



City of Sunnyvale

Agenda Item-No Attachments (PDF)

File #: 21-0072, Version: 1

REPORT TO COUNCIL

SUBJECT

Review Data Collected for the Temporary Eastbound Tasman Drive Lane Closure During COVID-19 Pandemic and Consider Whether to Extend the Lane Closure as Employees Begin to Return to Workplace

BACKGROUND

Tasman Drive between Fair Oaks Avenue and Lawrence Expressway is a four-lane commercial/industrial collector, with the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) light rail line running in the center of the roadway between the eastbound and westbound directions of traffic. Sidewalks are present on the south side of the roadway; however, a gap in sidewalk approximately 1,600 feet in length exists between about 800 feet east of Tasman Court (opposite the West Entrance to Casa De Amigos) and Vienna Drive. There is currently no existing bicycle facility on Tasman Drive. The VTA operates the Orange light rail line along the Tasman Drive corridor that connects Mountain View, Sunnyvale, Santa Clara, San Jose, and Milpitas.

When the Orange Light Rail Line was extended into Sunnyvale to its current terminus in Mountain View in the late 1990's, there was insufficient width along the Tasman corridor to install complete sidewalks and bicycle lanes without purchasing and demolishing existing mobile homes that back onto Tasman Drive and removal of all mature trees for long segments. Today's roadway configuration reflects the compromise, with gaps in the sidewalk along both sides of Tasman Drive and lack of bicycle facilities.

On June 30, 2020, City Council approved a temporary eastbound Tasman Drive lane closure during the COVID-19 pandemic (RTC No. 20-0633), but with a stipulation not to exceed ten months, in order to create a temporary pathway for the public to perform outdoor activities and to walk to and from the nearby grocery store and to monitor traffic conditions to ensure that the temporary lane closure does not negatively impact traffic along the segment of Tasman Drive between Fair Oaks Avenue and Vienna Drive and at the signalized intersection of Fair Oaks Avenue and Tasman Drive.

EXISTING POLICY

General Plan, Chapter 3, Land Use and Transportation Element

Policy LT-3.6 Promote Modes of travel and actions that provide safe access to city streets and reduce single-occupant vehicle trips and trip lengths locally and regionally.

Policy LT-3.24 Ensure effective and safe traffic flows for all modes of transport through physical and operational transportation improvements.

General Plan, Chapter 4, Community Character:

Policy CC-1.6 Maintain City neighborhoods as safe, healthy places to live.

Policy CC-1.7 Encourage Neighborhood Patterns that Encourage Social Interaction and Avoid Isolation.

Goal CC-12 Maximum access to recreation services, facilities and amenities.

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.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The temporary removal of one eastbound travel lane and the creation of a temporary pathway is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines Section 15301(c), for minor alterations of existing highways and streets that do not create additional automobile lanes and involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use.

DISCUSSION

On June 30, 2020, City Council approved the temporary closure of one travel lane in the eastbound direction of Tasman Drive during COVID-19, but not to exceed ten months, to create a temporary pathway primarily for pedestrians to facilitate the ability to walk to and from the nearby grocery store and to perform outdoor activities without causing traffic congestion during the State and County shelter in place order (Attachment 1).

As part of City Council's discussion, there was a desire that once the County's Public Health Order is relaxed and traffic patterns start to readjust and establish themselves again, the temporary lane closure should be removed, and the travel lane will be restored for its original use. At this point, traffic patterns are slowly starting to increase to pre-COVID-19 conditions as businesses allow employees to return to the office on a limited basis. At the same time, due to Covid-19 variants and increasing number of cases, major tech employers have recently announced delays to full mandatory return to in-person or hybrid work to October, and some to January 2022. This is an indication that the situation is still fluid as employers and the public are still adjusting. During the temporary closure, staff was directed to monitor the corridor to determine if there were any negative impacts to safety, queuing, and congestion.

To evaluate if the temporary closure would cause negative impacts on the traffic signal operations at the intersection of Tasman Drive and Fair Oaks Avenue, staff used available traffic volume data from 2015 as a baseline and collected vehicular, pedestrian and bicycle volume on both weekdays and weekends during the temporary closure of one eastbound Tasman Drive travel lane to monitor for pedestrian and bicycle usage. Vehicular travel speeds and queuing along Tasman Drive between Fair Oaks Avenue and Vienna Drive were also monitored using the City traffic monitoring cameras, travel time monitoring system, Advance Traffic Management System, crowd-sourced information through STRAVA and staff field observations.

Results from monitoring activities (Attachment 2) showed that during the weekday, an average of 15 bicyclists and 23 pedestrians used the temporary pathway throughout the day and an average of 15

bicyclists and 21 pedestrians during the weekend. Because of the gap in the sidewalk prior to the installation of the pathway, there is no pedestrian data to show if the numbers increased or decreased compared to the pre-COVID-19 conditions. During the monitoring of transportation conditions, it appeared that the closure did not negatively impact the traffic signal operations at the intersections of Fair Oaks Avenue/Tasman Drive and Tasman Drive/Vienna Drive, and vehicular travel speeds along Tasman Drive between Fair Oaks Avenue and Vienna Drive were not impacted either. The average travel speed during the monitoring period of the segment of Tasman Drive between Fair Oaks Avenue and Vienna Drive was 32 mph with an average 85th percentile speed of 39 mph. For comparison, the posted speed limit of Tasman Drive is 40 mph and speed data from a traffic signal retiming project in 2015 showed an average travel speed of 33 mph and an 85th percentile speed of 39 mph. Detrimental vehicular queues and un-necessary vehicular delay were not observed as a result of the temporary lane closure. This is primarily because of the decrease in vehicular volume due to the COVID-19 pandemic conditions. Average daily traffic volume during the monitoring period showed that traffic volume decreased by approximately 54% compared to the baseline data obtained in 2015. During the month of October 2015, the average daily traffic for eastbound Tasman Drive between Fair Oaks Avenue and Vienna Drive was 7,853 vehicles per day; an average daily traffic of 3,620 vehicles was observed during the monitoring period of the temporary lane closure. The most recent peak hour traffic volume, collected on June 16, 2021 showed 322 vehicles from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m., which is 42% of the theoretical 900 vehicles per hour per lane maximum throughput at congested flow.

As part of the Fiscal Year 2021/22 budget, City Council funded Study Issue DPW 21-03, Pedestrian and Bicycle Facility Installation on Tasman Drive from Fair Oaks Avenue to Lawrence Expressway. This Study Issue will conduct public outreach, coordination with other agencies, topographical surveying and transportation studies to determine desire and the feasibility of constructing permanent bicycle and pedestrian facilities along the Tasman corridor between Fair Oaks Avenue and Lawrence Expressway. The Study Issue is anticipated to be completed in 2023.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no cost to remove all equipment and traffic control devices should City Council direct staff to remove the temporary eastbound lane closure and restore the travel lane for normal usage.

Originally, City Council approved a budget modification of \$30,000 from Council Service Level Set Aside to pay for the installation and rental of channelizers and temporary ADA ramps, temporary traffic control devices such as solar powered arrow board, barricades with flashing beacons for nighttime visibility, water filled barriers, and the required signage to temporarily close a travel lane, and the maintenance of the temporary pathway for up to a 10-month period. 100% of the funds have been utilized to date. If City Council desires to extend the Tasman Drive Temporary Lane Closure, a total of \$3,227 per month is needed for the rental and maintenance of temporary traffic control devices and signage to keep the lane closure in a safe condition, ensure that the electronic solar powered arrow board is functioning, resetting devices that may have been moved or knocked over by the public and to conduct data collection for monitoring traffic volumes and pedestrian and bicyclist activity.

Budget Modification No. 4 has been prepared to appropriate General Funds in the amount of \$32,270 to fund another ten months of the temporary lane closure extension. This Budget Modification can be adjusted by simply multiplying the number of months Council desires to extend the lane closure by \$3,227. For example, a three month extension would require a Budget Modification of \$9,681.

Funding would come from the General Fund Budget Stabilization Fund.

**Budget Modification No. 4
FY 2021/22**

General Fund	Current	Increase/Decrease	Revised
<u>Expenditures</u>			
835260 – Tasman Drive Temporary Lane Closure	\$30,000	\$32,227	\$62,227
<u>Reserves</u>			
<u>General Fund Budget Stabilization Fund</u>	\$55,336,909	(\$32,227)	\$55,304,682

PUBLIC CONTACT

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

ALTERNATIVES

1. Direct staff to remove the temporary eastbound lane closure on Tasman Drive between Fair Oak Avenue and Vienna Drive and restore the travel lane for normal usage.
2. Direct staff to continue to maintain the temporary eastbound lane closure on Tasman Drive between Fair Oaks Avenue and Vienna Drive for a City Council defined period, establish a transportation trigger of 720 vehicles per hour for the restoration of the eastbound for vehicular traffic and approve Budget Modification No. 4 to fund the maintenance of the temporary lane closure for a Council determined number of months at a cost of \$3,227 per month.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Alternative 1: Direct staff to remove the temporary eastbound lane closure on Tasman Drive between Fair Oak Avenue and Vienna Drive and restore the travel lane for normal usage.

Staff recommends removing the lane closure as the County of Santa Clara and the State of California have removed the shelter in place order and lifted most pandemic related restrictions. In addition, commercial businesses, restaurants, retail, entertainment areas, office buildings and large gathering spaces are reopening without capacity limitations. Staff is observing that traffic volumes are increasing upwards as schools, businesses, and offices reopen. Keeping the lane closed when traffic volume is expected to increase as more people will be commuting to work, could potentially create queues at the intersection of Fair Oaks Avenue and Tasman Drive for the eastbound approach. Moreover, as traffic volume increases and the eastbound Tasman through capacity is decreased, emergency vehicle response times could also be impacted given the limited number of access points to mobile home parks on this segment of Tasman Drive. Staff's recommendation is also consistent with City Council's previous direction of removing the closure after ten months from installation.

If City Council does choose to maintain the existing eastbound Tasman Drive lane closure, staff would recommend that a defined threshold be established for reopening the travel lane to vehicular traffic once the peak hour traffic volumes reach 720 vehicles, which is 80% of the 900 vehicles per hour per lane throughput during congested flow. Furthermore, Council should determine the number of months it desires to extend the closure at a cost of \$3,227 per month.

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ATTACHMENTS

1. Map of Temporary Lane Closure During COVID-19
2. Eastbound Tasman Lane Closure Data Collection Results