Agenda Report

March 24, 2014

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council

FROM: Department of Transportation

SUBJECT: **PLAYHOUSE DISTRICT COLORADO BOULEVARD INITIATIVE**

RECOMMENDATION:

This item is presented for information only.

BACKGROUND:

Following a presentation by Fred Kent of Project for Public Spaces (PPS) at the annual meeting of the Playhouse District Association (PDA) in April 2012, members of the PDA began looking for initiatives that would embrace PPS's eleven principles for creating great community places, particularly the concepts of *have a vision* and *lighter, quicker, cheaper.* One of the initiatives that surfaced was a pilot project for parklets on the north side of Colorado Boulevard in the block between Oakland and Madison Avenues.

A parklet is a temporary sidewalk extension into the roadway. The installations typically create additional pedestrian-oriented public space by transforming space allocated to vehicle parking into an expanded sidewalk area with seating, landscaping and other amenities that are open to the public. Parklets had previously seen limited deployment in Pasadena during PARK(ing) Day, an annual event in September that advocates for the creation of temporary parks in curb parking spaces (see http://parkingday.org/).

In 2012, parklets were not in wide use in Southern California, but were gaining acceptance in San Francisco and Oakland, California. The Department of Transportation was working at that time with Community Design + Architecture (CD+A) on Pasadena's Context-based Street Plan (now titled the Complete Streets Plan), which allowed the City to take advantage of CD+A's experience with San Francisco's *Better Streets* program by commissioning a brief analysis of parklet deployment in San Francisco and what parklets in Pasadena might mean. The Department of Transportation asked for this analysis to determine how parklets might fit into Pasadena's Complete Streets planning, particularly from the standpoint of improving the pedestrian crossing of Colorado Boulevard. CD+A delivered the analysis and two Sketch-up models of parklets in June 2012. That report is provided as an attachment. The information in the report provided a robust definition of issues that guided

subsequent discussions with the PDA. Those discussions were also assisted by an analysis of parklets prepared by UCLA in September 2012 (see http://www.its.ucla.edu/research/parklettoolkit.pdf).

The PDA continued to pursue the parklet concept and formed a subcommittee to explore the initiative in 2012. The Department of Transportation met periodically with that subcommittee to both understand the directions that the subcommittee wanted to go and to provide technical support related to transportation issues. The Department of Transportation is interested in the PDA initiative because it provides an alternative model for improving pedestrian conditions, including the crossings of Colorado Boulevard, in this portion of the Central District.

The PDA subcommittee brought the current concept for parklets to the PDA Board in late 2012 and received Board approval to proceed with the parklet concept in January 2013. The PDA Parklet concept puts forward a program that relies upon private or non-profit funding for the parklets and seeks to use the PDA Business Improvement District as a mechanism to ensure uniform maintenance and operation.

Following the PDA Board action, the subcommittee expanded to form work groups to address the following areas: locations, design, construction, maintenance, regulatory, financial models, funding and marketing. In mid-2013, the PDA initiative had gained adequate detail to show that not only would the City need to have a role in regulating how the parklets are placed and used, but that the City would need to address the initiative's plan to reconfigure Colorado Boulevard to accommodate the proposed parklets. As a consequence, staff from the City Manager's Office, Planning and Community Development Department, City Attorney's Office and the Public Works Department joined the Transportation Department with assessing the feasibility of the parklets concept and determining what role the City would play if the initiative advances.

PARKLET CONCEPT

The initiative developed by the PDA involves two components, the first of which is a series of parklets at selected locations on Colorado Boulevard between Los Robles and Hudson Avenues. The parklets would be temporary platforms designed to City standards and removable so as not to interfere with the Rose Parade. Since the parklets would use curb parking space, which has traditionally been a scarce commodity in the Playhouse District, the PDA elected to forward a configuration for parking that would change the existing parallel parking to angled parking, which would increase the supply of curb parking in these blocks even with space given over to parklets. The change to angled parking is the second component of the initiative since it would require reconfiguration of Colorado Boulevard from a five-lane roadway to a three-lane roadway to make room for the added dimension of angled parking.

In the interest of providing for the continued use of Colorado Boulevard as a main thoroughfare through Pasadena, the suggestion was made to use reverse-angled parking rather than head-in angled parking. Deployments around the US have shown

that the effect of reverse-angled parking on traffic flow is similar to that imposed by parallel parking with the added benefit that the improved driver's view of the roadway results in easier entry into traffic and fewer conflicts with transit or bicycles.

CURRENT STATUS

The PDA working groups have continued to evaluate the following aspects of parklets:

- Locations – City staff has provided mapping of utility locations, traffic control requirements and other constraints to parklet placement to the PDA group. That group has identified a series of locations that could accommodate a parklet.
- Design/Construction/Maintenance – the PDA working with City staff has developed an RFP for design services to be used to select Architects/Engineers to develop a uniform design guideline that can be used to test materials, portability, costs, design aesthetics and safety appurtenances.
- Regulatory – this group is largely City staff and is identifying the pertinent City requirements that would apply to the parklets with regards to what permits might be necessary (sidewalk dining, curb use, etc.), whether sponsorship and/or advertising would be allowable (regulated by the Zoning Code), what the status of the parklets as public space would be, whether environmental clearance is needed, would the parklets be subject to review by the Design Commission and other areas concerning approval and monitoring while in operation.
- Financial models/funding and Marketing – the PDA has been conducting outreach to assess interest in and support for the parklets and has been exploring funding concepts.

From a feasibility standpoint, the Transportation Department has been evaluating the potential effects of the proposed angled parking on Colorado Boulevard using a traffic simulation model. This analysis evaluated the potential level of traffic diversion that might occur if a lane in each direction is removed from Colorado Boulevard between Hudson and Los Robles Avenues and has looked at intersections to determine how operations might be affected with fewer lanes on Colorado Boulevard and potentially more traffic on Green and Union Streets.

Traffic volumes on Colorado Boulevard in the Playhouse District follow a pattern of low late night volumes that begin around 7:00 AM to build to an initial peak at noon and then continue to build to an evening peak until 5:00 PM, after which time volumes decline steadily into the late night hours. Analysis of this volume pattern indicates that the evening peak hour is the highest hour of the day for traffic for traffic on Colorado Boulevard in this part of Pasadena. Figure 1 illustrates the volume pattern on Colorado Boulevard for current conditions.

A simulation model was prepared using the evening peak hour turning movement volumes at intersections between Los Robles Avenue and Mentor Avenue along Colorado Boulevard, Union Street and Green Street. Current traffic signal timings were

entered in the model and the model was validated to existing conditions. Auto Level of Service (LOS) was calculated for all of the signalized intersections in the network and conditions were found to be operating in LOS C or better conditions throughout.

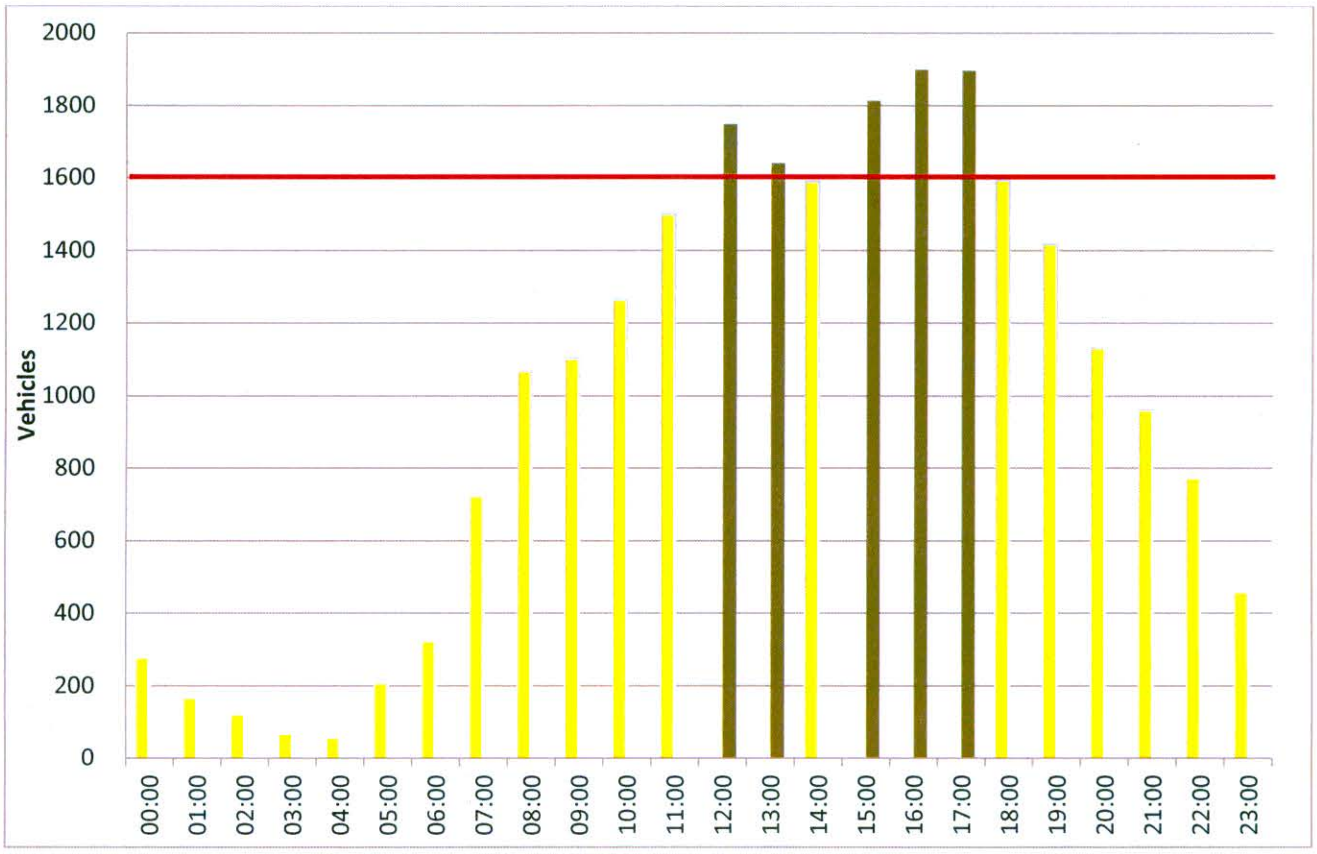

Figure 1: Colorado Blvd between Los Robles Ave & Lake Ave – 24-hour Street Segment Traffic Count

The simulation model was adjusted to replicate the loss of one traffic lane on Colorado Boulevard and several scenarios were modeled to simulate how traffic might adapt to the reduced cross section on Colorado Boulevard by diverting to Green and Union Streets. The model, which simulates traffic operations and queuing, was used to determine how much traffic diversion would result before conditions on Colorado Boulevard would return to a level equivalent to existing conditions.

The simulation indicates that evening peak period conditions would be maintained at or near existing levels on Colorado Boulevard if roughly ten percent of the existing traffic volumes on Colorado Boulevard were to divert to Union and Green Streets. This level of diversion is approximately 200 vehicles per hour (or about 100 vehicles per hour per direction). The diverted traffic would represent about a one percent increase in the traffic volume on Union and Green Streets, which carry 9,000 and 10,000 vehicles per day between Los Robles Avenue and Lake Avenue.

The peak hour findings are important when considering the daily traffic volumes for Colorado Boulevard. The peak hour findings indicate that for hours of the day that have 1,600 vehicles per hour or less, traffic operations would largely be unaffected by the loss of a traffic lane in each direction on Colorado Boulevard. As shown by in Figure 3, there are currently five hours in the afternoon when some traffic diversion would be expected to occur and that for the other 19 hours of the day, traffic would function much as it does today if the angled parking initiative were to be implemented.

The steps necessary to physically implement the reconfiguration of Colorado Boulevard would involve sandblasting to remove existing pavement markings and striping to place new pavement markings over the five block affected area. Because the reconfigured roadway would not affect the placement of the center three lanes (the left turn lane and the inside travel lane in each direction, little adjustment would be required in the traffic signal hardware or detector infrastructure. Changes to traffic signage and additional signage to direct motorists in the use of reverse angled parking would need to be installed. Preliminary estimates of costs to accomplish these changes are on the order of $75,000. Similar costs would be needed to revert to the current striping pattern if the angled parking were to be implemented and later removed.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

The initiative on Colorado Boulevard proposed by the PDA supports the City Council strategic planning goals to:

- Improve mobility and accessibility throughout the City.
- Support and promote the quality of life and local economy.

The proposal supports the adopted Mobility Element Goals to:

- Support streetscape amenities
- Protected sidewalks and pedestrian zone
- Measures to protect pedestrians

The initiative is also consistent with the following policies included in the Draft Mobility Element:

- Streets should reflect individual neighborhood character and needs, and support healthy activities such as walking and bicycling.
- Continue investing in pedestrian improvements to create safe and comfortable environment for walking. Improvements such as sidewalk repairs, providing more shade and street furniture.
- Integrate pedestrian improvements in traffic management programs to help reduce traffic noise, volumes and speeds that make it unpleasant and unsafe to walk.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

The CEQA requirements for this initiative are being evaluated. While the traffic analysis indicates that it is possible for the modified configuration of Colorado Boulevard to function much as it does today, it is possible that some level of analysis may be necessary to satisfy CEQA should this initiative proceed to implementation.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Funding for the roadway change portion of this initiative has not yet been identified.

A recent project to install angled parking on Holly Street was accomplished with Old Pasadena Parking Meter District funds since Title 10 of the Pasadena Municipal Code allows "revenues from the parking meters within the parking meter zone [to be used] for street and parking related expenditures which regulate and control traffic and parking within the parking meter zone and its surrounding area."

A recent project to install reverse angled parking on Vista Street was accomplished with Transportation Department General Fund allocation (since the location was not within a parking meter district).

Accordingly, existing fund balance in the Playhouse Parking Meter District Fund could be one source of funds for this roadway change. Other sources of funds for which this roadway change would be eligible are Gas Tax, Transportation Sales Tax (Measure R) and/or General Fund.

Respectfully submitted,

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Approved by:

MICHAEL J. BECK
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Attachment: Pasadena Complete Streets (CD+A No. 1206): Parklets Research Findings