

✓ BEN LOMOND

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Town not sure it needs 1st traffic light

By Terri Morgan
Special to the Mercury News

A Ben Lomond man has more than 1,000 signatures on a petition to get the town its first traffic signal, but some residents say that type of progress isn't needed.

Don Greenman decided to launch the petition drive after a motorcyclist nearly sideswiped him while he was trying to turn left onto Highway 9.

"I was so mad when that guy almost hit me I said I'll do this even if it kills me," said Greenman, 76.

Greenman began circulating the petitions about three weeks ago and says he's collected more than 1,000 signatures supporting a light at Highway 9 and Mill Street. He has lived one block east of that intersection for 18 years, and

has to turn left on Highway 9 to get to Felton, Santa Cruz and Scotts Valley.

Bonny Hawley, an aide to Santa Cruz County Supervisor Fred Keeley, who represents San Lorenzo Valley, said many Ben Lomond residents indicated last year they were opposed to a traffic signal in their town.

"The traffic light issue was discussed at some length when residents were working on the Ben Lomond town plan," Hawley said. "Studies showed that providing a traffic signal would create significant backups, particularly during the morning and evening."

Hawley added that Keeley's office has received several phone calls in opposition to a traffic light since Greenman began circulating his petitions.

Greenman wants a traffic light with left turn and pedestrian lanes, along with flashing lights

before and after the intersection warning motorists to slow down as they approach downtown Ben Lomond. Drivers go as fast as 60 mph through Ben Lomond, which is a 25 mph zone, he said.

Capt. Steve Ellis of the California Highway Patrol office in the county, however, said recent studies indicated the average driver moves through Ben Lomond at about 35 mph.

"Traffic flow through town is up a little bit above what it ought to be," Ellis said. "There's an occasional fender bender in that intersection, but traffic in downtown Ben Lomond is not too bad."

Greenman, however, feels the support for a Ben Lomond traffic light is there. "I almost always get a signature from those that listen to me," he said.