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New 'safer route to school' project in Castroville

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Pedestrian Safety Project breaks...

CASTROVILLE, Calif. - UPDATE 12/12/2016 5:15 PM:

On Monday, the Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC), Monterey County and community members broke ground on the Castroville Bicycle/Pedestrian and Railroad Crossing Project.

The $\frac{3}{4}$ mile pathway will start at McDougall Street and end at Castroville Boulevard, running parallel to Highway 156.

"So there will be a path connecting up at McDougall Street and the bridge will gradually start, so it's not a big climb," explained Debbie Hale, executive director of TAMC. "If it's too big of a climb people aren't going to use it. It'll eventually be as high as the highway but it will kind of mirror it so that it's not very visually big."

Not only will it promote a safe route for students who walk or ride their bikes to school, it will help other pedestrians and cyclists who are trying to get into Castroville.

"There's a lot of kids that come this way through school," JoAnn McClain said. "There's a lot of residents that come to do their shopping here."

Not only do pedestrians have to trek over an active train track, they must also make their way next to muddy agriculture fields, then dodge cars on Castroville Boulevard.

"The car traffic, I would say the average speed is 45-55 mph around that corner and the kids that are coming to school, they just wait for a break in the traffic and run across the road," Mike Mooneyhan said. "No crosswalk, no signals, very unsafe."

Longtime Castroville resident and planning commissioner Cosme Padilla said the project has been in the works for more than a decade and it's taken that long to get the funding but it's something the community desperately needs.

"I almost got hit by a train, we're going back 40-50 years," Mike Mooneyhan said. "But yeah, it can happen to me, almost, it can happen to someone else also."

The \$7.5 million project, which is mostly being paid for through state transportation improvement funds, should be complete in February 2018.

ORIGINAL:

On Monday, the Transportation Agency for Monterey County, Monterey County and community members broke ground on the Castroville Bicycle/Pedestrian and Railroad Crossing Project.

The ¾ mile pathway will start at McDougall Street and end at Castroville Boulevard, running parallel to Highway 156. It will promote a safe route not only for students who walk or ride their bikes to school, but other pedestrians and cyclists trying to get to Castroville.

KION's Mariana Hicks will have more on this story at 6PM.

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