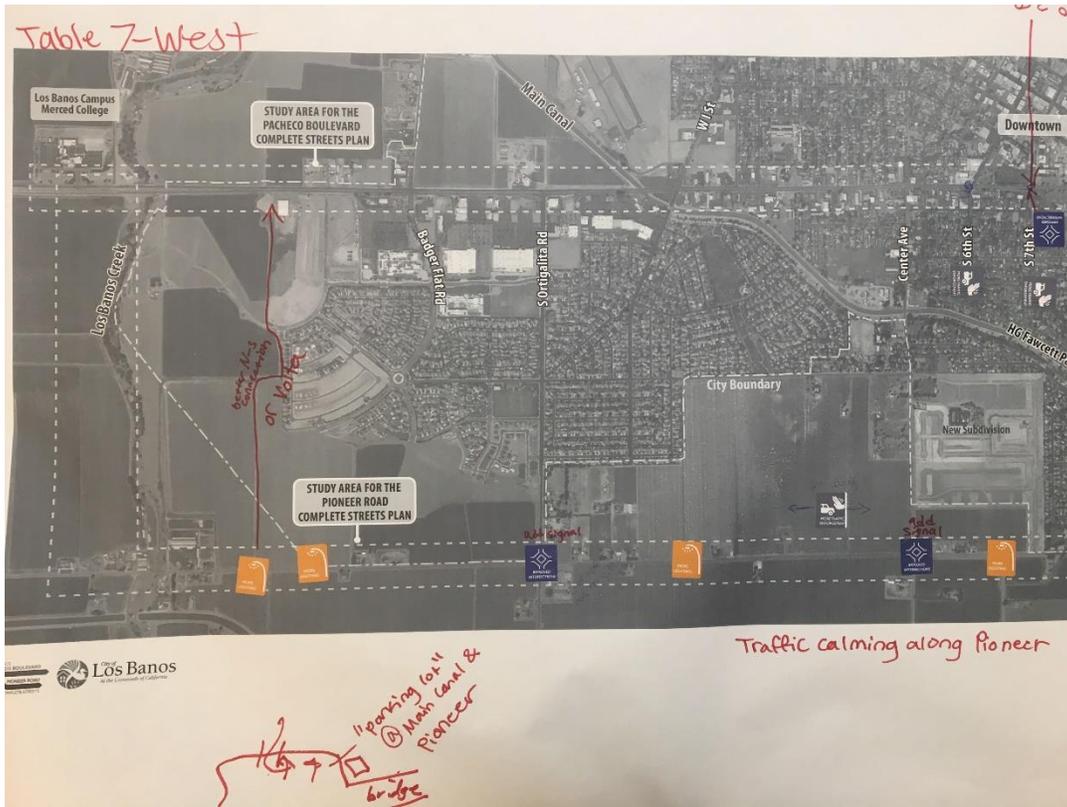


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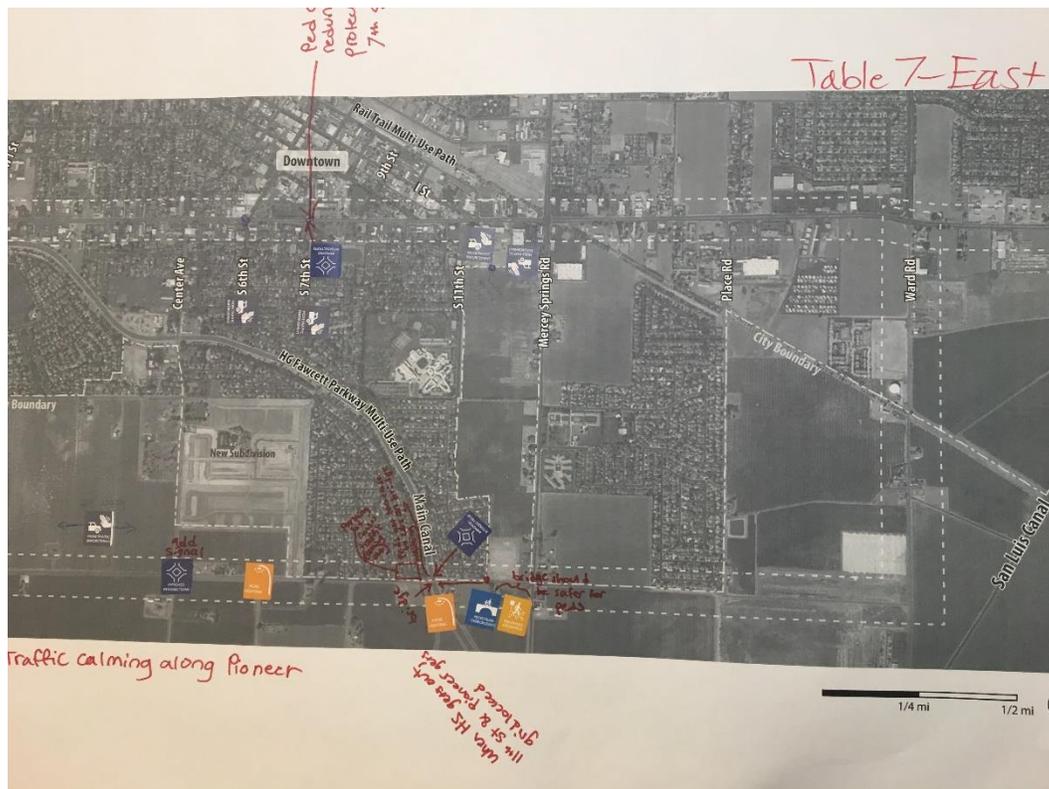


TABLE 8 - WEST

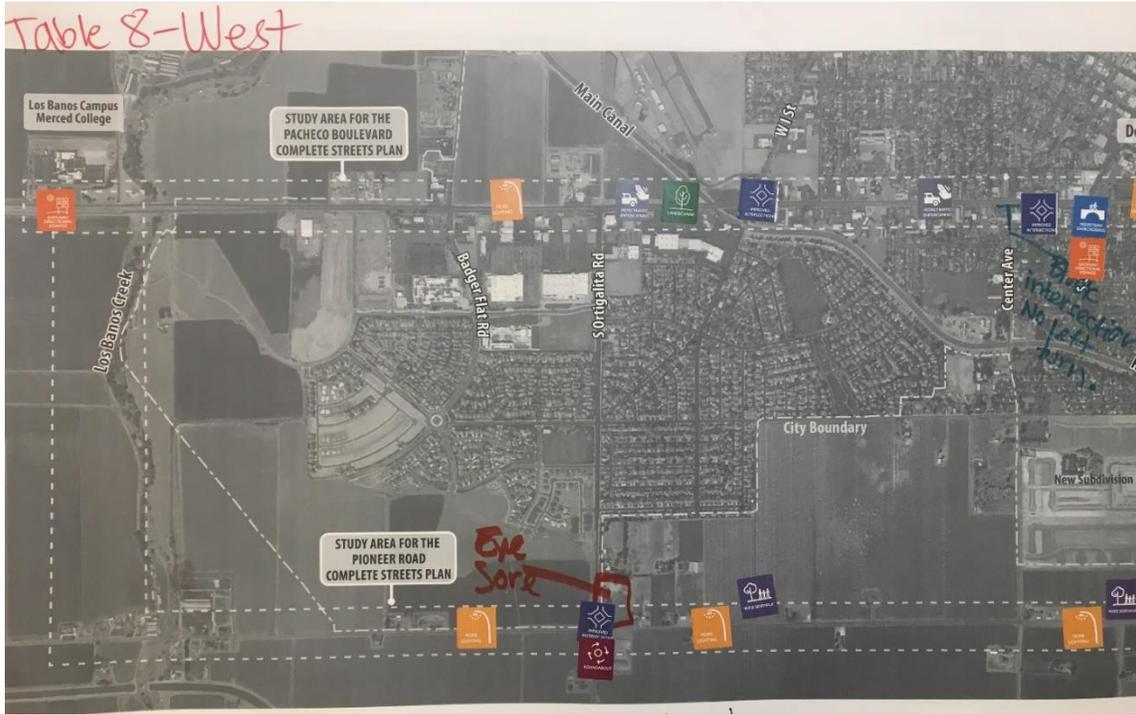


TABLE 8 - EAST

