

10/22/24

Dear TAMC Board of Directors,

My name is Nicole Hollingsworth and I am a resident of Toro Estates. A lot of you might know me from being CSUMB's representative on this board and I am also the areas appointed representative on the Monterey County Fire Protection Board. I am no stranger to the local, state, and federal processes of government. But today I'm writing to you as a citizen who lives in the Toro Estates neighborhood.

My husband, young daughter and I moved here about a year ago—we live directly off Torero (on Torero Court) unfortunately.

We fully understand the need to address safety concerns for the area we live in and I hope being newer to this neighborhood doesn't negate our strong opinions and observations of this "pilot program." You have heard from my husband, Daniel Hollingsworth, who travels to Monterey everyday during rush-hour to get our daughter to school. His commute has grown by at least 30 minutes and we have both observed a lot of unsafe behavior due to this pilot project. When we bought our first house, we intentionally bought a house near the Torero Highway 68 entrance because we work on the Peninsula. Why not move the barriers to the end of the school road (intersection of Portola and Torero) so residents of Toro that live on the other side of Torero can still use the entrance? At the last meeting, Doug Blise noted that "folks that live near the Torero entrance have had it pretty good but not we're catering to the rest of the neighborhood." I do not believe the intention of this pilot program is to make things worse for other residents because "we haven't had it as bad." This comment concerned those of us who live in West Toro. What we heard was this project has already been decided without our feedback so deal with it. Yikes.

Secondly, why was it decided to do this pilot project during major construction of other major transportation corridors? We have the expansion of Imjin Parkway, major redesign of Davis Road, and closures on Hitchcock Road. How does TAMC expect to collect accurate data and feedback with the rest of these projects impacting how people are commuting to and from the Peninsula? Is that not the entire purpose of a pilot project? This was poor planning at best, at worst it tells me this isn't a pilot project—TAMC has decided this is the way it's going to be.

Since I am newer, I have only met a few folks from our very small HOA. I plan on engaging with these folks more but you should know, this HOA does not engage with residents on a regular basis and I have a lot of concerns that TAMC is only seeking input from the HOA—one member told me, "sweetheart, we're never opening Torero again. So get over it." Please note that the "HOA" does not speak for all Toro residents and if you are mainly relying on this group of people, you are not getting fair, diversified feedback from the rest of the residents.

Thirdly, this is an egregious pilot project. Roads and access points are being closed in my neighborhood. TAMC states they can move the barriers wherever they want. Can TAMC also

look at less egregious options to control cut through traffic? Some extra stop signs and temporary (and permanent) speed bumps have done a great job diverting cut through traffic away from CSUMB. So if this is really JUST about safety and cut through traffic, there are extremely less intrusive and obtrusive ways to achieving this goal. I honestly cannot wrap my head around the fact that TAMC is just not allowing folks to use certain roads by closing off access.

Lastly, and this is the most important point I want to make. At the last community meeting, TAMC did a good job blaming the overarching issue and lack of progress of this project on CalTrans. I understand that to an extent (especially working in state and local government) but I want my TAMC Board and officials to spend their efforts engaging with CalTrans. I do not accept the mentality of throwing our hands in the air and saying, “well we can’t get CalTrans to cooperate.” TAMC exists to engage with CalTrans and other transportation agencies on behalf of the region—do better! A lot of energy has gone into finding band aids for the elephant in the room—the fact that Highway 68 issues have not been dealt with for decades. No one would need to try and avoid Highway 68 if it wasn’t a complete disaster. I understand the idea of “temporary fixes” while a longtime solution is hashed out. But temporary fixes have unintended consequences. I would like TAMC to acknowledge this pilot project is extremely flawed instead of taking a victory lap that the problem of cut through traffic is solved—which has been the sentiment. It hasn’t been solved; people are creatively trying to find other roads to cut through in our neighborhoods.

The pilot project was slated to end October 7th and has apparently been extended into the new year. I do not know when the Imjin Parkway project is slated to end, or when the Davis construction will be finished, or when the improvements to Hitchcock Road will be finished. Maybe we can try a pilot project again after these projects complete and get accurate data OR we need to consider less egregious alternatives. Surely, we aren’t the first community that has needed to contend with cut through traffic and I’m confident we can find some less intrusive solutions that don’t isolate/invalidate half the community.

Sincerely,
Nicole Hollingsworth
Resident, Toro Estates