

REPORT TO COUNCIL

SUBJECT

Steps to Achieving a Silver Level Designation in the League of American Bicyclists - Bicycle Friendly Communities (Study Issue)

BACKGROUND

In 2015 the Council ranked Study Issue DPW 15-03 (Attachment 1), sponsored by the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC) to determine the steps to move forward to recognize Sunnyvale as a Silver Level Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) by the League of American Bicyclists (LAB). The LAB was established in the year 1880 with the goal of creating safer roadways and stronger bicycle friendly communities. A BFC is defined as a community which welcomes bicyclists of all ages and abilities by providing safe bicycling facilities and thus encouraging people to bike for transportation and recreation. There are five designations which range from lowest to highest:

- Bronze
- Silver
- Gold
- Platinum
- Diamond

In 2006, the LAB recognized the City of Sunnyvale as a Bronze Level BFC. The Bronze designation reflects the investments the City of Sunnyvale and its partners made towards making the City more bicycle friendly. Communities are required to reapply for BFC status every four years to retain or improve their ranking. Sunnyvale last applied for a BFC status in 2012, therefore the City would need to reapply in fall 2016 in order to retain its Bronze status or move up one or more levels.

The BPAC considered this item at a noticed public hearing on March 17, 2016 and voted unanimously to recommend the City Council approve Alternative 1: Apply to be considered as a Silver Level BFC (Attachment 4: Excerpt from Draft Meeting Minutes). A summary of the BPAC's discussion and action is included in the Public Contact section below.

EXISTING POLICY

General Plan, Chapter 3, *Land Use and Transportation Element Policies*:

- LT-5.5: Support a variety of transportation modes.
- LT-5.5d: Maximize the provision of bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- LT-5.8: Provide a safe and comfortable system of pedestrian and bicycle pathways.
- LT-5.9: Appropriate accommodations for motor vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians shall be determined for city streets to increase the use of bicycles for transportation and to enhance

the safety and efficiency of the overall street network for bicyclists, pedestrians, and motor vehicles.

- LT-5.10: All modes of transportation shall have safe access to city streets.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The action being considered does not constitute a “project” within the meaning of the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15378(b)(5) in that it is a governmental organizational or administrative activity that will not result in direct or indirect changes in the environment.

DISCUSSION

The LAB reviews applications for a BFC designation twice a year, in spring and fall. Each year, during the application review process, the LAB compares the applicants against each other and against current designated BFC communities. The application is divided into the “Five Es” categories; Engineering, Education, Encouragement, Enforcement, and Evaluation. The application criteria changes constantly to better reflect the current status of bicycle communities, new technologies, and new best practices. As such, the thresholds communities must reach to be certified under a particular status (Bronze, Silver, Gold, or Platinum) have changed since Sunnyvale last applied and the criteria are not transparent to applicants.

The applications are first sent to local reviewers - volunteers who live or work in a community and have signed up through the LAB website for comments. Local reviewers submit an online review of the application. Once the local feedback is received, it is shared with the judging panel. Each judge then reviews each application, together with any supplemental material and local feedback. Applications that receive an award suggestion are then discussed during a panel review meeting for final award designation.

The City hired the consultant Alta Planning + Design to assist with gathering City data related to the “Five Es” to incorporate into the BFC application. Data on the current state of bicycling in Sunnyvale was collected in partnership with the Department of Public Works, Transportation and Traffic Division, the Department of Public Safety, Sunnyvale School District, Santa Clara County Health Department, and the Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition. The existing City bicycle-related infrastructure and programs were compared to current Silver and Gold Level BFCs and industry best practices. That comparison was used to create a list of Action Items (Attachment 2) by the consultant to achieve Silver Level status. A full report prepared by Alta Planning + Design titled “A Strategy Report to Achieve a Gold or Silver Bicycle Friendly Community Designation for Sunnyvale, California” (See Attachment 3) includes the BFC application questions along with the City’s response to each question and suggested action items to obtain a Silver Level or Gold Level status.

Many of the suggested action items to obtain a Silver or Gold Level BFC designation had been incorporated into the City of Sunnyvale 2006 Bicycle Plan. The bike plan includes but is not limited to following action items:

- Specific pedestrian and bicycle circulation plans; Moffett Park Specific Plan, Tasman/Fair Oaks Area Pedestrian and Bicycle Circulation Plan, and Downtown Specific Plan.
- Off-street bicycle accommodations; the City currently has a 12.3 miles trail way network.
- Bike lanes; to date the City has installed 169 miles of bike lanes (an increase of 93 miles or 82

percent from 2006) covering approximately 20% of the City's roadway network.

- Shared lanes; the City has approximately 5.5 miles of shared lanes or wide paved shoulders for bicycle use.
- Road diets - removal of parking or travel lane to install bike lanes. The City is implementing road diets on Mary Avenue and Duane Avenue. In addition, this year, staff will also study and recommend possible road diet options for Maude Avenue and Fair Oaks Avenue.
- In addition the bike plan includes action items on bicycle access to transit, end-of-trip facilities, education and encouragement, barriers to bicycle facilities, and possible opportunities for enhancing the existing City's bikeway network.

Those action items which are not included in the current Bicycle Plan will be incorporated into the updated Bicycle Plan, which staff would like to complete in 2017 (staff has submitted for grant funding for the update of the Bicycle Plan, and if not successful, staff will propose a new Capital project). Since the last Bicycle Plan, the City has continued to implement improvements that were not envisioned in 2006. Those items include the buffered bike lanes recently installed on Fremont Avenue, Mathilda Avenue, and Weddell Drive and the use of green bike treatments on projects on Evelyn Avenue in front of the Caltrain station and Mary Avenue. To standardize implementation of green bike lanes, staff is also currently updating the existing design standards and guidelines. Lastly, staff is also considering the possibility of modifying the existing bike lanes on Fremont Ave to convert them to physically separated bike lanes (cycle track).

After comparing Sunnyvale's existing bicycle infrastructure to other currently designated Silver Level communities and best practices, the consultant concluded that there is a 50 percent chance for a successful Silver Level BFC designation for the City of Sunnyvale. Staff believes the implementation of the upcoming road diets, use of green color, and possible cycle track on Fremont Avenue will increase the City's chances of becoming a Silver Level BFC. While the consultant's opinion is that Sunnyvale has a 50 percent chance of obtaining a Silver Level designation, staff believes that the City should proceed with applying for Silver Level BFC. Even if the City doesn't achieve the Silver Level BFC at this time, the LAB provides feedback to all applications, outlining the areas they are doing well in and the areas that need improvement. This feedback can be used to develop priorities for future projects and can be incorporated into the upcoming update of the Bicycle Plan.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with applying for the Silver Level designation.

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 Senior Center, Community Center and Department of Public Safety; and by making the agenda and report available at the Sunnyvale Public Library, the Office of the City Clerk and on the City's website.

The BPAC held a public hearing on March 17, 2016 to discuss this item and listened to a presentation from the consultant firm of Alta Planning + Design. Alta was selected by the City to assist with developing a report which included providing action items and cost estimates on ways to better the City's chances of obtaining a Silver Level Bicycle Friendly Community (BFC) designation. The BPAC discussed that the City should try to implement as many action items as possible to better their chances of obtaining a designation. The BPAC however voted unanimously to recommend the

City Council approve Alternative 1: Apply to be considered as a Silver Level BFC (Attachment 4: Excerpt from Draft Meeting Minutes).

ALTERNATIVES

1. Apply to be considered as a Silver Level Bicycle Friendly Community.
2. Wait to apply for a Silver Level BFC designation after acquiring additional funding and implementing additional action items listed in Attachment 2.
3. Do not apply to be considered as a Silver Level BFC and provide direction to staff for next steps.

STAFF AND COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1: Apply to be considered as a Silver Level Bicycle Friendly Community.

Prepared by: Carol Shariat, Principal Transportation Engineer/Planner

Reviewed by: Shahid Abbas, Transportation and Traffic Manager

Reviewed by: Manuel Pineda, Director, Public Works

Reviewed by: Frank Grgurina, Director of Public Safety

Reviewed by: Walter C. Rossmann, Assistant City Manager

Approved by: Deanna J. Santana, City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. DPW Study Issue 15-03
2. Action Items
3. Full report from Alta Design + Planning
4. Excerpt of Draft Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Commission Meeting Minutes of March 17, 2016