

# THE Valley Springs NEWS



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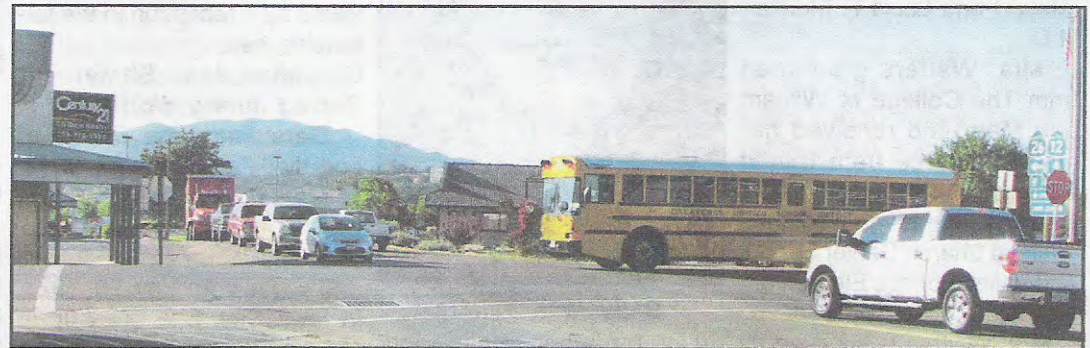
## Relief on the way at crossroad

By Nick Baptista

The start of school can be an exciting time, but for motorists driving through Valley Springs, it means adding a few more minutes to the morning and afternoon commutes.

However, the bottleneck at the downtown intersection of State Routes 12, 26 and Laurel Street could be a thing of the past by the fall of 2013.

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*The first day of school on Monday brought the usual traffic congestion problem in downtown Valley Springs. Vehicles were bumper-to-bumper all the way to Gold Creek Drive, right, but the problem could be alleviated by late next year as work progresses on an improvement project.*





# Intersection

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The first phase of the improvement project is expected to go out to bid shortly and construction on the north side of the intersection could begin at the end of summer or beginning of fall, according to Jonathan Mitchell, senior engineer for the county's public works department.

This first phase of work will include pedestrian access and accessibility improvements, he said.

The bulk of the intersection improvement project would be in phase two. It will include right-of-way acquisition, final design and

construction.

Funding for the second phase begins near the end of the year and working with landowners to obtain the necessary right-of-way could start in early 2013 and typically is about a six-month process, Mitchell said.

Although there is no set timeline, if the right-of-way acquisition process runs smoothly, final phase construction could begin at about this time next year, Mitchell added.

The proposed project consists of a free right turn lane from northbound SR 26 onto eastbound SR 12/26 and a left turn lane from westbound SR12 to SR26.

The improvement plan was one of three alternatives presented to

the public in meetings over the past few years.

Preliminary budget costs for the improvements have been pegged at \$1.2 million, much less than estimates of \$4.1 million for a traffic signal and \$2.5 million for a roundabout at the intersection.

The public expressed concern about the cost and impact on buildings and parking spaces in the downtown if plans for a traffic signal or a roundabout were pursued.

The Valley Springs intersection improvement proposal calls for a 90 percent reimbursement from the federal government with a 10 percent match coming from the county's Road Improvement Miti-

gation account.

District 1 Supervisor Gary Tofanelli has been a proponent for the extended right-turn lane plan. Cliff Edson, his opponent in the Nov. 6 election, voiced opposition to the project at last week's Board of Supervisors meeting.

Edson said he believes the envisioned project would do very little to improve traffic flow and suggested a bypass connecting Hogan Dam Road to Lime Creek Road. Former District 5 Supervisor Russ Thomas once advocated a similar route linking State Route 12 and 26.

District 1 covers Valley Springs along with Burson, Camanche, Campo Seco, La Contenta, San Andreas and Wallace.