

✓ Harvey West area

Traffic summit for city, business

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By ROBIN MUSITELLI
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — It's a rough crowd out there during the late afternoon, those commuters trying to drive out of Harvey West Park.

Just exactly how the city can remedy it, and when and how, was foremost on the minds Friday of business managers of some of the city's largest companies, including Costco, Plantronics, Granite Rock, United Parcel Service, George Wilson and Salz Tannery.

The answer the company representatives received wasn't what they wanted to hear. The answer: With \$3.2 million from those companies, the city will embark on several projects on Highway 9 and in the park area to ease traffic in and out of the park.

But that's only a partial solution: The real key to solving the jams lies at the intersection of Highways 9 and 1, a state highway intersection outside the city's jurisdiction.

A fix for that intersection is about a decade away, according to city traffic engineers. And until it's fixed, traffic is not going to move significantly faster.

In fact, it will continue to get worse if the Harvey West Park area continues to develop, as expected.

The jams at Harvey West Park have been a top topic of conversation for the past month since the opening of Costco, the giant retailer-wholesaler that opened in Harvey West Park.

Since then, end-of-the-workday traffic leaving the park area has worsened with backups of 20 to 30 minutes on some days.

City Manager Richard Wilson said the backups have tapered off as shoppers avoid the heavy traffic times, and Costco manager Dave Aue said that late afternoon sales had dropped some.

The traffic still unpredictably backs up on some days, however, said company representatives.

"We haven't been able to determine what day is going to be rough and what isn't," said a woman.

The city has proposed assessing the property owners in the park for a number of improvements. That Harvey West Assessment District is scheduled for approval before the Santa Cruz City Council on Sept. 27.

The assessment district improvements would include:

- About \$1.5 million for a new street connecting Fern Street with Coral and Encinal streets. That will allow Fern Street to become a new access into the park area.

- Flood control work on Pogonip Creek.
- Prohibiting left-hand turns onto and

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Traffic woes discussed

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from Coral Street.

A traffic light at Encinal and Highway 9, originally part of the assessment district plans, has been moved ahead separately. Along with the signal, Highway 9 will be restriped to provide two new left turn lanes into Encinal Street and Encinal Street will be restriped to provide two right-hand turns to south bound Highway 9.

If work proceeds as expected, the signal will be working by the end of November, said Chris Schneider, assistant director of Public Works. That's some months ahead of an earlier six months estimate made by Public Works Director Larry Erwin.

Those changes will make traffic move more quickly from and in-

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side the Harvey West Park area, said Ron Marquez, a traffic consultant for the city. "Exiting the park will be a little easier."

Marquez conceded, however, that the changes are not a complete fix. The real problem is at highways 9 and 1 as drivers headed from the Harvey West Park area cut across Highway 9 to make a left-hand turn onto Highway 1.

Schneider said Caltrans engineers had considered several solutions, ranging from a \$40 million

overpass over Highway 1 to a \$1 million-\$3 million widening of the intersection.

Company representatives particularly liked the lower cost proposal, and would rather use their assessment there, but were told it was unlikely to be built for at least a decade.

"This project over here for a million bucks looks a lot better to me," noted Norm Lezin of Salz Tannery.