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Lafayette's Transportation Circulation Commission presents long list of accomplishments

By Lou Fancher

Presenting to city council the Transportation Circulation Commission's highlighted 2023 accomplishments and 2024 work plan, committee chair Bart Carr on Feb. 12 said, "Probably our biggest accomplishment in the year was the Local Road Safety Plan, which is really the centerpiece action supporting our Vision Zero approach to traffic safety."

Commissioners Greg Brown and Stella Wotherspoon had volunteered to sit on the staff's Local Road Safety Plan task force, providing expertise prior to the plan being reviewed and discussed at two TCC meetings. The plan received updates and was adopted by the council in August 2023. Carr emphasized Wotherspoon's considerable contribution of time to the effort and thanked her for also participating in General Plan Advisory Committee activities and providing monthly verbal updates to the commission.

Among initiatives the TCC focused on in 2023 was the local zoning included in the Engineering and Traffic Survey conducted last year that allowed the city to reduce speeds by five mph on select high volume roads in Lafayette. The Burton Valley Elementary Traffic Calming Pilot Project was created by a task force of 18 residents and reached its conclusion in 2023. Carr said the task force's work had resulted in a "great plan" that is currently in use. Information about the traffic calming project is available for residents to view at the city's website. Additionally, the TCC provided updates to a guidebook online where new, streamlined information and formatting makes the program's features more useful for residents in other neighborhoods interested in implementing similar traffic calming measures.

The TCC last year continued to prioritize and oversee all Lafayette school safety programs, including those at private schools. An initiative that started in 2021 to make roadways safer, especially for parents, caretakers, and kids making their way to schools, had the Commission reviewing and evaluating Rapid Implementation Plans for Schools reports prepared by Toole Design Group in 2022. Recommendations for priority measures to be implemented around each school were provided and TCC commissioners spent time on-the-ground to better identify ongoing safety issues and offer recommended solutions. Carr said work on near- and medium-term school safety projects begun in 2022 will continue in 2024. He made specific note of traffic calming measures put into place around Burton Valley School that have received "an energetic response from residents" in relation to added speed humps, high-visibility lane striping, and improved signage, among other measures taken.

Concluding his comments on achievements in 2023, Carr said the council's approval in January in response to staff's request to move in a more efficient, timely manner to capitalize on grant opportunities for projects that are strong matches for county and state funding will be helpful. Grant announcements often arrive with tight deadlines and the flexibility and pre-approval to enter the application process will help the TCC-and the city-to not lose opportunities to other regions.

Outlining the 2024 work program and priorities, Carr referred to a matrix the committee has prepared in a staff report, which includes projects and programs the commissioners will be addressing throughout the year, viewable on the city's website. Instead of reviewing the details, Carr provided what he called a "high flyover" of the most important elements, beginning with the Connecting Lafayette Project. The Downtown Pathways and Schools Safety Project focuses around Stanley Middle School and Lafayette Elementary. "What we want to do is improve the connections for youths, pedestrians, parents, families, and cyclists in that area," Carr said.

Improvements to pathway connections to Moraga Trail and the downtown core, he said, would increase the safety of the area for anyone walking or biking. "The project also includes an expanded drop-off location on St. Mary's Road for drivers choosing to drop school children off in that location." He said the commissioners would look closely at speeds on roads adjacent to local schools to see if new issues need to be addressed in order to support the City's efforts to reduce speed limits in school zones via the School Zone Speed Limit Study.

Transportation Program Manager Patrick Golier's staff report lists the TCC's continued review and input related to two Pleasant Hill Road Pathway projects (center-median and east side alignment) and the design for the Pedestrian Pathway Near Springhill School as part of the 2024 work plan. These projects are in different stages of planning, design, and public engagement, and the commission expects to bring comments to the council in the coming months. Additionally, the TCC will be working on three larger projects related to improving multi-modal travel in Lafayette's downtown: the Downtown Parking Management Planning Study, an update to General Plan's Circulation Element, and the Mt. Diablo Boulevard Corridor Plan.

Responding with input regarding the EBMUD Aqueduct Pathway that currently constitutes a short length on the western side of the city, Carr said the TCC would like to see it expand -- a measure that would require EBMUD to obtain added funding. Similarly, participating in the Contra Costa Transportation Authority-led multi-jurisdictional Olympic Boulevard Corridor Plan (Lafayette-Moraga Trail to Iron Horse Trail) is dependent on grant funding.

Speaking on a most general topic, transparency, members of the commission expressed that they are "wrestling" with the subject and aiming to find ways to make their processes and projects more available to the public. They thanked residents and others who have provided input because it alerts them to the highest concerns and exceptions of the community they serve. Questions from the council and two public comments made clear that clarification and updates about the Mt. Diablo Boulevard Corridor Plan and the Downtown

Parking Management Study are priority interests and more transparency would be welcome.
The full staff report and 2024 Transportation Work Plan can be found at
https://lafayette.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=3&clip_id=7115&meta_id=179462

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