

Agenda Report

October 26, 2020

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Department of Transportation
SUBJECT: ST. JOHN CAPACITY ENHANCEMENT PROJECT CONSISTENCY WITH GENERAL PLAN

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the City Council:

1. Find that the proposed action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15061 (b)(3) (General Rule); and
2. Find that the St. John Capacity Enhancement Project is Consistent with the General Plan.

PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On May 27, 2020, City staff presented the St. John Capacity Enhancement Project to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission was unable to achieve a majority vote on consistency of the St. John Capacity Enhancement project with the General Plan but recommended that the City proceed with developing the project with vigorous public outreach that solicits and includes the concerns of the affected stakeholders, balances vehicle mobility and pedestrian safety, consciously accounts for the needs of the surrounding land use, and to the extent technically feasible and ultimately found to benefit the project, include safety elements identified in a May 22, 2019 letter to the Planning Commission from the Head of Sequoyah School.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The St. John Capacity Enhancement Project was awarded \$2,600,000 in Measure R Mobility Improvement Project funding by the Metro Board on September 26, 2019, meeting the fundamental criteria of alleviating traffic congestion while also enhancing the multimodal network through targeted improvements aimed at increasing pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, enhancing pedestrian and bicyclist safety, and providing accessibility for all users. On April 20, 2020, City Council approved the addition of the St. John Capacity Enhancement Project to the FY 2020 – 2024 Capital Improvement Program and

authorized the City Manager to enter into a funding agreements with Metro for the project.

Due to the Covid-19 emergency situation, this new project was not previously presented to the Planning Commission as is normally the process. By law the Planning Commission must review all new recommended CIP projects for General Plan consistency. Given this, as a one-time provision, the City Council adopted the recommended projects and appropriations prior to Planning Commission's review. As identified in the April 20, 2020 Agenda Report, the projects would not become active until they have been presented to the Planning Commission and the Commission has deemed them consistent with the General Plan.

On May 27, 2020, City staff presented the St. John Capacity Enhancement Project to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission was unable to achieve a majority vote on consistency of the St. John Capacity Enhancement project with the General Plan but recommended that the City proceed with developing the project with vigorous public outreach that solicits and includes the concerns of the affected stakeholders, balances vehicle mobility and pedestrian safety, consciously accounts for the needs of the surrounding land use, and to the extent technically feasible and ultimately found to benefit the project, include safety elements identified in a May 22, 2019 letter to the Planning Commission from the Head of Sequoyah School.

Following meetings with representatives from Sequoyah School and leadership from the Sunrise Sequoyah student group, the City has addressed their concerns for balancing vehicle mobility and pedestrian safety. The proposed design incorporates all of the technically feasible components that benefit the project as described in the Background section below. As such, City staff is recommending that City Council find that the St. John Capacity Enhancement Project is consistent with the General Plan as described in the Council Policy Consideration section of this Agenda Report.

BACKGROUND:

On May 25, 2017, the Metro Board voted to adopt the Transportation System Management/Transportation Demand Management (TSM/TDM) Alternative as the Locally Preferred Alternative for the SR-710 North Project, allocate \$105 million in remaining Measure R funds to the development and implementation of the projects listed in the TSM/TDM Alternative, and allocate the remaining Measure R and other funding dedicated to the SR-710 North Mobility Improvement Projects (previously referred to as Early Action Projects) to alleviate traffic congestion on local arterials in the SR-710 N corridor.

The City of Pasadena retained the services of Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates, in September of 2017, to assist the City identify projects that met the funding criteria and help facilitate coordination with neighboring cities to ensure that projects submitted to Metro for Measure R funds are coordinated regionally. Pasadena contacted the City of Alhambra and the City of South Pasadena to develop a comprehensive approach towards maximizing the benefits of the available funding. Nelson/Nygaard provided a report outlining the City's mobility priorities and the list of projects for the Pasadena's consideration. The initial list of projects were presented to the Pasadena Transportation

Advisory Commission at its October 26, 2017 meeting to obtain feedback prior to submitting for City Council approval. On January 29, 2018, Pasadena City Council approved the following projects for funding consideration:

- Gold Line Grade Separation at California Boulevard;
- Modifications to the I-210 stub freeway access ramps to remove access to/from California Boulevard and make operational improvements to the access ramps at Del Mar Boulevard;
- Implement traffic calming/Complete Streets Programs for St. John Avenue/Pasadena Avenue/South Orange Grove Boulevard, Allen Avenue, Hill Street and Avenue 64;
- Implement Intelligent Transportation Systems projects that include performance monitoring and analytics for intersections near to the Gold Line crossings, automated data collection for pedestrians and bicycles, high resolution traffic signal data collection/broadcasting, Walnut Street corridor signal upgrades and expansion of the I-210 Connected Corridor project;
- Transit improvements that include rapid bus enhancements in the Fair Oaks/Atlantic and Rosemead corridors, Rose Bowl shuttles and college/university transit passes;
- Bicycle improvements, including unfunded projects identified in the adopted Bicycle Transportation Action Plan, the Arroyo Link and Bike Share expansion; and

On November 14, 2018, the Metro Board approved the first round of Mobility Improvement Projects for funding. The Gold Line Grade Separation at California Boulevard was awarded \$105,000,000 and was the only project funded in the City of Pasadena.

On September 26, 2019, the Metro Board approved funding for Mobility Improvement Projects Round 2. The five projects listed below were approved for funding by Metro:

- A. St. John Capacity Enhancement Project - \$2,600,000
- B. Fair Oaks Avenue/ Bellevue Drive Signalized Intersection Project - \$850,000
- C. ITS Projects and Traffic Flow Improvements - \$3,800,000
- D. Walnut Street Corridor Signal Improvement Project - \$4,100,000
- E. Gold Line Grade Separation at California Boulevard - \$230,500,000 (Round 1 and 2 funding allocation)

The five projects approved by the Metro Board for funding meet the criteria of alleviating traffic congestion while also enhancing the multimodal network through targeted improvements aimed at increasing pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, enhancing pedestrian and bicyclist safety, and providing accessibility for all users.

On April 20, 2020, City Council approved the addition of the five projects listed above to the FY 2020 – 2024 Capital Improvement Program. At that meeting, City Council also authorized the City Manager to enter into funding agreements with Metro for the following four projects:

- A. St. John Capacity Enhancement Project - \$2,600,000
- B. Fair Oaks Avenue/ Bellevue Drive Signalized Intersection Project - \$850,000
- C. ITS Projects and Traffic Flow Improvements - \$3,800,000
- D. Walnut Street Corridor Signal Improvement Project - \$4,100,000

However, due to the Covid-19 emergency situation, these new projects were not previously presented to the Planning Commission as is normally the process. By law the Planning Commission must review all new recommended CIP projects for General Plan consistency. Given this, as a one-time provision, the City Council adopted the recommended projects and appropriations prior to Planning Commission's review. As identified in the April 20, 2020 Agenda Report, the projects would not become active until they have been presented to the Planning Commission and the Commission has deemed them consistent with the General Plan.

On May 27, 2020, City staff presented the four projects identified as A-D above to the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission approved (7-1) a recommendation to City Council that the Walnut Street Corridor Signal Improvements, the Intelligent Transportation System Projects, and Traffic Flow Improvements within the SR-710 Affected Corridors are consistent with the City of Pasadena's General Plan.

The Planning Commission, however, was unable to achieve a majority vote on consistency of the St. John Capacity Enhancement project with the General Plan. At that meeting Planning Commission recommended (7-1) that:

"the City proceed with developing the project with vigorous public outreach that solicits and includes the concerns of the affected stakeholders, balances vehicle mobility and pedestrian safety, consciously accounts for the needs of the surrounding land use, and to the extent technically feasible and ultimately found to benefit the project, includes the following elements from the Head of Sequoyah School:

- Installation of two red turn arrows in the traffic light to stop cars from turning when pedestrians are in the crosswalks; especially at dual turn lanes
- Installation of signs which alert drivers to a SCHOOL ZONE - 25 MPH
- A change of timing to allow for leading pedestrian interval at all crosswalks
- A curb extension on the northwest corner of California Boulevard and Pasadena Avenue (where there is currently roadway striping and not a drive lane) to shorten the crosswalk crossing time. This would also allow for consolidation of the light and electric poles that block the pedestrian right of way
- Improvement of the substandard sidewalk along California Boulevard between St. John and Pasadena Avenues"

In August 2020, City staff met with representatives from Sequoyah School to further discuss the conceptual design for the proposed safety enhancements and address the items listed above. With the exception of the leading pedestrian interval for the crosswalk on the north leg of the intersection of Pasadena Avenue and California Boulevard (which will no longer be required since the "WALK" and flashing "DON'T WALK" indications for pedestrians at this crossing do not have a conflicting vehicular movement), all of the other elements identified above are included in the project design and will be

implemented, contingent on final cost estimates and Caltrans approval. As the project develops through the design phase, City staff will continue to meet with representatives from Sequoyah School to obtain feedback and finalize design details.

In September 2020, City staff also met with representatives from the Sunrise Sequoyah student group to address their safety concerns regarding the project. Current Sunrise Sequoyah student leadership did not identify any additional safety concerns about the project. The past hub coordinator for Sunrise Sequoyah did however raise concerns of projects like this on the environment and greenhouse gas emissions. Through the design phase of the project, the Transportation Department will continue outreach to adjacent stakeholders, inviting community input and providing at least two virtual workshops. As described in the project description approved by City Council for inclusion in the FY 2020 – 2024 CIP on April 20, 2020, this project provides for modifications to the intersections of the I-210 eastbound off ramp at California Boulevard, and westbound California Boulevard at the Pasadena Avenue northbound I-210 on ramp to provide dual southbound left turn movements and dual right turn movements which require roadway striping and reconfiguring lanes. Other work will include: resurface a portion of California Boulevard to accommodate roadway striping changes; reconstruct and widen the sidewalk on the north side of California Boulevard to meet current standards, and modify traffic signals and associated hardware at the intersection of Pasadena Avenue/California Boulevard, and the southbound I-210 off ramp at Californian Boulevard. This project will optimize traffic operations and improve mobility. See Attachment A for CIP project sheet.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

The proposed action is consistent with the goals of the General Plan Mobility Element and also the goals of the Strategic Plan including “Improve, Maintain and Enhance Public Facilities and Infrastructure, Improve Mobility and Accessibility throughout the City, and Support and Promote the Quality of Life and Local Economy.” The projects selected for Measure R funding will support the Department of Transportation in implementing the following objectives of the Mobility Element.

- Enhance Livability
- Encourage walking, biking, and other alternatives to motor vehicles.

Specifically, this project addresses three policies of the Mobility Element:

- Policy 1.7 Design streets to achieve safe interaction for all modes of travel particularly for pedestrians and bicycle users.
- Policy 1.11 Design Streets to reflect the mobility needs of the adjacent land use context to support healthy activities such as walking and bicycling
- Policy 1.30 Pursue funding opportunities such as grants, impact fees, or fair share contributions from development to implement programs and projects that contribute to the City’s Mobility Element objectives.

Policy 2.16 City of Pasadena will work with Caltrans to evaluate access management needs and strategies to better manage traffic operations on arterial streets located within close proximity of freeway on/off-ramps in an effort to reduce traffic backups and frictions at Caltrans ramp signals.

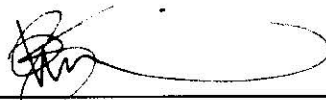
ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

The City's Environmental Administrator has determined that this action is categorically exempt under the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") Guidelines in Section 15061 (b) (3), the General Rule. The receipt of Measure R MIP funding does not result in a significant effect on the environment.

FISCAL IMPACT:


On April 20, 2020 City Council authorized the City Manager to execute agreements associated with the receipt of Measure R Mobility Improvement Projects, including the St. John Capacity Enhancement Project. City Council also approved the addition of the St. John Capacity Enhancement Project to the FY 2020 CIP budget and appropriated \$2,600,000 in Measure R Mobility Improvement Program Grant funds to this project. There is no additional fiscal impact associated with this action.

Respectfully submitted,



LAURA CORNEJO
Director
Department of Transportation

Prepared by:



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Approved by:



Steve Mermell
City Manager

Attachment:

Attachment A – St. John Capacity Enhancement (75120) CIP Project Sheet