

City of Albany

February 20, 2009

To: Gateview Homeowners Association – 555 Pierce Street
Bridgewater Homeowners Association – 545 Pierce Street
Bayside Commons Homeowners Association – 535 Pierce St.

From: Ann Chaney, Community Development Director
Randy Leptien, Albany City Engineer

Subject: **Pierce Street Pavement Rehab and Path Project**

Dear Homeowners and Residents in the 500 Block of Pierce Street,

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with a summary status report and description of the **Pierce Street Pavement Rehab and Path Project**, as well as a response to questions raised by residents during various public meetings, and background on the City’s plans to rehabilitate Pierce Street and add a bike/pedestrian path along the soundwall.

I. SUMMARY STATUS REPORT

The City wishes to proceed with a two-phase contract for design services for the **Pierce Street Pavement Rehab and Path Project**. The first phase will consist of public meetings, an environmental document, and 20% plans for the pavement reconstruction on Pierce Street and the development of the bicycle/pedestrian path from the north City line on Pierce Street, to Buchanan Street via Cleveland Avenue. During Spring 2009, City staff would meet with residents to review the 20% plans. The Traffic & Safety Commission would hold a public meeting and make a recommendation to the City Council. The Council would then consider the plans and decide whether to authorize the second phase of the contract. If approved, the second phase will consist of preparing 100% plans for the entire pavement reconstruction portion, and the widened sidewalk bike/ped path along the soundwall from the northerly City limits to the south end of 555 Pierce Street.

Issues addressed in the project design will include: minimize loss of on-street parking, provide on-street moving van parking, enhance visibility when exiting the southernmost garage entrance at 555 Pierce Street, and accommodate trash and mail pick up.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- New pavement on Pierce Street (from northerly City limits to south end of 555 Pierce; and from Calhoun to Buchanan Street)
- Widened sidewalk next to soundwall for a separated bike/ped path
- Four (4) raised crosswalks across Pierce Street
- Two (2) bus turnouts with provisions for two bus shelters
- Narrower travel lanes: reduce southbound lane from 20 to 12 feet; and northbound lane from 14 to 12 feet
- Retain as much on-street parking as possible

Project benefits

- Newly rehabilitated street (pavement rehab)
- Slower traffic (due to narrower travel lanes)
- Improved visibility
- Safer street crossings (four raised crosswalks)
- Bus shelters
- Dedicated bus turnouts
- New or improved access ramps (to access southbound buses)
- Dedicated bicycle path

III. RESIDENT CONCERNS/CITY STAFF RESPONSE

a) PEDESTRIAN SAFETY

Concern: If the City eliminates the eastside (parallel) parking, between the roadway and sidewalk, pedestrians would lose a safety buffer.

City Staff Response: New plan will retain the eastside parallel parking as was shown in an earlier proposal.

b) BICYCLE PATH

Concern:

1. Proposed bike/ped path along the soundwall abruptly ends south of 555 Pierce, putting bicyclists onto the street because the path has nowhere else to go, with no agreement yet to allow a path through Caltrans property; and

2. There does not appear to be a demand for this bike path.

City Staff Response: The Segment I bike/ped path adjacent to the soundwall (between Cerrito Creek to the south property line of 555 Pierce Street), will be designed by the traffic consultant to safely transition onto the street and be posted as a “Share the Road” bike route. During 2008,

City staff met with Caltrans staff and explored the extension of the bike/ped path through Caltrans owned land. While an agreement has not yet been reached, Caltrans has acknowledged the City's interest in developing concept plans for a Segment II bike/ped path. This segment would extend through Caltrans owned land to the intersection of Washington and Cleveland Avenues. From this point, the path would follow the west side of Cleveland Avenue and connect to the Buchanan Street overcrossing, and ultimately the Bay Trail.

Given the City's and State's carbon emission reduction goals, and the uncertainty of gasoline prices, the demand for separated bicycle paths is expected to increase. The Pierce Street bike/ped path is part of the "Cerrito Creek Bay Trail Connector" that will eventually link the Ohlone Greenway (BART path) with the Bay Trail. This trail will provide greater regional and local connections between transit, shopping and employment centers along San Pablo Avenue, and in El Cerrito, Berkeley and Emeryville.

c) **PARKING**

Concern: Possible loss of on-street existing street parking.

City Staff Response: In the interest of safety, it may be necessary to lose some on-street parking. However, the project will be designed to minimize a loss in parking. The City will also investigate the possibility of adding parking on the west side of Pierce Street, south of 555 Pierce, as part of the Phase II – bike path project.

d) **SIGHT DISTANCE WHEN EXITING GATEVIEW GARAGE**

Concern: Need for adequate visibility when exiting the southernmost garage at 555 Pierce Street.

City Staff Response: City will investigate the possibility of shaving back a portion of the hill on the east side of Pierce Street to improve visibility, as well as look at other design solutions. The engineers believe that the project will reduce traffic speeds due to lane narrowing, crosswalks, etc. This in turn should improve overall safety when exiting garages and driveways.

e) **ACCOMMODATING MOVING VANS/DELIVERY TRUCKS**

Concern: Need to provide on-street parking for moving vans and delivery trucks.

City Staff Response: Locations for moving vans and large delivery trucks may remain the same or change. Regardless, locations will be identified and incorporated into the project design.

f) **ADEQUATE ACCESS FOR SOLID WASTE PICK-UP AND MAIL BOX**

Concern: Solid waste (trash) pick-up and mail pick-up need to be provided to 535, 545 and 555 Pierce Street.

City Staff Response: Access for solid waste pick-up and mail pick-up will be taken into consideration in the project design.

IV. PROJECT BACKGROUND

- April 9, 2007 - Albany City Council accepted the Traffic and Safety Commission recommendation and conditionally approved a plan for **Pierce Street Pavement Rehab and Path** project that incorporated a bike path. This plan showed a loss of one (1) on-street parking space (114 parking spaces currently exist). Because the plan proposed to relocate the existing parallel parking on the eastside to the west side of the street, the Council included a condition that -staff meet with residents and address their concerns about safety along the sidewalk, as well as parking for moving vans and delivery trucks.
 - June 26, 2007 - City staff met with Pierce Street residents in the Gateview clubhouse. Staff summarized issues and concerns heard thus far from residents; presented ideas for addressing those concerns; and listened to additional questions and input offered by residents.
 - 2008 - City staff met with Caltrans staff, and discussed (among other things) a bike path extension through Caltrans owned land. City staff and consultant reviewed approaches for meeting resident concerns (e.g., bike path, parking, visibility exiting the Gateview garage).
 - March 2, 2009 - Albany City Council will be asked to authorize a two-phase contract with Kimley-Horn Associates (traffic engineers). The first phase will include development of 20% plans for the entire project.
 - Spring 2009 - Public meetings will be held, and the City Council will consider whether to proceed to the second phase for preparation of construction documents for pavement reconstruction, and construction of a bike/ped path along the west side of the 500 Block of Pierce Street. Construction drawings will enable the City to call for bids and hire a contractor. Assuming approval is granted, the City could award a construction contract in Summer 2009, and construction could begin in late Summer- early Fall 2009.
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If you have questions regarding the **Pierce Street Pavement Rehab and Path Project**, please call Aleida Andrino-Chavez or Ann Chaney at 510/528-5760, or email us at achaney@albanyca.org and achavez@albanyca.org.