



Staff Report

Date: May 10, 2016

To: Honorable Mayor and City Council

From: Valerie J. Barone, City Manager

Reviewed by: Victoria Walker, Director of Community and Economic Development

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Subject: **City Council Study Session presenting the Draft Bicycle, Pedestrian and Safe Routes to Transit Plan**

Report in Brief

This study session is intended to provide the City Council with an overview of the City's recently released Draft Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Safe Routes to Transit Plan (Attachments 1 and 2), as well as an opportunity to provide comments and ask any questions regarding the content. A presentation will be provided at the Council meeting by project consultant Jennifer Donlon-Wyant, Principal, of Alta Planning + Design.

The Draft Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Safe Routes to Transit Plan was released to the public and discussed by the Plan Advisory Committee (PAC) at their regular meeting held on April 25, 2016. This was followed by a city-wide public workshop hosted at the Senior Center on the evening of Thursday May 5, 2016 to introduce the Draft Plan and receive feedback from participants. Staff requests that the City Council review the Draft Plan, hear the consultant's presentation, and provide feedback for incorporation into the final Draft Plan document.

The release of the Draft Plan marks the beginning of an extended public comment period which will include study sessions with the Parks Recreation and Open Space Commission and Planning Commission, followed by environmental review and preparation of a final Draft Plan in July. The final version of the Draft Plan will be presented to the Planning Commission and then City Council for final consideration and adoption in late summer.

Recommended Action

The Council may wish to provide feedback on the issues and information presented at this study session. There is no staff recommendation or request for approval from the Council at this time.

Background

In December of 2012, the City Council approved a General Plan Amendment to incorporate Complete Streets policies into the Transportation Element of the *2030 General Plan*. The goal of Complete Streets policies is to plan and design the City's transportation system to meet the needs of all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists and public transit patrons, as well as motorists. After the Council adopted the Complete Streets policies into the General Plan, it was determined that the next step was to build upon those efforts and prepare a Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.

Funding for the Bicycle and Pedestrian planning effort was initially seeded by a \$100,000 Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) grant accepted by the City Council in 2013. This amount was further supplemented by an additional \$200,000 of funding secured by a second grant through MTC's competitive Regional Measure 2 (RM-2) Safe Routes to Transit grant program, which was accepted by the City Council in July of 2014. The City's winning proposal for the Safe Routes to Transit RM-2 grant included a partnership with the Contra Costa County Health Services Department (CCHS) and the Monument Impact organization. The City in turn provided \$20,000 of matching Measure J funds and staff resources to manage and prepare the plan.

On December 9, 2014, the City Council approved a contract with Alta Planning + Design, Inc. (Alta) to assist with the preparation of a Bicycle, Pedestrian and Safe Routes to Transit Plan. Staff from Alta had a technical role in preparing the plan and provided assistance with the public outreach program. Those efforts included conducting a very successful community survey with over 600 responses, a well-attended bicycle and walking tour in April 2015, and three City-wide workshops to gather community input, develop policies and, most recently, to introduce the Draft Plan and receive initial feedback.

Public Outreach

Because the City's built environment has a direct impact on residents' health and quality of life, the Plan's public outreach program made an extra effort to reach out to residents who rely on the City's public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure. Project partners from Monument Impact helped enable wider participation by providing Spanish translation, child care services, and food at workshops, as well as inviting staff to their own venues for participation and feedback.

Public outreach for the Plan began in June of 2014 with a series of public events, including visioning workshops hosted at Monument Impact, Mt. Diablo High School, the Monument Crisis Center, and booths hosted at the Tuesday Farmers Markets and

Thursday evening Music and Market events, as well as at the Senior Center's Age Strong Live Long Expo. The visioning workshops supporting the planning effort were conducted by James Rojas, a noted planning consultant who uses models and everyday objects to enable participants to express themselves. Planning students from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo also helped support the plan and expand public outreach by conducting bicycle and pedestrian survey counts and co-hosting a booth with city staff at one of the downtown Music and Market events. Staff from Monument Impact and Contra Costa Health Services hosted four Community Capacity Building workshops at locations that included the Monument Crisis Center, the Library, and Cambridge Park, all of which included Spanish translation. City staff also reached out to Concord's disabled community, with a presentation and project discussions held jointly with staff from the Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART) at Independent Living Resources (ILR) of Contra Costa County in June of 2015.

Project consultants from Alta were also actively involved with public outreach. Alta worked with City staff and staff from BART at the first community workshop to get feedback on community needs in April 2015 and again hosted a successful policy workshop at Centre Concord in July of 2015. Alta also led the most recent city-wide public workshop held at the Senior Center on the evening of May 5, 2016 to introduce the Draft Plan and receive comments.

It should also be noted that Bike East Bay and Bike Concord assisted generously with public outreach for the Plan by independently hosting and promoting a number of events, including an advocacy ride in September of 2014 and a successful Bike to Work Day party in Todos Santos Plaza in May of 2015. Bike Concord performed their own independent online survey for the plan, which is identified in the Plan's appendices. Bike Concord also provided complimentary bike valet services for participants at all of the Plan's city-wide workshops.

Plan Advisory Committee

The City Council established a public Plan Advisory Committee (PAC) to help guide the development of the Draft Plan. The PAC held their first public meeting in March of 2015 and is led by City Council representative Mayor Laura Hoffmeister, along with Planning Commission Chair Carlyn Obringer, Parks Recreation and Open Space Commissioner Mark Sinclair, and two at-large members, Clair Linder and Sergio Huerta. Resident Kenji Yamada served as the Committee's alternate. The PAC represents a diverse group of Concord residents with interests in both recreational and commuter walking and bicycling, and includes representatives from Concord's bicycling community.

Throughout the process, the PAC held a regular monthly schedule, holding public meetings, taking public comments, and discussing the Plan's direction. Some of the PAC's key recommendations included establishing the Plan's project scoring criteria, goals, and vision statement, as well as qualitative guidance on the Draft Plan's programs. The PAC also serves as the City's interim Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory

Committee (BPAC) until a permanent standing committee is created, which the draft Plan identifies in its program recommendations. With this interim responsibility, the PAC has been responsible for reviewing grant applications for capital improvement projects in accord with MTC's requirements.

Technical Advisory Committee

Staff from every division of the City's Community and Economic Development Department collaborated closely on the formation of this Plan through an internal and informal Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC included staff from the Public Works and Police Departments, Contra Costa County Health Services, BART, County Connection, and East Bay Regional Parks, who were provided the opportunity to comment on working papers over the course of the Draft Plan's preparation. The TAC members contributed valuable advice and technical assistance on the formation of the Plan.

Plan Goals, Policies and Objectives

Planning staff and consultants from Alta Planning + Design hosted a focused policy workshop on July 30, 2015 at Centre Concord. The workshop included group exercises to develop the Plan's goals, policies, and objectives. Over 70 participants helped to form and identify clear and consistent themes as well as a number of goals, objectives and policies. The exercise produced a number of excellent concepts and ideas which have been incorporated into the Plan.

With feedback from the July policy workshop, the PAC developed a vision statement and recommended four primary goals for the Plan (Attachment 1, Chapter 4), as follows:

"The City of Concord envisions an environment that supports walking, bicycling and active living, and enables people of all ages and abilities to comfortably access jobs, schools, recreation, shopping and transit by foot or on bicycle as a part of daily life."

- Goal 1:** **Safety-** *Prioritize travel safety for all modes of transportation;*
- Goal 2:** **Design-** *Design active transportation projects that are accessible and comfortable for people of all ages and abilities;*
- Goal 3:** **Network-** *Identify and implement a complete and convenient active transportation network; and*
- Goal 4:** **Programs-** *Increase awareness and support of walking and bicycling through education, encouragement, and evaluation programs.*

The goals and objectives identified in the Draft Plan are ambitious, but they reflect the interest of the community and their implementation will result in substantial

improvements to Concord's existing bicycling and walking infrastructure. The Draft Plan strives to achieve as much as possible within its 20 year horizon.

Plan Overview and Discussion

The Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Safe Routes to Transit Plan envisions Concord as a community where bicycling, walking and transit can serve the transportation needs of all users. The Draft Plan helps make that vision a reality by outlining a strategy to develop a safer and more comfortable walking and bicycling network. The physical improvements would be complimented by programs designed to educate and encourage safe use of the expanded transportation network. To achieve this goal, the Plan helps position the City for future funding for bicycle, pedestrian and transit access improvements by identifying community needs and addressing those needs with \$139 million of identified and prioritized capital improvement projects. The Plan also contains evaluation programs to encourage forward progress by documenting progress towards the Plan's goals.

The Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Safe Routes to Transit Plan provides a clear strategy for the development of a comprehensive bicycling and walking network. Having a functional bicycle and pedestrian network with ready access to public transit is critical for the success of any non-motorized transportation plan. The Plan seeks to enable and encourage walking and bicycling as a reasonable and feasible alternative form of transportation through recommended improvements like filling in sidewalk gaps, establishing new bicycle routes, enhancing existing bicycle routes, providing wayfinding, amenities, and establishing secure and reliable places to park bicycles. The Plan identifies recommendations to improve pedestrian and bicycle access to transit stops and stations and identifies a number of programs to educate and encourage all residents about walking, bicycling, and sharing the road safely, as well as good behavior for road users. The Plan helps the City fulfill its policy commitment to Complete Streets goals, identifying a future comprehensive bicycling and walking transportation network that meets the needs of all users and enables and encourages alternatives to driving.

For future capital improvement programming, the Plan provides a detailed prioritized inventory identifying hundreds of projects, a strategy for implementation, potential funding sources, cost estimates that take into account typical design and construction costs, as well as long-term maintenance costs, with the goal of making Concord a safer and more comfortable city for walking and bicycling. In addition to the inventory, the Plan developed conceptual designs of three major corridors for potential future bicycle and pedestrian improvements. The corridors studied are Monument Boulevard, Clayton Road, and Willow Pass Road. These conceptual corridor plans demonstrate what is possible within given roadway limitations on three of Concord's major transportation corridors and are eligible as shelf-ready projects for grant applications to fund both their remaining design and construction.

The Plan identifies a number of challenge areas identified as “complete streets studies” that could be expanded into future transportation planning or capital improvement projects. With the prioritized project inventory and complete streets studies, the Plan and its supplementary studies will competitively position the City for future grants and funding opportunities. The Plan will fully comply with the State’s Active Transportation Program (ATP) guidelines, making Concord eligible to receive ATP grant funding, as well as the second round of One Bay Area Grant (OBAG) funding.

It should be noted that the Plan’s recommendations for infrastructure improvements can all be implemented within the City’s existing public rights-of-way. Implementation of the plan as written does not require obtaining private property, easements, or the removal of any vehicular lanes of traffic. Traffic impacts resulting from the Plan’s recommended projects are limited to narrowing existing vehicular lanes of travel where feasible and situations that may require the removal of existing on-street parking. Where on-street parking would be removed, the Draft Plan calls for further study and neighborhood input before these proposals are further developed.

The Plan also provides the City with a number of practical recommendations for improvements to development standards that pertain to bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. As a companion to the Plan, Alta is currently developing a separate Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility Design Guidelines manual, which will identify standards for infrastructure improvements based on existing State and Federal engineering standards and best practices. These guidelines are being developed to take into account construction costs, durability, and identify where design flexibility is possible.

As a part of the project, staff from Alta conducted a thorough review of the City’s Municipal Code. They present a number of recommendations in the Plan to update the City’s code provisions relating to bicycle and pedestrian usage of the public right-of-way, bicycle licensing, and bicycle parking standards and methods. These shelf-ready recommendations can be used toward future Development Code updates, if so directed by Council.

Next Steps

The public will continue to have the opportunity to comment on the Draft Plan through final City Council consideration for adoption, anticipated in early September. The PAC will further discuss the Draft Plan and hear public comments again at their meeting scheduled on May 23, 2016. The Draft Plan will also be presented to the Parks Recreation and Open Space Committee on May 11, 2016, followed by Planning Commission on May 18, 2016. The Draft Plan will then be finalized and considered for recommendation to the City Council by the Planning Commission. Finally the City Council will consider the Draft Plan adoption in late summer.

Environmental Review

Staff is currently working with the project consultants on an environmental assessment of the Plan, including an evaluation of potential traffic and safety impacts. The environmental assessment will be based on the final version for adoption following the extended public comment period. Recently adopted State legislation has expanded the options for potentially exempting bicycle and pedestrian plans and certain projects identified within them from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Should the Draft Plan not qualify for an exemption, an appropriate environmental determination will be prepared and circulated for review. Staff has adequate funding remaining in the project's budget to support the completion of either a Negative Declaration or a Mitigated Negative Declaration.

The Plan does not identify or call for the removal of any existing lanes of vehicular traffic, existing parking spaces, the creation of easements, or private property acquisitions. Complete Streets studies and other challenge areas identified in the Plan that could have the potential to result in an impact under CEQA reference a need for further study and would be required to be publically vetted and independently evaluated for environmental impacts in accordance with CEQA standards on a project by project basis.

Financial Impact

Preparation of the Draft Plan has been funded by a combination of grants with staff time compensated by the general fund. In February of 2013, the City Council accepted \$100,000 in TDA grant funds and enabled a 20% City match using Measure J funds (\$20,000) to support the plan preparation. This funding was supplemented by an additional \$200,000 of RM-2 Grant funding accepted by the Council in July of 2014, for total grant funding of \$320,000 for this project. The TDA funds supporting the project must be depleted prior to June 30, 2016 and the RM-2 grant requires the project to be completed no later than February 28, 2017.

The adopted Plan will well-position the City to apply for several types of significant grant opportunities for sidewalk and street improvements and other CIP projects.

Public Contact

The City Council study session was announced at the April 25, 2016 PAC meeting and at the May 5, 2016 public workshop. The item was posted in the City Council agenda. In addition, members of the public who expressed an interest in this topic were also notified and emailed a copy of this staff report. Any future City Council public hearings to consider final adoption of the Plan will be publicly noticed in accord with the requirements of the Municipal Code.

Attachments

- 1: Draft Bicycle, Pedestrian and Safe Routes to Transit Plan
- 2: Draft Bicycle, Pedestrian and Safe Routes to Transit Plan Appendices

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City of Concord
Bicycle, Pedestrian &
Safe Routes to Transit Plan

April
2016



Draft Plan
Can be found at:

<http://www.cityofconcord.org/pdf/projects/transit/sr2t042016.pdf>

City of Concord
Bicycle, Pedestrian &
Safe Routes to Transit Plan
Appendices

April
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Administrative Draft Plan Appendices

Can be found at:

<http://www.cityofconcord.org/pdf/projects/transit/sr2t042016App.pdf>