



CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

AGENDA DATE: February 13, 2024

TO: Mayor and Councilmembers

FROM: Downtown Team Division, Public Works Department

SUBJECT: Lower Eastside Community Connectivity Active Transportation Plan
[Resolution]

RECOMMENDATION: That Council:

- A. Approve the Lower Eastside Community Connectivity Active Transportation Plan;
- B. Adopt, by reading of title only, a Resolution of the Council of the City of Santa Barbara Supporting the Lower Eastside Safety Enhancements Project and Pedestrian and Bicycle Overcrossing Project, and Directing Staff to Apply for a Grant to Fund Design, Environmental Review, and Construction; and
- C. Determine that the Lower Eastside Community Connectivity Active Transportation Plan is exempt under California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines and Public Resources Code Section 21080.20, and direct the filing of a Notice of Exemption in compliance with California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines § 15062.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The purpose of the Lower Eastside Community Connectivity Active Transportation Plan (Plan) is to identify ways to improve pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between the Lower Eastside and destinations south of US Highway 101 (US 101). In 2020, the City of Santa Barbara (City) was awarded an Active Transportation Program (ATP) Cycle 4 Grant in the amount of \$344,000 to develop the Plan. The Plan is intended to implement Policy 1.4 of the City's adopted Pedestrian Master Plan (PMP), which states that "the City shall work to eliminate US 101 as a barrier to pedestrian travel," and identifies a future overcrossing between the Lower Eastside neighborhood and Dwight Murphy Field as a possible strategy to achieve that goal. The Plan also builds upon Santa Barbara's Vision Zero Strategy (Vision Zero), which is to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all.

The Plan's contents are based on ATP grant guidelines that include how and why the Plan was developed, existing conditions analysis, community engagement, engineering approaches to address community mobility needs, and a feasibility assessment of the overcrossing (Attachment 1). Staff is requesting that Council approve the Plan and

authorize staff to apply for grants to fund the design, environmental review, and construction of the Lower Eastside Safety Enhancements Project and the Pedestrian and Bicycle Overcrossing Project, as described in the Plan.

DISCUSSION:

Planning Effort

The Plan Area is focused on the Lower Eastside neighborhood and destinations south of US 101 (East Beach, Dwight Murphy Field, Santa Barbara Zoo, etc.). To identify the community's preferences and priorities for improving bike and pedestrian connectivity, the City conducted bilingual community engagement via a webinar on October 25, 2021, and an in-person meeting on October 30, 2021. Spanish interpretation was provided at both meetings. In addition, a bilingual online survey was launched between October and December of 2021. Through this outreach, the community gave input on what is working and not working for walking and biking routes between the Eastside Neighborhood and south of US 101 (at Milpas Street, Cacique Street, and Cabrillo Boulevard). Residents also conveyed strong support for the City to study the feasibility of an overcrossing that would start at the intersection of Canada and Pitos Streets and connect to Dwight Murphy Field, which is an alignment identified in the City's PMP.

Paralleling the community engagement process, the City conducted a Vision Zero traffic safety analysis for the Plan Area using collision data to identify trends and recurring collision patterns. Milpas and Salinas Streets and Cabrillo Boulevard have been determined as high-collision corridors and have the highest traffic volumes in the Plan Area. Currently, active transportation access between the Eastside and Waterfront requires using Milpas Street and Cabrillo Boulevard, and Salinas Street bisects the Eastside neighborhood, exposing active transportation users to high collision corridors. The Plan identifies proposed safety enhancements to address collision patterns on Salinas Street, as well as planned or funded projects already in process for Milpas Street and Cabrillo Boulevard.

Following initial public outreach and after receiving support for studying a pedestrian and bicycle overcrossing, the City contracted with an engineering consultant, Consor, in May of 2022 to provide a Feasibility Study (Study) including preliminary engineering, environmental, and survey services for the Plan. The engineering services included the preparation of a structural feasibility analysis and conceptual design options for an overcrossing in the alignment the community supported (between the intersection of South Canada and Pitos Streets and Dwight Murphy Field). The environmental services included a preliminary geotechnical investigation, and preliminary biological resources, cultural resources, and hydraulic analyses. The survey work identifies existing topographical and right-of-way features and constraints in the Plan area. Cost estimates for the final design, environmental review, and construction of the overcrossing are also provided within the Study. The full Study and appendices are included as an attachment to the Plan.

Staff returned to the community in spring of 2023 and held two additional meetings, online and in-person, and launched a second online public survey. The purpose of the meetings

and survey were: 1) to share the findings of the Feasibility Study for a future pedestrian and bicycle overcrossing, and 2) to hear from the community on how frequently they would use an overcrossing, for what purpose (e.g., work, commute, recreation), and if it would change their choice of travel method between the Eastside and south of US 101. Most participants in the meetings and survey responses live in the Eastside, would use the overcrossing to reach recreational destinations (parks, zoo, beaches), and would use it daily or weekly. Some survey respondents living in the East Beach neighborhood had concerns about having more foot traffic with the proposed overcrossing and unhoused activity in their neighborhood.

The Transportation and Circulation Committee (TCC) received two updates on the Planning Effort in 2021 and 2022 and reviewed the Draft Plan on October 26, 2023. Some committee members expressed concern for the estimated cost of a future overcrossing; however, overall, the TCC supported the Plan and made a recommendation to proceed to Council for Plan adoption.

The Plan

Per the ATP Guidelines, there are 16 required components for an Active Transportation Plan (Attachment 1). These components guided development of the Plan and include maps and descriptions of existing conditions for the Plan Area (e.g., bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, demographics, land uses, collision data, etc.), a description of community engagement, and a framework for Plan implementation including proposed projects, cost estimates, and future maintenance requirements.

The Study for the pedestrian and bicycle overcrossing is part of the Plan and dives deeper into the structural and environmental feasibility of the proposed project. The other proposed safety enhancements within the Plan are more typical infrastructure treatments (e.g., curb extensions, sidewalk infill, lighting) and are anticipated to be designed and constructed with standard engineering practices.

Proposed Projects

The mobility barriers identified by the residents and the City's Vision Zero safety analysis of the Plan Area resulted in two primary proposed projects: 1) the Pedestrian and Bicycle Overcrossing Project, and 2) the Lower Eastside Safety Enhancements Project.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Overcrossing

The proposed overcrossing would provide a facility for users of all ages and abilities that is separated from vehicular traffic, reduce travel distances, and connect residents directly to recreational destinations.

Lower Eastside Safety Enhancements

The Lower Eastside Safety Enhancements Project includes the following improvements

within the neighborhood and along corridors leading to crossing locations of US 101:

- **Safe Routes to School Safety Enhancements**, including curb extensions for the intersections at Montecito/Voluntario, Montecito/Soledad, Quinientos/Voluntario, Quinientos/Soledad, and Carpinteria/Soledad.
- **Cacique to Canada Streets Bike Boulevard/Bike Friendly Street**, including curb extensions at Canada/Hutash, Canada/Punta Gorda, and Cacique/ Voluntario to improve pedestrian crossings. This route connects to the existing Cacique/US 101 Undercrossing and would also connect pedestrians and cyclists to the future overcrossing at Canada/Pitos.
- **Alisos Sidewalk Infill between Hutash and Cacique Streets** - This would close a gap in sidewalk connectivity leading to the US 101 Undercrossing at Cacique Street, connecting pedestrians to and from commercial services along the Milpas Street Corridor and to the Waterfront.
- **Salinas Street pedestrian and lighting safety enhancements** - From the US 101 Freeway Off-Ramp into the neighborhood. This includes additional lighting throughout the Salinas corridor, curb extensions at Clifton/Salinas, a compact roundabout at Carpinteria/Salinas, a crosswalk, curb extensions and rectangular rapid flashing beacons at Hutash/Salinas, and a raised intersection for speed control from the highway off-ramp at Pitos/Salinas.

In addition, the Plan describes five planned and funded projects within the Plan area that are currently in various stages of development. These projects will address mobility challenges and traffic collision patterns identified in the Plan area.

BUDGET/FINANCIAL INFORMATION:

A cost estimate for the Pedestrian and Bicycle Overcrossing, including final design, engineering, project management, construction engineering, contingency, and escalation is included in the Plan for a total of \$32.5 million.

The Lower Eastside Safety Enhancements Project, which includes enhanced crossings, lighting, and sidewalk infill, is anticipated to cost a total of \$8.2 million.

Grant funding is required to accomplish these infrastructure projects as the City does not have sufficient internal funding available to implement these projects. City staff is requesting that Council adopt a Resolution of Support to apply for grants that include the Lower Eastside Safety Enhancements Project and the Pedestrian and Bicycle Overcrossing Project.

Two possible sources of grant funding are the State's ATP and the SB1 Solutions for Congested Corridors Program (SB1 Solutions).

The ATP's next grant cycle, Cycle 7, has grant applications due in June of 2024. The ATP is extremely competitive, and Cycle 7 will likely have a reduced overall amount of funding available due to the State's budget deficit. The City is not in a financial position to support

the more than \$5M matching fund commitment that is most likely needed to compete with other applications from around the State for the ATP Cycle 7 grant..

The Streets Fund has a structural deficit and is not a potential funding source as a local match. Measure C cannot be used without significant impacts to street maintenance activities and addressing the large backlog of street maintenance. Even without this grant match, street maintenance funding is trending downward. Given these constraints, staff recommends that the City proceed with a grant application containing no local match funding. If there is any marginal funding available within the City's Measure C account, it is staff's strong recommendation that it be committed to Storm Drain analysis and improvement projects.

The next SB1 Solutions grant cycle, Cycle 4, has a December 2024 application deadline. Staff is currently working with Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) and Caltrans to incorporate the Lower Eastside Safety Enhancements Project with the Highway 101 High Occupancy Vehicle and Widening Project. It is anticipated that the local roadway network will see more vehicular traffic near US 101, and the Lower Eastside Safety Enhancements Project would provide the necessary safety enhancements for the most vulnerable road users (pedestrians and cyclists) in this highway-adjacent neighborhood. A grant match for the Lower Eastside Safety Enhancements Project is not required. If SBCAG and/or Caltrans are not successful in obtaining funding, the City will explore other grant opportunities to fund this project.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

The Plan and its recommended projects are consistent with the Council-adopted Vision Zero Strategy, Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plans, Circulation Element, and the City's existing and draft Climate Action Plans. Implementing the Plan will provide residents with a safe active transportation mode choice in the Lower Eastside to get to and from the Waterfront, which will assist in reducing vehicle trips and greenhouse gas emissions.

The Lower Eastside meets the State's and regional definitions of a disadvantaged community, and the neighborhood has historically been divided by US 101. The proposed overcrossing restores a critical neighborhood connection to the Waterfront for jobs, services, and recreation.

The proposed pedestrian and bicycle overcrossing is located in the Coastal Zone and is subject to the City's Local Coastal Program and the California Coastal Act. The project will require a Coastal Development Permit (CDP) approved by the Planning Commission and appealable to City Council and the California Coastal Commission. The City's Coastal Land Use Plan includes several applicable policies that seek to improve public access to the coast, remove Highway 101 as a barrier to pedestrian and bicycle access to coastal areas, encourage use of sustainable transportation, and minimize impacts on coastal and biological resources, including Sycamore Creek. The Feasibility Study (Attachment 3) discusses some of these policies in greater detail. Of note related to biological resources is Coastal Land Use Plan Policy 4.1-11, which prohibits alteration of creeks for new road

crossings unless there are no feasible alternatives. The CDP review process will involve a thorough analysis of the project for consistency with this and other policies.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

Under Santa Barbara Municipal Code (SBMC) § 22.100.070 and § 22.100.080, the Public Works Director has determined that the Plan is exempt under Public Resources Code Section 21080.20.

CEQA Exemption Criteria

Per Senate Bill 922 (Chapter 987, Statutes of 2022), Section 21080.20 establishes a statutory exemption that includes active transportation plans and pedestrian plans. An individual project that is a part of an active transportation plan or pedestrian plan would remain subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) unless another exemption applies to that project. The proposed plan includes a priority list of projects to be implemented after adoption of the plan and securing funding. All future projects as part of this plan will be subject to CEQA environmental review.

For these reasons, the Public Works Director, exercising authority under SBMC § 22.100.080, has determined that the Plan is exempt under CEQA. The Council has final authority to approve the Plan. Therefore, the Council must confirm the exemption before Plan approval. The recommended action will make the necessary environmental determination and authorize the filing of a Notice of Exemption for the Plan.

- ATTACHMENTS:**
1. Active Transportation Program Plan Requirements
 2. Lower Eastside Community Connectivity Active Transportation Plan
 3. Lower Eastside Community Connectivity Active Transportation Plan Feasibility Study

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SUBMITTED BY: Clifford M. Maurer, P.E., Public Works Director

APPROVED BY: City Administrator's Office