

**Business**

In-N-Out Burger proposal could fry traffic, Campbell study says



The In-N-Out Burger chain has proposed tearing down the former Elephant Bar in Campbell at 499 Hamilton Avenue and replacing it with a double drive-through fast food restaurant. The project site is close to Highway 17, Fry's Electronics, Home Depot, Kohl's and Bed Bath & Beyond. (Judy Peterson/Bay Area News Group)

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A Campbell intersection that's already rated "D-minus" for its level of service could become an "F" if an In-N-Out Burger restaurant is built, a city-sponsored traffic impact study says.

The study was released in May and says a D-minus roadway is "approaching unstable." It notes that motorists have difficulty maneuvering, but says delays are tolerable.

An "F" rating is described as a "total breakdown," with congested conditions and excessive delays.

The traffic study will be updated as part of an environmental impact report that's being prepared for the proposed In-N-Out project at 499 E. Hamilton Ave. The address is the former location of a dine-in Elephant Bar restaurant that closed in October 2016.

Popular retailers like Fry's Electronics, Home Depot, Kohl's and Bed Bath & Beyond are all nearby. Also nearby are the busy Hamilton Avenue on and off ramps to Highway 17.

One of those ramps is adjacent to the Fry's entrance on Salmar Avenue.

The Campbell Planning Commission held a public hearing Tuesday night to receive input on what the environmental report should study, with traffic driving residents' concerns.

"I do challenge any of you to go and just sit at the Hamilton and 17 and Salmar intersection for an entire day, at different times of the week, just to see what a disaster that intersection is," resident Beth Littleton said. "At certain times of the day you just can't get anywhere and people are honking their horns, they're getting frustrated. People don't know how to change lanes and get to where they need to be. I'm not against In-N-Out in Campbell, but not at that location."

Revised plans call for the fast food restaurant's main entrance to be off Hamilton Avenue. It would have 97 indoor seats and 48 outdoor seats, and a double drive-through that can accommodate 28 cars, Senior Campbell Planner Daniel Fama said.

In-N-Out representatives did not comment during the public hearing, but several planning commissioners echoed residents' traffic worries.

“We know that this area is going to get worse — even with nothing happening,” Commissioner Mike Krey said. “But how much worse is it going to be with a...very popular, very good, very high quality, very reputable drive-through restaurant versus a sit down restaurant. That, I guess, is the question in my mind.”

Commission Vice Chairwoman JoElle Hernandez called out traffic, too, and the potential for an “unsightly” line-up of cars at the drive-through, as well as pedestrian safety and the removal of all trees on the approximately 1.2-acre property.

The proposed project has a dedicated city web page at <https://bit.ly/2NHX8oO>, where people can comment on the project. Specific comments regarding the environmental impact report are due Aug. 10.

To date, 265 written comments for and against the project have been received.

For example, Campbell resident Justin Low wrote, “I think the Hamilton Avenue location is perfectly suitable for In-N-Out. Hamilton Avenue is a major thoroughfare with many businesses. Arguments that somehow traffic is going to be drastically affected have no weight. Bottom line is that there's a lot of traffic on Hamilton — always has been, always will be.”

Among other things, the environmental impact report will also analyze the potential impacts of a new proposal to expand an apartment complex that's adjacent to the In-N-Out project site, planner Fama said.

The environmental report should be completed by early 2019. The project then returns to the planning commission for a final decision.

The city council would become the final decision-maker if the planning commission's decision is appealed.