



Published July 5th, 2023

## Staff provides Lafayette council with requested input for multi-use pathway

By Lou Fancher

Engineering Services Manager Matt Luttrupp reminded city council members at the June 26 meeting that they had requested updated cost estimates for preliminary and final designs for a multi-use pathway proposed for the east side of Pleasant Hill Road. The preliminary design and proposed work was planned in addition to an existing multi-use pathway project already being completed in the center median of Pleasant Hill Road, between Deer Hill Road and Mt. Diablo Boulevard.

Several members of the Lafayette community had requested that options to improve the quality and safety of the area receive further attention, prompting city staff to request new information from the project's design consultant firm, Kittelson and Associates. Luttrupp said the proposed items and costs received by staff included the following: 1) Prepare a strip map concept drawing for east side multi-user pathway with summary of pros/cons and potential impacts. (Approximate cost \$17,000); 2) Provide a strip map concept drawing for west side multi-user pathway with summary of pros/cons and potential impacts. (\$17,000); 3) Provide a concept sketch for signalized ramp terminals on the east side (\$3,500), a traffic analysis for signalized ramps (\$4,500) and design concept for signalized ramps (\$10,000); and 4) Develop full design plans, specifications and an estimate for east or west side design?(\$110,000).

Luttrupp said the current center median alternative design assumes roadway configuration would not change. There would be no additional vehicle delays unless pedestrian and cyclist use at signaled intersections is heavy. Staff reached out to the Terraces project developer to obtain more right of way information. Those discussions led staff to understand that no additional right of way was needed beyond what has already been approved, provided the bike lane on the southbound side of Pleasant Hill Road is eliminated or the buffers (the shoulders) between the center pathway and the concrete barrier are reduced, or the buffers between vehicles and the K-rail concrete barriers are reduced from 2 feet to 1 foot in width. "You can kind of mix and match," he said. The details and costs, depending on the council's choice, would be worked out as the final designs for a center multi-use pathway are completed.

Staff was also asked to consider improvements to the safety of the east side sidewalk along Pleasant Hill Road as part of the center median improvement effort. Luttrupp said the concern he heard expressed most often was the close proximity of vehicles to pedestrians. Eliminating the bike lane would shift vehicles away from pedestrians by creating a buffer that could be designed as a landscape buffer or with striping, but would not increase the safety of people traveling on foot. He suggested the buffer be designed as a landscape element because there are funds to accommodate such a decision. South of Acalanes, where the buffer is four or two feet wide, he said is not optimum and "is skinny," but cautioned it might be costly if extensively altered. "Any time you're touching curbs, gutters and sidewalks, the costs go up considerably," he said. Again, if a decision were to be made to approve either option, the associated details and costs would be studied by the project design team and incorporated into a future center pathway design. He emphasized that the primary goal of the pathway project is to reduce conflicts and improve safety between pedestrians, cyclists, and vehicles at the freeway interchange. Staff said the center median design eliminates potential conflicts at the on and off ramps to Highway 24 and addresses residents' concerns about the safety of the signalized intersections on both ends. While none of the designs eliminate the need for pedestrians and cyclists to cross at the intersections, full traffic signaling increases the safety considerably.

The designs are unfunded and would require additional resources to be identified. Because an east side path does not eliminate conflicts between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles at the freeway on and off ramps, and additional design work is unfunded, he said staff does not recommend allocating reserve funds to consider a design alternative to the existing proposed center multi-use pathway.

Council Member Susan Candell asked about how the current design impacts cyclist traffic. Luttrupp said the Terraces bike path would terminate at the freeway on-ramp. The proposed signalized lights safety percentages were not numbers Luttrupp could quantify, but pointed out that the signals are \$750,000 each and because they would be on Caltrans property, would need their approval, which is highly unlikely. He said the "road warrior" cyclists would not be compelled to use the center median because they travel at the rate of vehicle traffic, but he envisions commuters, kids going to school, and casual bike riders would use it most often.

Council members asked for details about reducing the width of the buffers, cost proposals, the usefulness of more discussion with Caltrans and invited public comment on the project.

Public comment included concern about crashes at the intersections, arguments and evidence supporting the belief that the median strip would be used primarily by cyclists, not pedestrians, and suggestions that funding for the project was perceived as remaining unclear. While voicing appreciation that the council is listening to residents' input, several speakers at the meeting said they continue to have reservations about the pathway plans and staff recommendations.

Council addressed the public's comments, discussed the pros and cons raised about safety, usage, and design features, and focused in the final moments largely on the budgetary decisions involved and when those discussions might occur. They directed staff to hold conversations with Caltrans before moving forward on any of the options presented.

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