

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

Agenda Date: July 20, 2009
Reviewed by: BP

Subject: **Buchanan Bicycle and Pedestrian Path Design Recommendation and support for Resolution No. 09-37 for construction grant application**

Report By: Aleida Andrino-Chavez, Transportation Planner
 Ann Chaney, Community Development Director

TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

1. That City Council approve the following design alternatives for the Buchanan Bicycle and Pedestrian Path as recommended by the Traffic and Safety Commission and shown on plans developed by DMJM Harris Engineers (attached):

Segment I: From Cornell Avenue to San Pablo Avenue (SPA): Alternative 1
Segment II: From SPA to Jackson Street, there is only one proposal for this segment.
Segment III: From Jackson Street to USDA: Alternative 1
Segment IV: From USDA to the Buchanan Bridge Overcrossing: Alternative 2

The Park and Recreation Commission reviewed the project as it relates to street tree removal and recommends the same alternatives as recommended by T&S Commission.

2. Adopt Resolution No. 09-37 supporting a grant application for construction funds in the amount of \$500,000 from the Safe Routes to Transit Program, and authorize use of funds for local match.

BACKGROUND

In July 2007, the City of Albany received a grant in the amount of \$266,000 for the development of 35% Plans, Specifications and Engineering, Environmental Work and Traffic Analysis for the Buchanan Bicycle and Pedestrian Path project. The City contracted with DMJM Harris, now AECOM, in February 2007 to prepare the 35 % plans. The intent is to develop a concept plan on which an environmental document will be prepared.

The Buchanan Bicycle and Pedestrian path design concept entails extending the Marin Avenue bicycle lanes from Cornell Avenue to the intersection of Marin Avenue and San Pablo Avenue, construction of a bicycle and pedestrian path along the south side of

Marin Avenue and Buchanan Street, and extension of the westbound bicycle lane along the north side of Marin Avenue and Buchanan Street to the Buchanan Bridge Overcrossing. The goal of this project is to close the existing east-west gap between the Ohlone Greenway and the Bay Trail. As such, this project was ranked as the top priority in the Alameda Countywide Bicycle Plan.

Since project initiation, and throughout the plan development process, the Traffic and Safety Commission, Park and Recreation Commission, and staff held several meetings with stakeholders, neighborhood residents, and internal city departments. The T&S Commission held two public hearings for this project, one at its March 26, 2009 meeting, to discuss the different alternatives developed for the path, and the other at its June 25, 2009 meeting where the Commission selected a preferred design alternative for recommendation to the City Council. Because several project alternatives proposed the removal of street trees, the P&R Commission held public meetings on April 9, May 14, and July 9, 2009. At this latter meeting, they came to the same conclusion as the T&S Commission, and recommended that the City Council approve the plan being recommended by the T&S Commission.

DISCUSSION

Design Alternatives

The attached drawings (5 drawings) detail the different alternatives developed for this project. Attachment A describes the Project Alternatives by segment. In order to continue with the project development and schedule, a design alternative should be selected. The environmental work and final cost estimates will be based on the selected design alternative. The T&S Commission is recommending to the City Council the following design alternatives for the different segments of the project:

- Segment I: From Cornell Avenue to San Pablo Avenue (SPA): Alternative 1
- Segment II: From SPA to Jackson Street, there is only one proposal for this segment.
- Segment III: From Jackson Street to USDA: Alternative 1
- Segment IV: From USDA to the Buchanan Bridge Overcrossing: Alternative 2

Attachment A also describes the number of trees and parking spaces that would be retained or removed with each alternative. The T&S Commission and P&R Commission independently walked the site to evaluate impacts to parking, proposed tree removals, tree replacement opportunities, and type, size and health of tree as described in the arborist report (Attachment B). The P&R Commission held a public hearing on the project on July 9 and took formal action to support the T&S Commission recommendation, but recommended that the design explore adding mid-block bulbouts in Segment I, as much as possible, and planting as many trees as possible in Segment II along the south side of Marin Avenue west of San Pablo Avenue (Gill Tract).

Segments II and IV

The alternatives being recommended for Segments II and IV would not result in the removal of any street trees or parking spaces. However, the palm tree on the Gill Tract, at the corner of San Pablo and Marin streets, may have to be removed or relocated as a result of the project. Additional trees are planned along the south side of Marin Avenue from San Pablo Avenue to Jackson Street to be located between the curb and bicycle/pedestrian path. A significant element of Segment IV, involves a new traffic signal at Pierce Street and the closure of the Buchanan “spur” just west of Pierce Street.

Segment I (along Marin Avenue from Cornell to San Pablo)

In order to extend the bicycle lanes on Marin Avenue, either existing parking or most of the street trees would have to be removed. The T&S Commission and P&R Commission recommend removing most of the street trees, which would have to come out because of the need to relocate the curb approximately five feet toward the sidewalk. Their separate decisions were based on the declining health of many of the existing trees, the fact that many of the trees are Camphors, the proposal to plant at least four new trees in bulb-outs, and the sensitivity around losing residential parking. The P&R Commission asked that additional opportunities be considered for mid-block bulbouts during preparation of the 100% plans, and that a uniform street tree be used (e.g., London Plane).

Segment III (along Buchanan Street adjacent to Ocean View Elementary School and Ocean View Park)

The T&S Commission and P&R Commission recommend removing five (5) redwood trees in this area, constructing an straight-line path, and installing five bulbouts for planting new trees. Of the 25 existing parking spaces in this area, the recommended alternative would remove 9 to 10 spaces, retaining 15 to 16. Both commissions recognized that the existing redwoods are considered to be in good health, and are important to the visual character of the street. However, because the other alternatives either removed most of the parking spaces, or created a curvature in the bicycle path, both commissions believed Alternative 1 would be the safest. In addition, the P&R Commission noted that new tree planting opportunities would allow for a more suitable street tree for this important entry point into the city. Finally, the Commission noted the existence of the cluster of redwoods at entrance to Ocean View Park and on the USDA property.

Environmental Review

Action by the Council to approve this concept plan will result in a project description on which an environmental review will be conducted. The cost of preparing the environmental document is included under the current grant.

Estimated Construction Costs and Phasing

Preliminary cost estimates for any of the proposed alternatives for the path range from \$1.7 to \$2.0 million in 2008 dollars, making this project difficult to fund by one granting

agency. Thus, staff divided the project into 3 construction phases in order to make it more viable for grant funding.

Phase I includes construction of Segments I and II, which involves extension of the Marin Avenue bicycle lanes from Cornell Avenue to the intersection of Marin and San Pablo Avenue; construction of a bicycle and pedestrian path along the south side of Marin Avenue up to the intersection of Jackson and Buchanan Streets; and, extension of the westbound bicycle lane along the north side of Marin and Buchanan to the Bridge Overcrossing.

Because of the proximity of the Buchanan Bicycle Path project, and an application for a mixed-use project at University Village, the consultant designed an exclusive right turn lane along eastbound Marin Avenue at the intersection with San Pablo Avenue as part of the 35% plans for the Buchanan Path project. This right turn lane proposal was designed in anticipation of a possible mitigation measure for the mixed-use project. The draft environmental impact report for the mixed-use project, now available for review, includes a mitigation measure requiring that the applicant install the right turn lane. The right turn lane will require additional right-of-way from the University of California, which is currently reviewing the plans for the right turn lane.

Phase II of the Buchanan Path project construction includes building the path from the Buchanan/Jackson intersection to the intersection with Pierce Street. Phase III includes implementation of a traffic signal at Pierce Street and construction of the path to the Buchanan Bridge Overcrossing. The proposal also includes closure of the Buchanan Street spur leading to Cleveland Avenue, so that bicycle and pedestrian traffic does not compete with vehicular traffic trying to access Cleveland from Buchanan Street. Staff suggests that Phases II and III be built together, or that Phase III be built before Phase II because it includes the traffic signal that would provide pedestrians and bicyclists with adequate protection when crossing Buchanan Street.

Grant Opportunities

Recently, a call for projects was issued by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) for the Safe Routes to Transit program (SR2T). The SR2T program is one of the programs funded by Regional Measure 2, the extra dollar on state-owned bridges. Staff is recommending Council approval to submit an application for construction of Segments I and II (Phase I) of the Buchanan Bicycle and Pedestrian Path by approving Resolution No. 09-37. The amount being requested is \$500,000, which is the maximum amount that a single agency can request.

In addition to this project, the City is working on another project that overlaps with the Buchanan Path. It is the traffic signal modification at Buchanan and Jackson, which is being funded by a Safe Routes to School grant. The Council had the opportunity to authorize the City Administrator to enter into a design agreement with DMJM Harris, and plans are being prepared for a new traffic signal with bidirectional protected left turns, speed feedback solar signs and enhancements to the route to Ocean View School “walking shed”. Construction of this project is anticipated in the winter of 2009. Staff

will return to the Council for an authorization to go out for bids on this project.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT

When the project is complete, it will provide a sustainable mode of transportation for Albany residents and visitors alike. It will facilitate an increase in bicycle usage by improving safety at one of the most congested intersections in the City. It will help the City achieve the goal established by the Council in 2007 of reducing the carbon footprint to 25% below 2004 levels by the year 2020.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Approving a design alternative and completion of environmental work is fully funded by the ACTIA grant and its corresponding local match, which includes Measure F and TDA funds.

City staff is preparing an application for the SR2T grant program, which does not require a match. However, projects with additional financial resources score higher. The estimated construction costs for Segments I and II is \$639,000. The City is requesting \$500,000 from the SR2T program for the construction of the two segments. An additional local match of \$139,000 is required for project completion. Staff is recommending using the TDA funds that the City receives annually and Measure F monies previously allocated to Phase II of the Marin Avenue Reconfiguration as local match for this project.

Attachments:

Drawings 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 – Design Alternatives
Attachment A – Description Project Alternatives by Segment
Attachment B – Arborist Report
Resolution No. 09-37 – Support for SR2T grant application