



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item

21-0658

Agenda Date: 7/15/2021

REPORT TO BICYCLE AND PEDESTRIAN ADVISORY COMMISSION

SUBJECT

Recommend to City Council to Remove On-Street Parking for the Northbound Direction on Willow Avenue between Reed Avenue and Aster Avenue and to Install Bicycle Lanes on Both Sides of the Street Per the Active Transportation Plan

BACKGROUND

Willow Avenue is a posted 25 miles per hour north-south local collector street that connects Reed Avenue and the Lawrence Caltrain Station, providing direct pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular access to the train station. It is located within the Lawrence Station Area Plan area, and Willow Avenue terminates at the Lawrence Caltrain Station at the City of Sunnyvale/Santa Clara city limits, which then transitions into French Street within the City of Santa Clara. Willow Avenue has one travel lane in each direction and has on-street parking on both sides of the street for approximately 720 feet north of Reed Avenue; there is no on-street parking for the remainder of the street. There is currently no bicycle facility on Willow Avenue, bicyclists and vehicular traffic must share the travel lane.

Along the western side of Willow Avenue, there are multi-family residential units and a childcare facility; along the eastern side of Willow Avenue, there are several automobile repair shops, restaurants and a supermarket.

The City Council adopted the Lawrence Station Area Plan (LSAP) at its December 6, 2016 meeting (RTC No. 16-1108). In the adopted LSAP, Willow Avenue was identified as a key access route for pedestrians and bicyclists heading to and from the Lawrence Caltrain Station. The proposed improvements identified on Willow Avenue include filling in missing sidewalk gaps and installing a Class II Bicycle Lane on Willow Avenue between Reed Avenue and 350 feet north of Aster Avenue. Willow Avenue, with the improved pedestrian and bicycle facilities, will improve north-south connectivity through the LSAP area.

At the August 25, 2020 meeting, City Council adopted the Active Transportation Plan (ATP) (RTC No. 20-0249), where one of the main goals of the plan is to assist the City in creating a safe, connected, and efficient citywide walking and bicycling network. The proposed bicycle improvements on Willow Avenue include a Class IIB buffered bicycle lane on the section of Willow Avenue where there is existing on-street parking between Reed Avenue and 720 feet north of Reed Avenue; and a Class II bicycle lane on the section where there is currently no existing on-street parking. To implement a Class II bicycle lane or Class IIB buffered bicycle lane on the southern portion of Willow Avenue, on-street parking would need to be removed on at least one side of Willow Avenue.

For this project, the existing on-street parking along the commercial/retail land use side of northbound Willow Avenue is proposed to be removed as commercial/retail land uses were designed

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to have ample on-site parking for their respective land uses. The removal of on-street parking in the northbound direction and the proposed bicycle improvements as identified in the ATP are consistent with the Public Draft of Amended LSAP and Draft LSAP Sense of Place Plan, which are both currently being circulated for public review.

The City was awarded with a One Bay Area Grant-Cycle 2 (OBAG2) grant in the amount of \$500,000 with a required local match of \$132,911 to plan, design, and construct bicycle and pedestrian improvements within the Lawrence Station area. On February 25, 2020, the City Council awarded a contract to Siegfried Engineering, Inc. for the planning and design of the proposed improvements in Lawrence Station Area (RTC No. 19-1164). At this time, Siegfried Engineering, Inc. has completed preliminary design and staff has presented the design to the public along with a parking study for input on the parameters of the project.

Attachment 2 presents project limits and locations of where on-street parking spaces are proposed to be removed; Attachment 3 shows the existing and proposed cross sections on Willow Avenue.

The City Council is scheduled to consider this item on August 31, 2021.

EXISTING POLICY

Resolution No. 793-16 Complete Streets Policy (and Resolution No. 896-18 amending Resolution No. 793-16): the City wishes to improve its commitment to Complete Streets and desires that its streets form a comprehensive and integrated transportation network promoting safe, equitable, and convenient travel for all users while preserving flexibility, recognizing community context, and using the latest and best design guidelines and standards.

General Plan Chapter 3 Land Use and Transportation:

- **Goal LT-3:** An Effective Multimodal Transportation System - Offer the community a variety of transportation modes for local travel that are also integrated with the regional transportation system and land use pattern. Favor accommodation of alternative modes to the automobile as a means to enhance efficient transit use, bicycling, and walking and corresponding benefits to the environment, person-throughput, and qualitative improvements to the transportation system environment.
- **Policy LT-3.8:** Prioritize safe accommodation for all transportation users over non-transport uses. As city streets are public spaces dedicated to the movement of vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians, facilities that meet minimum appropriate safety standards for transport uses shall be considered before non-transport uses are considered.
- **Policy LT-3.9:** As parking is the temporary storage of transportation vehicles do not consider parking a transport use of public streets.
- **Policy LT3-10:** Prioritize street space allocated for transportation uses over parking when determining the appropriate future use of street space.

Lawrence Station Area Plan

- **WS-G1** Design to be safe and attractive for residents of the study area and those south of Reed who walk or ride to the station.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) determination for this project is a Class 1

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categorical exemption pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301(c) for operation, repair or minor alteration of existing streets, sidewalks and pedestrian and bicycle trails or other similar alterations that do not create additional automobile lanes.

DISCUSSION

On-Street Parking Occupancy Study

To evaluate whether the removal of on-street parking on the northbound direction of Willow Avenue would have an impact to the users who live/work along the corridor, an on-street parking observation was conducted along Willow Avenue on four different mid-week weekdays between March 2021 and May 2021: Wednesday March 24, Wednesday March 31, Wednesday April 28, and Wednesday May 5. The data was collected at three different times throughout the day to capture the parking occupancy at 11 a.m., 3:30 p.m. and 11 p.m. At the time when the on-street parking observation was conducted, the County of Santa Clara was in the orange tier of the State of California's Blueprint for a Safer Economy to reduce COVID-19. Under the orange tier, most businesses could open with reduced capacity, and offices could open with modifications, but telework was encouraged. Therefore, the daytime on-street parking usage observed was higher than typical as most residents were still working remotely from home. In addition, given the residential land use along the corridor, staff believes the 11 p.m. observation would have the highest parking occupancy for the area. The on-street parking occupancy data is summarized in Attachment 4.

From the parking occupancy data, the western side of Willow Avenue where the multi-family residential units had a slightly lower average daily parking usage than the eastern side (an average of 64% vs. an average of 79%). When looking at the data aggregately, the total number of parked vehicles along this corridor was very consistent among the four days of observation, with a slightly higher usage at night.

License plate data was also collected as part of the study to understand when vehicles were parked along the corridor and whether they were parked there repeatedly. Approximately 48% of the vehicles parked on this corridor were present only one out of the four days of observation. 20% of the vehicles were parked on this corridor during the day only and were not observed to be parked on Willow Avenue at night when residents were typically home. In addition, 12% of the parked vehicles were vans or recreational vehicles which were not observed repeatedly along Willow Avenue. During the site visits, staff noticed one of the repair shops on the eastern side of Willow Avenue specializes in the repair of vans and recreational vehicles. In general, there is an abundance of available on-site parking for business use. While staff did not drive onto the private property to collect detailed on-site parking utilization data, staff was able to observe visually the available parking capacity at the repair shops, restaurants and supermarket while driving on Willow Avenue. From the data collected, staff was able to identify resident parking vs. non-resident parking.

Resident parking on Willow Avenue were classified based on the following criteria:

- a) parked on Willow Avenue for more than one out of the four days of site observations;
- b) parked along the corridor at night (or all-day); or
- c) they were not recreational vehicles or vans

Non-resident parking were classified based on the following criteria:

- a) parked on Willow Avenue during daytime only;
- b) parked on Willow Avenue for only one out of the four days of site observations; or

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c) they were recreational vehicles or vans

Staff believes that non-resident parking was mostly employees or patrons from the nearby automobile repair shops for several reasons:

- One of the automobile repair shops on Willow Avenue specializes in the repair of recreational vehicles and vans.
- Some vehicles parked on Willow Avenue had missing bumpers.
- Staff has received emails, phone calls and Access Sunnyvale requests from residents indicating they noticed employees from the automobile repair shops parking either their own vehicles or their patrons' vehicles on Willow Avenue.

The parking observation data was evaluated to determine the true average daily resident-only parking demand on this corridor based on the time of day vehicles were parked on the corridor, how often the vehicles were observed, and the type of vehicles that were observed. Taking these factors into account, the estimated average daily residential parking demand would range from 14-21 vehicles. If the on-street parking for the northbound direction of Willow Avenue was removed, the remaining on-street parking capacity would be 23 vehicles, which would be sufficient to accommodate the average daily residential parking demand. The results are summarized in Attachment 5.

Online Public Outreach Meeting

On Thursday May 27, 2021, an online public outreach meeting was held with residents and property owners along the project corridor to present the project as well as the parking occupancy study results. Residents, property owners and business owners were notified of the public meeting through postcards mailed to apartments, townhomes, single family homes, and businesses (Mailer notification area is shown in Attachment 2). There was a total of seven members of the public that participated in the outreach meeting; and three members of the public provided feedback via email; none of the participants indicated they were property owners. Residents in general agreed that the automobile repair shops do utilize the existing on-street parking on Willow Avenue as storage of customer vehicles, and their staff would park on the on-street parking spaces instead of the on-site parking spaces as well. One resident expressed concern that the repair shops would continue to use the on-street parking spaces on Willow Avenue as storage if on-street parking was prohibited on the northbound side of Willow Avenue. Staff indicated that from the drive-by observations over the four days of data collection, there appeared to be available capacity on-site at the repair shops. The repair shops seemed to be parking their customers vehicles on the street out of convenience.

Overall, no property owners or residents opposed the removal of on-street parking on the northbound direction of Willow Avenue. One of the residents expressed support of the City's efforts in building and improving the bicycle and pedestrian network throughout the city.

Next Steps

Upon City Council's action to remove the on-street parking for the northbound direction on Willow Avenue, Siegfried Engineering, Inc. will complete the design of the proposed improvements by October 2021. City will advertise the project for a construction firm to construct the proposed improvements. Construction is anticipated to begin in the first quarter of 2022, and to be completed in summer 2022.

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FISCAL IMPACT

If on-street parking were to be removed on the northbound direction of Willow Avenue to install Class IIB buffered bicycle lanes, funding is available in Project 832960 - Lawrence Station Area Sidewalk and Bicycle Facility.

PUBLIC CONTACT

Public contact was made through posting of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission on the City's official-notice bulletin board, on the City's website, and the availability of the agenda and report in the Office of the City Clerk.

ALTERNATIVES

1. Recommend to City Council to Remove On-Street Parking for the Northbound Direction on Willow Avenue between Reed Avenue and Aster Avenue and to Install Bicycle Lanes on Both Sides of the Street Per the Active Transportation Plan
2. Recommend to City Council to Maintain On-Street Parking for the Northbound Direction on Willow Avenue between Reed Avenue and Aster Avenue and Not to Install Bicycle Lanes on Both Sides of Willow Avenue

RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1: Recommend to City Council to Remove On-Street Parking for the Northbound Direction on Willow Avenue between Reed Avenue and Aster Avenue and to Install Bicycle Lanes on Both Sides of the Street Per the Active Transportation Plan

The City has a vision to increase the viability of bicycling, walking and transit ridership throughout the City in order to help provide people additional transportation options beyond driving a car. By removing on-street parking and installing Class IIB bicycle facilities on Willow Avenue, it will provide a new bicycle facility with a direct connection to the Lawrence Caltrain Station. As part of the future Caltrain service planning, Joint Powers Board aims to increase frequency along the corridor, as well as the number of bullet/express trains that will stop at Lawrence Caltrain Station. With the future increase in service, Willow Avenue will serve as a key access route for pedestrians and bicyclists to access the Lawrence Caltrain Station.

This proposed improvement will align with the City Council's Strategic Priority: Ability of Infrastructure to Support Development, Traffic and Active Transportation. Furthermore, it will comply with our Complete Streets Policy and support the City's Climate Action Plan goal to reduce vehicle emission.

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Reviewed by: Dennis Ng, Transportation and Traffic Manager
Reviewed by: Chip Taylor, Director, Department of Public Works
Reviewed by: Teri Silva, Assistant City Manager
Approved by: Kent Steffens, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Reserved for Report to Council
2. Study Area
3. Proposed Bicycle Improvements on Willow Avenue

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- 4. On-Street Parking Observation Summary
- 5. On-Street Parking Study Evaluation