



City of Santa Clara

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Agenda Report

19-295

Agenda Date: 4/23/2019

REPORT TO COUNCIL

SUBJECT

Informational Report on adding an alternative analysis for the removal of a travel lane as a part of the El Camino Real Specific Plan process and proceeding with parking removals and addition of a bike lane prior to consideration of the plan

BACKGROUND

The City is in the process of preparation of a Specific Plan for the El Camino Real corridor. The Specific Plan would help to implement the City's General Plan goals and policies for the corridor by providing more detailed guidance for future land uses and urban design elements. The development of the El Camino Real Specific Plan is primarily funded by a Priority Development Area (PDA) Planning Assistance Grant that the City received from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) in March 2015. The grant includes a performance deadline that requires completion of the Specific Plan by June 30, 2020.

Following receipt of the grant, the City conducted a consultant selection process and selected a consultant team led by Raimi & Associates Inc. The City negotiated a scope for the consultant's work and entered into a contract with a consultant team to assist with preparation of the Specific Plan. MTC and the City Council both reviewed and accepted the current schedule and scope of work for the Specific Plan and the project is on schedule for completion prior to the MTC performance deadline.

On February 5, 2019 the City Council held a study session on the El Camino Real Specific Plan (Councilmembers Davis, O'Neill, Watanabe and Mahan were eligible to participate; not eligible are Councilmembers Chahal, Hardy and Mayor Gillmor). At the study session staff presented two key components of the Specific Plan; the draft land use plan and the preferred right-of-way roadway alternatives for El Camino Real (Attachment 1). Completion of these draft elements allows staff to proceed to the next step in the planning process which is the preparation of an environmental analysis as required for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Based on feedback received at the study session, the environmental analysis will be conducted using the preferred land use plan and El Camino Real right-of-way alternative 2A (narrowing of travel lane widths and removal of on-street parking to accommodate a buffered bicycle lane with a bus boarding island).

During the study session, Councilmembers O'Neill and Watanabe requested additional information regarding the work and costs required to also study right-of-way design Alternative 3A. Alternative 3A includes removal of one travel lane in each direction on El Camino Real to accommodate a buffered bike lane with a bus boarding island along with a widened center median and widened sidewalks. This report responds to the requested information on the additional cost and work plan implications for further study of roadway design Alternative 3A.

DISCUSSION

The evaluation of Alternative 3A would require technical analysis, community outreach and intergovernmental coordination beyond the current scope of the El Camino Real Specific Plan effort.

Technical Analysis

Because the removal of travel lanes will increase delays for drivers on El Camino Real corridor and could divert traffic onto adjacent side streets, additional analysis of potential transportation impacts will need to be prepared as part of the environmental review process, including a neighborhood traffic intrusion analysis, simulation modeling, and a traffic model to evaluate intersection levels of service, pedestrian delays and queues for vehicular through movements on El Camino Real. This traffic analysis would add approximately three months to the overall timeline and cost approximately \$120,000. The project budget includes \$159,000 of contingency funding for “additional services” that could be applied toward this effort, however staff would not recommend using this funds as the contingency is not typically used for a new element of work of this magnitude and could affect the rest of the plans. Additional City funds would be required to complete the work

Community Outreach and Intergovernmental Coordination

At least two additional community meetings would be necessary to gain input on right-of-way Alternative 3A, targeted to neighborhoods potentially impacted by diverted traffic. Outside agency coordination to adjacent cities (Sunnyvale and San Jose), Caltrans, and the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) would also be required as El Camino Real is a regional transportation corridor. The outreach should be conducted after completion of the additional traffic analysis so that the results of that analysis could be presented to the community. The additional outreach is expected to add an additional three months to the Specific Plan process, resulting in a total delay of 6 months. MTC is unlikely to extend the current performance deadline to allow additional time for the planning process, so it is possible that the City would not be able to access the MTC grant for this work.

Further consideration of Alternative 3A could also be conducted as a separate project after completion of the Specific Plan so as not to extend the current schedule for the El Camino Real Specific Plan. However, whether done as part of the El Camino Real Specific Plan process or separate from it, the required outreach to analyze Alternative 3A would impact the capacity of staff working on advance planning, thus creating potential delays to work on other advance planning projects such as the Downtown Precise Plan.

In summary, further study of right-of-way Alternative 3A would be an extended work effort outside of the current project scope and schedule and if conducted in conjunction with the El Camino Specific Plan would add an estimated total of six months to the Specific Plan schedule, exceeding the current grant deadline timelines. However, any work conducted after the grant deadline would not be eligible to be funded by the MTC grant and would need to be absorbed by the City’s General Fund or the City’s long-range planning funds.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee

During the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC) dinner meeting on March 26, 2019, BPAC members requested that parking be removed along El Camino Real immediately so that bike lanes could be striped with the Caltrans repaving project that is set to start this spring. Staff will be studying the potential removal of parking along this corridor as part of the El Camino Specific Plan which will be coming back to Council in early 2020. As part of the February Study Session Council report staff included the following language regarding parking:

A preliminary parking analysis identified 446 on-street parking spaces available along El Camino Real within the Specific Plan area. The parking occupancy analysis concluded that on the average throughout the day 31% of these on-street parking spaces are utilized. Almost all properties fronting El Camino Real, with the exception of the properties located at the northeast corner of El Camino Real and Main Street (El Camino Coin Wash & Dry, Custom Hairstyling, El Camino Realty, JC Beauty, and Santa Clara Montessori), the north side of El Camino Real just east of Los Padres Boulevard (Diver Dan's), and the south side of El Camino Real just east of San Tomas Expressway (Gran Prix Power Sports) have sufficient on-site parking to meet their overall parking needs. For the aforementioned properties that lack on-site parking, staff will continue to work with those property owners, and also review bike design alternatives.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This informational report does not constitute a "project" within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(4) in that it is an informational report that does not involve any commitment to any specific project which may result in a potential significant impact on the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no cost to prepare this report other than administrative staff time and expense. Study of right-of-way Alternative 3A would require additional use of General Fund or Long-range Planning funds. The Long-range Planning funds are generated as a percentage of development permit fees and currently has approximately \$500,000 available, but this fund is also used to support other planning efforts, such as the Downtown Precise Plan or Placemaking activities. Additional General Fund money would be needed to proceed with parking removal in advance of the Specific Plan.

COORDINATION

This report has been coordinated with the Department of Public Works and the City Attorney's Office.

RECOMMENDATION

Note and file the Informational Report on the El Camino Real Specific Plan right-of-way Alternative 3A. If Council would like to proceed with analysis of the removal of a travel lane on El Camino Real (Alternative 3A), direction should be provided to staff to return to Council with a formal scope and budget for consideration.

Reviewed by: Andrew Crabtree, Director, Community Development Department

Approved by: Deanna J. Santana, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. El Camino Real Right-of-Way Alternatives