

# Petition for BL stoplight draws 1,000 signers

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Sentinel staff writer

**BEN LOMOND** — Some 1,000 San Lorenzo Valley residents say they want something done about a dangerous Highway 9 intersection.

That many people have signed a petition seeking a traffic signal for the intersection where Mill Street, Glen Arbor Road and Oak Street join Highway 9.

According to the author of the petition, the intersection is a hazard, particularly for children and elderly people trying to cross Highway 9 to get to the park and market on Mill Street.

A public meeting to discuss the issue will be at 7 p.m. tonight at Highlands Park Senior Center, 8500 Highway 9, Ben Lomond.

"There've been some fender benders but I don't know of anyone being killed — yet," said Don

Greenman, the prime mover in the push.

In the 18 years Greenman has lived a block from the intersection, he said he's seen a dramatic increase in the number of people living — and driving — in the valley.

Between 1980 and 1990, the population of Ben Lomond alone has gone from 4,825 to 7,884, an increase of 63 percent.

Greenman began gathering signatures in August in front of the Ben Lomond Market. Despite an asthma attack that sent him to the hospital 11 days into his petition drive, he managed to gather some 1,000 signatures in 2½ weeks.

"That says something in itself," he said.

Greenman said the light is needed to slow traffic. "The speed is posted at 25 miles per hour but nobody honors it," he said.

The matter was discussed during Ben Lomond Town Plan meetings a few years back, said Scott Millar, aide to San Lorenzo Valley Supervisor Fred Keeley, but residents decided they did not want a signal, fearing it might actually cause accidents.

Visibility is limited on both sides of the intersection, with an arching bridge to the south, and an uphill curve to the north.

A more likely spot for a traffic signal, the plan said, was Main Street, just north of the Mill Street intersection.

However, a traffic study of the Mill Street intersection has already shown that a stoplight is warranted, according to Bill Uesugi, a Caltrans traffic engineer in charge of Santa Cruz and Santa Clara counties.

That study was turned over to

the county's Transportation Commission, Uesugi said, and Caltrans has not heard anything since.

County Transportation Commission officials were not available for comment Wednesday.

Uesugi explained why Caltrans favors stoplights over stop signs on state highways.

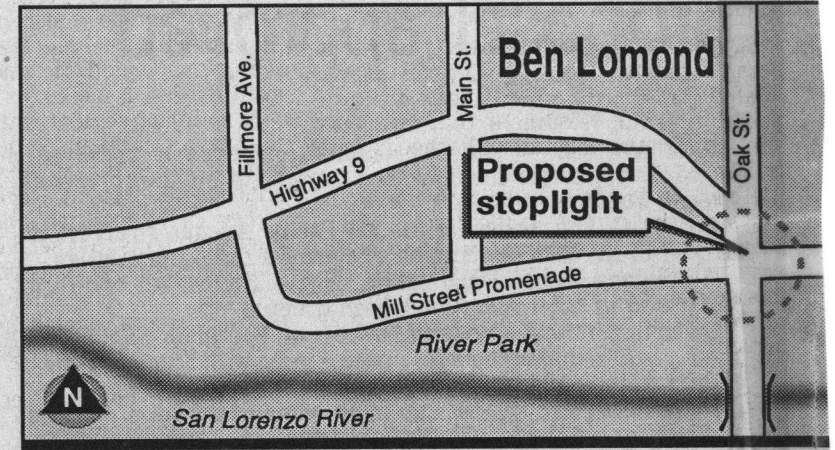
"If you put a stop sign, you're stopping traffic 24 hours a day."

But a traffic-actuated signal can be set to green for prevailing traffic, he said. Cars approaching on side streets are detected by buried wires, which sense the metal in them and change the signal.

"With a traffic signal, you're not penalizing all legs of the intersection," he said.

Traffic signals are more costly, however.

A ballpark figure for the Mill



Sentinel map

Street intersection would be \$125,000 to \$150,000, said Uesugi, compared to perhaps \$5,000 for a sign.

Since three of the five "legs" of

the intersection are county roads, Uesugi said, the county would be expected to pick up three-fifths of the cost, with Caltrans footing the bill for the remaining two-fifths.