



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item

22-0791

Agenda Date: 8/1/2022

REPORT TO COUNCIL

SUBJECT

Recommend to City Council the Selection of the Mary Avenue Underpass with Jughandle Option to be Defined as the Proposed Project for the Grade Separation of Crossing of the Caltrain Railroad Tracks for the Environmental Review

BACKGROUND

This item was originally agendized for the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC) meeting on July 21, 2022 (RTC No. 22-0628). Due to three recusals by Commissioners and one absence of a Commissioner, there was no quorum and this item was not heard. The Sunnyvale Avenue crossing location was heard and action taken. Therefore, this special meeting is being held to discuss and take action on the Mary Avenue crossing location item. See Report to Commission (RTC) No. 22-0628 for a detailed discussion of the project background and associated attachments.

EXISTING POLICY

General Plan, Chapter 3, Land Use and Transportation Element

The 2017 Land Use and Transportation Element (LUTE) of the Sunnyvale General Plan lists goals and policies that emphasize the need to provide an effective multimodal transportation system and providing options for healthy living.

Complete Streets Policy

The Complete Streets Policy was adopted by City Council on December 6, 2016, through Resolution No. 793-16 (RTC No. 16-0972) and amended on August 28, 2018, through Resolution No. 896-18 (RTC No. 18-0642). Through this policy, the City commits to creating and maintaining Complete Streets that provide safe, sustainable, integrated, efficient and convenient transportation systems that serve all categories of users and maintain sensitivity to local conditions.

Active Transportation Plan

The 2020 Sunnyvale Active Transportation Plan (ATP) includes the addition of bicycle facilities along these segments of Mary, Sunnyvale and Evelyn avenues as a recommendation within the Bicycle Plan.

Vision Zero Plan

Sunnyvale's Vision Zero Plan calls to reduce fatalities and serious injuries by 50 percent by 2029 and to continue improving traffic safety towards zero fatal and serious injury collisions in the ten years that follow. The plan is also a call to action to make Sunnyvale's streets safer, especially for people biking and walking.

Climate Action Plan

City Council adopted the Climate Action Plan (CAP) on May 20, 2014, which includes various

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strategies to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. This plan was updated in August 2019 as the Climate Action Playbook and includes six strategies (with related plays and moves) for accelerating the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Section 15004(b) of the CEQA Guidelines provides that CEQA compliance should be prepared “as early as feasible in the planning process to enable environmental considerations to influence project program and design and yet late enough to provide meaningful information for environmental assessment.” The action being considered merely defines the proposed Project for each Caltrain crossing location so that staff can proceed with the environmental review for the grade crossing separations. This action does not approve construction of the grade separations or any particular option, including the “No Project” alternative. Therefore, the present action is not itself a project that requires separate environmental review (CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3).)

DISCUSSION

This item was originally agendized for the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC) meeting on July 21, 2022 (RTC No. 22-0628) but was not heard due to lack of quorum. See RTC No. 22-0628 for a detailed discussion of the project background and associated attachments.

FISCAL IMPACT

The current feasibility study phase is fully funded and the selection of preferred options will conclude this phase of work. Future phases of work will be partially funded through VTA 2016 Measure B Grade Separation Program funds. Local match funds will be required for the 2016 Measure B funding and additional funding will be required to complete the Environmental Review, Final Design and Construction phases. The selection of preferred options will inform the amount of funding required for those phases.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made by posting the Council agenda on the City's official-notice bulletin board outside City Hall, at the Sunnyvale Public Library, Senior Center, Community Center and in the Department of Public Safety Lobby. In addition, the agenda and report are available at the Sunnyvale Public Library, Office of the City Clerk, and on the City's website.

Additional public outreach has been performed through the following methods to inform the public of the project and of the community meetings:

- City Manager's Update on May 13, 2022
- Multiple email blasts to project subscriber list
- Placement of portable changeable electronic message boards to announce Community Meetings
- Informational booth at Art & Wine Festival 2022
- NextDoor posts
- Summer 2022 Horizon centerfold article
- Direct emails and letters to potentially impacted property and business owners
- Direct emails to local business groups, including the Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Business Association and the Moffett Park Business Group
- Direct emails to local public and private schools near the crossings
- Direct emails to local Home Owners Associations

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- Direct emails to neighborhood groups such as SNAIL Neighborhood Association, Washington Park Neighborhood Association and Sunnyvale West Neighborhood Association
- Direct emails to community interest groups such as Friends of Caltrain, Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition and Bike Sunnyvale
- Direct emails to local places of worship near the crossings
- Meetings with potentially impacted developers, property owners and business owners who wished to meet
- Meetings with Sunnyvale Downtown Association Board and Chamber of Commerce

ALTERNATIVES

1. Recommend to City Council the selection of the Mary Avenue Underpass option to be defined as the Proposed Project for the grade separation of the Mary Avenue crossing of the Caltrain railroad tracks for the Environmental Review
2. Recommend to City Council the selection of the Mary Avenue Underpass with Jughandle option to be defined as the Proposed Project for the grade separation of the Mary Avenue crossing of the Caltrain railroad tracks for the Environmental Review

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 2: Recommend to City Council the selection of the Mary Avenue Underpass with Jughandle option to be defined as the Proposed Project for the grade separation of the Mary Avenue crossing of the Caltrain railroad tracks for the Environmental Review

Staff recommends that the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission make a recommendation to the City Council that they select Alternative 2: the Mary Avenue Underpass with Jughandle option to be defined as the Proposed Project for the grade separation of the crossing of the Caltrain railroad tracks for the environmental review.

At the Mary Avenue crossing, the Underpass with Jughandle option has the following benefits:

- Improves safety by removing the railroad conflict with local traffic modes;
- Decreases noise from rail gates, bells and sounding of train horns;
- Reduces the volumes of vehicle traffic through each jughandle intersection compared to the full Mary-Evelyn avenues intersection;
- Reduces the overall average vehicular delay compared to both the “no build” and the Underpass options;
- Improves or maintains vehicular travel times for Mary Avenue compared to both the “no build” and the Underpass options;
- Decreases the number of points that bicyclists and pedestrians would need to cross vehicle lanes compared to the “no build” and Underpass options;
- Decreases the quantity and severity of private property impacts compared to the Underpass option;
- Decreases the number of private driveway modifications required compared to the Underpass option;
- Decreases the quantity and length of utility relocations required compared to the Underpass option;
- Has a lower anticipated construction duration compared to the Underpass option which would be less disruptive to the local community; and

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- Has a lower construction cost compared to the Underpass option.

Selecting a project to be the Proposed Project for the environmental review under CEQA for the Mary Avenue crossing will move the project forward as it will allow the environmental review to be completed. The project ultimately selected for grade separation construction by the City Council as part of environmental study approval may be different than the preferred alternative selected now for starting environmental review.

Prepared by: Angela Obeso, Principal Transportation Engineer
Reviewed by: Dennis Ng, Traffic and Transportation Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Link to June 21, 2022 Report to Commission 22-0628