

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda date: March 19, 2012

Reviewed by: BP

SUBJECT: Safe Routes to School Project (SR2S) for the Marin Avenue-Santa Fe Avenue Intersection and Pedestrian Improvements around Marin Elementary School.

FROM: Jeff Bond, Community Development Director
Randy Engineer, City Engineer
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TRAFFIC AND SAFETY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council authorize the Call for Bids for construction of this project.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the following actions:

- 1) Approve Final Plans for the SR2S project Marin Avenue-Santa Fe Avenue Signal and Intersection Improvements, Contract No. C12-3 and authorize the City Clerk to call for bids.
- 2) Approve a \$263,571 increase in budget for this Project (CIP Project P64).

BACKGROUND

The Marin/Santa Fe Traffic Signal and Intersection Safety Improvements project was identified as a high priority traffic safety improvement in the City's Traffic Management Plan adopted May 15, 2000. The project takes on added importance because the majority of pedestrians at this intersection are elementary school students. With the City's increased policy emphasis on alternative modes of transportation to and from school, it is extremely important that the access to the school be safe for pedestrians and bicyclists. Thus, the proposed project also is identified in the Active Transportation Plan.

In 2009, the City received a Safe Routes to School (SR2S) grant of \$576,000 for this project. The original grant application called for replacement of traffic signal equipment, curb modifications to shorten crosswalks, several related traffic calming features and student outreach. The original grant application required a local match of \$64,000.

Since the summer of 2010, the Traffic and Safety Commission along with staff and the Consultant team has been working with the community on a number of design options for the

project. This process, while time consuming, provided the project engineer, AECOM, with several enhancements that have since been incorporated into the project design.

On December 1, 2011, the Traffic and Safety Commission considered two final options for this project, and on January 26, 2012, the Traffic and Safety Commission approved a recommendation to City Council to authorize the Call for Bids for construction of this project.

DISCUSSION

The fundamental design challenge with this project is two-fold: (1) Santa Fe Avenue north of Marin does not align with Santa Fe Avenue south of Marin; and (2) the south leg of Santa Fe Avenue intersects Marin Avenue at an oblique angle, creating awkward pedestrian crosswalks across Marin Avenue. The high volume of pedestrian and automobile activity around the school accentuates the challenges of the alignment.

The proposed design addresses the challenges by making changes in the alignment of Santa Fe and constructing pedestrian bulb-outs at the corners to shorten the crosswalks and place the crosswalks in locations that will be most visible to motorists. In addition, the project includes installation of a completely new traffic light system. The design also provides for bicycle improvements consistent with the Active Transportation Plan. Excerpts from the final plans for this Project are attached. The proposed plans are approved by the City Engineer and currently under review by the Department of the State Architect (DSA) to ensure accessible access to Marin School.

Intersection Design Alternatives

On December 1, 2011, staff and the design engineer, AECOM presented two final design options to the Traffic and Safety Commission. In order to better align Santa Fe Avenue through the intersection, the Option 1 moved the south leg of Santa Fe to the east towards Marin Elementary School. Option Two shifted the curbs on the north leg of the intersection to the west.

Because Option 2 required less grading, concrete work, drainage work, and utility relocations, its cost will be lower than that of Option 1. In addition, the trees next to the school can remain. It also provided a larger area for students to platoon at the crosswalk near the entrance to the school. Both the Commission and staff therefore recommend Option 2 to the Council. This option does require the installation of an additional speed hump in the 800 block of Santa Fe to prevent motorists speeding downhill when turning right onto Marin Avenue.

Option Two, however, does affect the residence on the northwest corner of the intersection. A portion of the front yard of this property, like nearly all residential properties in Albany, encroaches into the public right of way. The realignment of Santa Fe would stay within the public right-of-way, but will eliminate the planter strip between the sidewalk and the street and reduce the size of the east side of the front yard by several feet. The area of the yard on the south side of property will increase by roughly a corresponding amount. The home on the northeast corner, and the Bright Star School property, would have larger bulb outs and realignment of the sidewalks in front of their properties in both options.

On December 1, 2011, concern was expressed by residents of the 900 block of Santa Fe that if a second lane for right turns from southbound Santa Fe onto westbound Marin was not allowed, the traffic would queue excessively during peak AM hours. Concern was also expressed by the Albany Strollers and Rollers that a “free” right turn might pose a threat to cyclists waiting for the light to change. The right-of-way in the southbound lane is 20 feet wide, and thus sharing the lane is required if vehicles turning left and turning right are side-by-side.

Educational Outreach

SR2S projects require a combination of the “four E’s”: Engineering, Education, Enforcement, and Evaluation. No engineering project would be as effective in heightening pedestrian safety if the other three E’s are not established. The proposed Education programs include guidelines for children to be cautious when walking and bicycling to school, training sessions about the rules of the street, bike rodeos and presentations that teach children how and when to look for oncoming traffic when walking or bicycling. Since the City has invested considerable staff and financial resources in providing an educational program for the three elementary schools in Albany, it is crucial that this program be enhanced by an improved physical environment conducive of the use of alternative modes of transportation.

Curtis Sidewalk

One of the related improvements, the repair of the sidewalk along the east side of the school on Curtis Street from Marin to Sonoma Avenue has been removed from this project and is proposed to be funded with the next phase of the SR2S program.

Project Schedule

In order to construct the improvements during the summer when school is not in session, the project must be advertised for bids in March and a Contract awarded no later than May of this year.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS

Staff has determined that the proposed project is categorically exempt from the requirements of California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines (CEQA) per Section 15301, “Existing Facilities” of the CEQA Guidelines, which exempts projects that involve alterations of streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle paths, and similar facilities for purpose of public safety.

SUSTAINABILITY ANALYSIS

In accordance to the Clean Water Act, a rain garden is included in this Project at the southwest corner of the intersection. Rain gardens help improve storm water that drains to the bay.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

The current total cost estimate for the project as recommended by staff and the Commission is \$900,000 (Attachment A). This estimate includes an estimated construction cost of \$579,100, plus design, project management, public art, and Safe Routes to Schools programs.

The cost increase is due to several factors. The original grant application called for the elimination of the crosswalk on the west side of the intersection. During the public review process it was determined that this crosswalk should remain. In order to preserve the crosswalk, it was necessary to realign the intersection, which required additional design work and construction. Other additional items included adding Clean Water Act improvements (rain gardens) to the plans and submitting the plans to the Department of the State Architect (DSA) for the review of accessible path of travel.

The current approved budget for this project (CIP Project P64) is \$636,429 (Attachment B). The project is largely funded by state grants, and supplemented with regional funds, and City taxpayer-generated funds contributing \$231,780 to the project. In order to fully fund the proposed project, staff is recommending the following amendments to the Current CIP:

Additional Funding Source	Explanation	Amount
SR2S Grant Correction	Adjusts the Revenue in the current CIP to match the amount listed by the State	\$5,371
Measure B – Previous Allocated Correction	Measure B, FY 09/10 revenue received but not reflected in the CIP. These funds were used during the preliminary design phase.	\$3,400
Proposed Measure B, FY 12/13		\$27,000
CDBG, FY 11/12	The City will receive \$47,581 in Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds to fund curb ramps. The proposed allocation will pay for the curb ramps at the four corners of the intersection plus a mid-block curb ramp on Santa Fe Avenue.	\$30,000
Measure F - 2006	Pay for the removal and construction of asphalt concrete pavement and base and drainage improvements.	\$197,800
Total		\$263,571

Attachments

1. Excerpts from Final Plans
2. Cost Estimate Analysis (Attachment A)
3. Funding Sources & Estimated Expenditures (Attachment B)