



City of Santa Barbara Transportation & Circulation Committee *Staff Report*

DATE: April 22, 2021

TO: Transportation and Circulation Committee

FROM: Jessica W. Grant, Supervising Transportation Planner
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SUBJECT: Eastside and Westside Community Paseos Corridor Projects - Design Update

RECOMMENDATION

That the Transportation Circulation Committee receive an update and provide comments on the design for the Eastside and Westside Community Paseos Corridor Projects.

This report will provide a background for both projects, and the refinements that have been made to the designs.

BACKGROUND

The Eastside and Westside Community Paseos Corridor Projects were developed from needs identified in the City's Bicycle Master Plan (BMP). The BMP identified bicycle boulevards as a type of facility to provide a safe, low stress cycling environment while minimizing the need for parking removal. On bicycle boulevards, also known as bike friendly streets, traffic volumes and speeds are low enough that novice bike riders feel comfortable riding in the traffic lane. Bicycle boulevards were identified in the BMP on the following corridors:

- Alisos Street to provide a safe, efficient alternative to riding on Milpas Street. Providing bike lanes on Milpas Street would have required a significant amount of parking removal.
- Sola Street to provide a safe, efficient alternative to riding on Micheltorena Street. Providing bike lanes on Micheltorena Street would have required a significant amount of parking removal.
- Chino Street to provide a safe, efficient alternative to riding on San Andres Street. Providing bike lanes on San Andres Street would have required a significant amount of parking removal.

Elements of the BMP were grouped together and applications were made to the Active Transportation Program (ATP) for the following:

The Eastside Community Paseos Project (originally named the Eastside Green Lanes & Bike Boulevard Gap Closure) includes cycling facilities in the Eastside neighborhood to provide connectivity within the Eastside, and between Downtown and the Eastside. Specific bicycle related features in the grant application included:

- Alisos Street bike boulevard
- Haley Street bike lane (eastbound) green conflict striping

- Cota Street bike lane (westbound) green conflict striping
- Ortega Street new bike lane (eastbound)

The Westside Community Paseo Corridor Project (originally named the Westside Bike Boulevard Gap Closure) includes facilities to connect the Westside neighborhood to Downtown, Santa Barbara High School, and to the Eastside Community Paseo. Specific bicycle related features in the grant application included:

- Chino Street bike boulevard
- Micheltorena Street bike lanes (between San Andres Street and Castillo Street)
- Sola Street bike boulevard
- A contra-flow bike lane on Castillo Street connecting Sola Street to Micheltorena Street.

In late 2016, the City was notified that both of the Active Transportation Program grant applications were successful. The Eastside project was awarded approximately \$2.7 million, and the Westside project was awarded approximately \$4.4 million.

Eastside Community Paseos Project

The Project was renamed from the Eastside Green Lanes & Bike Boulevard Gap Closure Project to the Eastside Community Paseos Project. The term bicycle boulevard has been a difficult term to explain and the term paseos was more comprehensive in describing a project that incorporates both bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure improvements. On December 9, 2020, a webinar was held to update the community on the specific features planned for this Project.

The webinar illustrated the features along the Alisos Street bike friendly street. To make Alisos Street safe and efficient for cyclists, stop signs will be rotated to favor Alisos Street so that cyclists and travel end to end without stopping. Traffic diverters will be added every two to three blocks so that vehicular drivers do not find this an attractive cut-through route to bypass Milpas Street. To minimize driver speeds between the traffic diverters, landscape peninsulas are planned at some of the mid-blocks. All traffic control infrastructure will not impede emergency access along Alisos Street. While street lighting is not covered under the grant, the City will work with SoCal Edison to have additional street lighting on utility poles that currently do not have a street light on them.

The webinar also described the green bike lane markings that will be added to the bike lanes on Haley Street (eastbound), and Cota Street (westbound). A new eastbound bike lane will be added to Ortega Street (eastbound) from Chapala Street to east of Olive Street. Green bike lane markings increase visibility and awareness between motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists, and designates the continuation of the bicycle path, safely guiding bicyclists through the conflict zone.

The Project also includes sidewalk infill on the west side of Alisos Street between Ortega Street and Canon Perdido Street, creating a continuous path of travel. Safety features will be added to school crosswalks at Cota Street and Quarantina Street, Cota Street and Nopal Street, and Canon Perdido and Nopal Street including curb extensions, lighting, and pedestrian activated rapid flashing beacons.

Construction is anticipated in early 2022.

Westside Community Paseos Project

The Project was renamed the Westside Community Paseos Project. In the spring of 2020, the bike friendly street originally planned for Chino Street was moved to Gillespie Street and San Pascual Street. A bike friendly street on Gillespie Street will provide better connections to the community's public schools, and a bike friendly street on San Pascual Street will provide better connections for cross-town cyclists. Community webinars were held on October 14 and 15, 2020, to update the community on specific features planned for the Westside Community Paseos Project.

Similar to Alisos Street in the Eastside neighborhood, bike friendly streets planned for Gillespie Street, San Pascual Street, and Sola Street will be designed to have low traffic volumes and speeds, and traffic control designed to minimize stops for cyclists. The webinars described the specific features planned for each street including traffic control, diverters, lighting, and speed control.

The webinars also described the bike lane improvements planned for Micheltorena Street (from San Andres to Castillo Streets), and the connections to San Pascual Street and Sola Street. A new crosswalk with pedestrian activated rapid flashing beacons is planned for the intersection of Micheltorena Street and Dutton Avenue.

Finally, the webinars described the route through the Upper East neighborhood to connect Sola Street with the Eastside Community Paseos Project. No physical changes are planned in this neighborhood. Only signs and pavement markings will be used to define the bike route along low volume streets that minimize elevation changes.

The project is planned for construction in early 2022.

DISCUSSION

Since the last update that was presented to the Transportation & Circulation Committee on these projects, and since the community webinars, there have been the following design changes/updates based on community feedback. Please see Attachments #1-11 to see all the improvements proposed for both projects.

Eastside Community Paseos Updates

- Alisos Street
 - *Traffic diverter relocated from Cota to Ortega Street* - This is needed to accommodate a delivery truck route from a business on Milpas that does not have an alternative route. The concern of keeping the traffic diverter on Cota Street is that the delivery route would go onto another neighboring street (most likely Voluntario Street). During our review of vehicles using Alisos Street, we observed a high number of commercial trucks using Alisos Street for end to end trips as an alternative to Milpas Street. We anticipate the project will eliminate commercial trucks that have no reason to use Alisos Street and resume their primary access along Milpas Street. By relocating the diverter from Cota Street to Ortega Street, the diverter planned for De La Guerra (one block north of Ortega Street) is not needed and was eliminated from the project.
 - *Landscape Peninsulas* – Due to the traffic diverter being relocated from Cota to Ortega Street, a landscape peninsula is being relocated from the 600 block (between Cota and Ortega Street) to the 400 block (between Gutierrez and Haley Streets). We anticipate the highest traffic volumes along Alisos Street between Cota Street and

Gutierrez Street so speed control is important in this area to maintain safety and cyclist comfort.

- Gutierrez Street
 - *Bus Stop Relocation* – The westbound bus stop at Alisos and Gutierrez Streets needs to be relocated due to the planned traffic diverter. Buses using this stop would block the westbound travel lane on Gutierrez Street. MTD is evaluating the preferred location to relocate. It is anticipated that the relocated bus stop will be relocated either slightly closer to Milpas Street or at Voluntario Street.
- Haley Street
 - *Removal of Two Way Option on Haley Street (900 East Block)* – An option to convert Haley Street to a two-way street between Milpas and Haley Streets was proposed to the neighborhood. The option was not supported by the neighborhood and the existing configuration will remain.

Westside Community Paseos Updates

- Gillespie Street
 - *Gillespie and Mission Intersection Traffic Diverter* – The pedestrian refuge island on the west leg of the intersection was removed due to concerns that the island would impede turning movements and affect access to an adjacent driveway. The southbound diverter was removed due to a diverter now planned at Valerio Street.
 - *New Landscape Peninsulas* – We heard from the community that they have concerns with vehicle speeds because of the stop signs that will be changed to favor Gillespie Street, and traffic will be unimpeded for three blocks (from Mission Street to Valerio Street). Like Alisos Street, landscape peninsulas were suggested for the 1900, 1800 and 1700 blocks of Gillespie Street. Overall, the landscape peninsulas were well received. Some residents said they would rather just have a speed hump to minimize some parking loss as each located removes approximately two to four on-street spaces. To keep the community paseo aesthetic and function of a bike friendly street and visual narrowing of the roadway so drivers do not speed, we recommend moving forward with the landscaped peninsulas.
 - *Gillespie and Micheltorena Traffic Diverter relocated to Gillespie and Valerio* – The main concern we heard was preserving the existing bus route so families can be dropped off on the school side of the street for Harding Elementary. The traffic diverter at Micheltorena Street would have required changing the direction of the bus route from a clockwise loop to a counterclockwise loop, and caused the need to relocate the bus stops to the non-school side of the street. In order to keep the vehicle volumes low and not impact the existing direction of the bus route, we propose to relocate the traffic diverter to the intersection of Gillespie and Valerio Street. The proposed diverter would go in the existing red curb area so no on-street parking would be removed. While the diverter is designed so vehicles cannot drive through, it is designed so emergency vehicles can maneuver through. The diverter also creates an opportunity for landscaping. Having a diverter just north of the Gillespie/Valerio intersection, the bus route will not need to be changed.
 - *New All Way Stop at Gillespie and Micheltorena Streets* – We heard this intersection is another difficult intersection for families to cross to get to Harding Elementary. An all-way stop is proposed. While cyclists will not have end to end travel without stops,

this will result in the safest configuration for the intersection and will also improve pedestrian mobility.

- *New traffic diverter as Gillespie and Sola Streets* – By relocating a diverter from Micheltorena Street to Valerio Street, a five block long section of Gillespie Street is created (from Valerio Street to Anapamu Street) that could become a cut-through route for vehicular traffic. This can be mitigated by either a landscape peninsula at the mid-block between Micheltorena and Sola or a traffic diverter at the intersection of Gillespie and Sola. Resident feedback was split about 50/50 on this. Since the traffic diverter would not remove any on-street parking, we proposed to move forward with the traffic diverter.
- San Pascual Street
 - *Enhancement at San Pascual and Mission Intersection Approach* - A raised mountable island and left turn lane was added to the roadway as a way to provide refuge for left turning cyclists that may need to yield to southbound drivers on San Pascual before cyclists connect to the short off-street multiuse path along Mission between San Pascual and Mission Streets. This mountable island and left turn lane (painted green) will also highlight to drivers to expect cyclists crossing in the roadway. This added enhancement creates a more comfortable route to less experienced cyclists and helps avoid any left turn or westbound movements in the congested roadway along Mission Street in the am and pm peak periods. This feature was strongly supported by the cycling community, but will result in the loss of about four parking spaces.
 - *New Landscaped Peninsulas* –Residents had concerns of driver speeds on San Pascual between Islay and Mission Streets. Like Gillespie Street, landscape peninsulas were suggested for the 1900 and 1800 blocks for speed control.
 - *Enhanced connection to Micheltorena* – San Pascual ends in a cul-de-sac and there is currently a short section of sidewalk to connect to Micheltorena Street. We heard from the community that they would like to see this connection made wider so cyclists and pedestrians can share the path. Upon further review of the City's right of way, we are able to widen this connection from six to ten feet and add a light for comfort at night.
- Micheltorena
 - *Eastbound Buffered Bike Lane* – The bike lane was changed from a raised bike lane to a standard bike lane. Standard bike lanes require less width. This change provides additional room for the westbound bike lane. The additional space will be used for an enhanced connection to San Pascual Street that is described below.
 - *Enhanced Connection to San Pascual* – We heard that a better connection from Micheltorena onto San Pascual is desirable via the sidewalk connection. There are several technical issues that need to be addressed including the downhill speed of westbound cyclists, and the ramp configuration from Micheltorena Street to the sidewalk. To address these issues, the westbound (downhill) bike lane will have a separate right turn lane for cyclists to decelerate, and a new wide ramp for cyclists to access the sidewalk connection to San Pascual.
 - *Raised Westbound Bike Lane* – The bike lane will be raised in the section of Micheltorena where the downhill driver speeds are greatest near Dutton Avenue. This raised section of bikeway will make this section of Micheltorena safer to navigate for less experienced cyclists.

- *Added Green Conflict Striping to Micheltorena and Castillo* – We heard a lot of community feedback on how to better stripe the approach to the contraflow lane on Castillo. The conflict striping allows cyclists to best position themselves through the intersection before making the right hand turn in the Castillo contraflow bike lane before connection to the proposed bike friendly street on Sola.
- Sola Street
 - *No Functional Design Changes* - There are no additional design changes to this bike friendly street other than what was called out in the BMP, which was to include four traffic signals and two traffic diverters to control and reduce roadway volumes so cyclists feel comfortable riding in the street with vehicles. On March 23, 2021, the City Council voted unanimously (7-0 vote) to keep the roadway function as originally discussed during the BMP planning effort.
 - *Landscape Services Solicited* – Per City Council direction, the City is in the process of contracting with a landscape architect to develop a landscape pallet for the traffic diverters. Two members from the Historic Landmarks Commission have been appointed to peer review the landscape pallet. This is not a participating cost of the grant and will require City monies to fund for design, construction, and maintenance.
- Nopal Street
 - *New Landscaped Peninsulas* – Residents had concerns of driver speeds on Nopal Street. Like Gillespie, San Pascual, and Alisos Streets, three landscape peninsulas are proposed between Canon Perdido and Anapamu Streets for speed control so cyclists are comfortable riding in the street with vehicles.

To summarize, all of the above changes continue to meet with goals of the Bicycle Master Plan and Vision Zero Strategy. We really appreciate the community feedback to make this a strong and bike friendly east to west connection in our City. Staff is seeking any additional feedback from the Transportation & Circulation Committee before the project designs are finalized.

ATTACHMENTS

Eastside Community Paseos Corridor

1. Alisos #1
2. Alisos #2
3. Haley
4. Cota
5. Ortega

Westside Community Paseos Corridor

6. Gillespie
7. San Pascual
8. Micheltorena
9. Sola #1
10. Sola #2
11. Sola #3