



City of Santa Barbara
Transportation & Circulation Committee
Staff Report

DATE: February 24, 2022

TO: Transportation and Circulation Committee (TCC) Members

FROM: Chelsey Swanson, Acting Supervising Transportation Planner

SUBJECT: Lower Eastside Community Connectivity Active Transportation Planning Effort

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Transportation and Circulation Committee hear a presentation from staff introducing the Lower Eastside Community Connectivity Active Transportation Planning Effort and recent community engagement.

DISCUSSION:

On May 21, 2020, the City was awarded an Active Transportation Program (ATP) Cycle 4 Grant in the amount of \$344,000 for the Lower Eastside Community Connectivity Active Transportation Plan (Plan). The Plan will study feasible options for a pedestrian and bicycle highway overcrossing between the Eastside Neighborhood and the vicinity of Dwight Murphy Field. U.S. Highway 101 is a physical barrier to walking and bicycling, with approximately 1.25 miles between crossing points for the Eastside neighborhood. The City's Pedestrian Master Plan's (PMP) Policy 1.4 states that the City shall work to eliminate Highway 101 as a barrier to pedestrian travel, and identifies a possible future overcrossing between the intersection of South Canada, Pitos Streets, and Dwight Murphy Field. This Plan will also build upon Santa Barbara's Vision Zero Strategy, which is to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all. While funding for construction has not yet been identified, developing a plan is an important first step.

The kickoff of the Plan was delayed due to pandemic related restrictions for in-person public outreach efforts and the shift in workload duties related to pandemic conditions and priorities of the Transportation Planning and Parking Division. In the fall of 2021, Public Works staff conducted community outreach to determine; if there was support for the City to study the overcrossing location identified in the PMP, whether to study other crossing locations, and to hear what is working with existing bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure between the Eastside and destinations south of the highway.

The first public meeting was an online webinar on October 25, 2021, included Spanish interpretation, and had approximately 38 attendees. During the webinar, staff provided an

overview of both recently completed and upcoming bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure projects in the Plan vicinity to demonstrate existing connectivity and future needs to fill connectivity gaps. The webinar also included interactive polling with eight questions to receive and document input from participants.

A second public meeting was held in-person on October 30, 2021, with the same purpose of the webinar. The meeting was an open house format with five interactive stations in English and Spanish where community members could answer questions, add comments on display boards, and discuss each issue with staff. Spanish interpreters were on-site to help facilitate the meeting. Approximately 16 people attended the open house meeting.

In addition to the two community meetings, a survey was posted on the project webpage between October and December in English and Spanish. The survey included the same questions presented at both community meetings and 86 total responses were received.

Based on the input staff received during the webinar, in-person meeting, and online survey, the following summarizes the comments received to date:

- ◆ There is strong support by the community for the City to move forward with studying the feasibility of an overcrossing between the intersection of South Canada and Pitos Streets and the vicinity of Dwight Murphy Field.
- ◆ When walking between the Eastside Neighborhood and south of the freeway, challenges include: lack of lighting, missing or too narrow sidewalks (Cabrillo Blvd undercrossing and Milpas Street), loud and busy traffic (Milpas Street), drivers speeding and/or not yielding at freeway ramps and the Milpas Street roundabout, the distance, and feeling unsafe or unsanitary where there is homeless activity in highway underpasses (Cacique undercrossing).
- ◆ When biking between the Eastside Neighborhood and south of the freeway, challenges mentioned include: lack of lighting, speeding vehicles, lack of bike lanes or too narrow roadway (Cabrillo undercrossing), uncomfortable sharing the road with vehicles, lack of secure bike parking at destinations, and hard to navigate roundabouts and getting through railroad crossings, especially for families.
- ◆ The preferred walking route between the Eastside and south of Highway 101 is through the Cacique undercrossing; however, homelessness concerns were brought up as a deterrent at this location.
- ◆ Some residents use Sycamore Creek to cross under the highway, however, there were safety concerns expressed with using this route.
- ◆ The preferred biking route between the Eastside and south of Highway 101 is the Cacique undercrossing; however, busy traffic between the Cacique/Milpas intersection and south of the railroad tracks was uncomfortable for some, especially families. Some preferred the bike route via Old Coast Hwy to Cabrillo undercrossing.

With the community's strong support, the next steps include contracting with a consultant to study the feasibility of an overcrossing between the intersection of South Canada and Pitos Streets and Dwight Murphy Field. The consultant will provide preliminary environmental and

engineering services by analyzing right-of-way, structural, and environmental resource site constraints, and by providing conceptual design options. The study is anticipated to be complete by July/August 2022. Staff will return to the public in the fall of 2022 to share the findings of the study, conceptual design options, and to receive additional feedback. The crossing options will be presented to the Architectural Board of Review at a conceptual level and will return to the TCC for an update in the fall.

The entire planning effort and circulation approaches and costs will be summarized in the Lower Eastside Community Connectivity Active Transportation Plan. The draft plan will return to the TCC for review in early 2023. City Council review and approval of the plan is required.