



City of Santa Barbara California

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PLANNING COMMISSION and TRANSPORTATION & CIRCULATION COMMITTEE STAFF REPORT

REPORT DATE: June 4, 2009
AGENDA DATE: June 11, 2009
PROJECT SUBJECT: Las Positas/Mission Circulation Options Report –
(a.k.a. Improving access to Cottage Hospital)
TO: Planning Commission and Transportation & Circulation Committee
FROM: Transportation Division
Rob Dayton, Principal Transportation Planner
Jessica W. Grant, Project Planner
For questions please call (805) 564-5470.

I. RECOMMENDATION

- That the Planning Commission (PC) and the Transportation & Circulation Committee (TCC):
- A. Review the Las Positas/Mission Circulation Options Report;
 - B. Support the Las Positas/Mission Circulation Options Report's recommendation on the selected transportation improvements that would be included in the Project Study Report; and
 - C. Recommend to Council that staff proceed with IBI Group in the preparation of a Project Study Report for Caltrans using Las Positas Northbound Hook Off-Ramp, widening the Southbound Highway 101 Off-Ramp to Las Positas Road, and widening the Las Positas/Calle Real intersection.

II. INTRODUCTION

Since August 2008, the Transportation Division and its consultant, IBI Group, have been developing the Las Positas/Mission Circulation Options Report (Circulation Options Report), which identifies access improvements to Cottage Hospital and the adjacent neighborhoods. To date, we have held two joint PC/TCC meetings regarding this topic. The first meeting covered the purpose and need of the Circulation Options Report along with the potential improvements to be analyzed in it. The second meeting focused on the public input and further refined the scope of improvement projects to be investigated. This third and final PC/TCC meeting is to review the draft Circulation Options Report (Exhibit 1) and its findings, and to make recommendations to Council regarding development of a Project Study Report (PSR) and local improvements. Project options involving modifications to the State Highway System or to transportation facilities located within Caltrans right-of-way require the preparation of a PSR. A completed PSR is required before a project can be considered for funding through the State

Transportation Improvement Program (STIP) or approved by Caltrans if the project is to be funded by other sources.

Based on the last public workshop on February 24, 2009, and the second PC/TCC hearing on March 12, 2009, there was an overall consensus that Alternative 2B (Las Positas Northbound Hook Off-Ramp) was the preferred alternative. Alternative 2B provides the greatest benefit with the least capital cost and the least amount of disruption during construction. Generally, the public, commissioners, and committee members preferred all Alternative 2 options over the overpass option because Alternative 2 provides the most direct access to the hospital. Although the public workshop attendees, commissioners, and committee members were not opposed to an overpass (Alternative 1), they felt it should only be explored if Alternative 2 would not work. They were generally supportive of the local street improvements, but needed more information on how the improvements would impact the on-street parking.

Since the last PC/TCC hearing, we have received a letter from Caltrans commenting specifically on Alternative 2B. After Caltrans reviewed our model data and concept drawings, no major issues were raised with this alternative. They advised that at the PSR stage a project level traffic study with a more detailed design will be required.

Prior to the completion of the Circulation Options Report, City staff and the consultant team discussed the addition of a sub-option to Alternative 2B with Caltrans. The purpose of this sub-option is to provide a back-up option to Alternative 2B, as a result of concerns related to construction costs and the right of way impact to the Earl Warren Showgrounds property for an off-ramp located west of Las Positas Road.

The sub-option would locate the new northbound hook off-ramp east of the Las Positas Road overpass, rather than to the west as proposed in Alternative 2B. The location of the off-ramp would be near the historical location of the original northbound Las Positas off-ramp, and correspond to the existing off-ramp location near the intersection of Calle Real and Leslie Drive. The primary difference from the existing condition is that the existing off-ramp would be realigned to a "hook" configuration to create a new signalized intersection and allow the conversion of Calle Real to serve two-way traffic. Figure 6.1 of the report illustrates this concept.

In the initial stages of this study, Caltrans was not supportive of a reconfigured off-ramp east of Las Positas Road. However, through further discussions with City staff and the consultant team, it was determined that the sub-option could be examined as part of the PSR as a suboption to Alternative 2B. As such, the sub-option is proposed to be carried forward in the PSR as a sub-option to Alternative 2B should the cost and right-of-way constraints associated with Alternative 2B prove to be too substantial. An initial analysis of the traffic operations for the sub-option has been completed and is included in the Circulation Options Report. This sub-option will be further evaluated as part of the PSR process.

III. REPORT ORGANIZATION

The Circulation Options Report summarizes the community outreach efforts, the process undertaken to develop and evaluate the project alternatives, and recommended next steps for the City of Santa Barbara to proceed towards the implementation of recommended improvements (Exhibit 1). The report consists of the following sections:

- 1.0 Introduction and Study Objective
- 2.0 Purpose and Need
- 3.0 Community Involvement
- 4.0 Potential Improvements
- 5.0 Alternatives Analysis
- 6.0 Recommendations and Next Steps

The organization of the Circulation Options Report is intended to provide the reader with an understanding of this phase of the study development process, and the next steps required to proceed with the recommendations presented in the report. The alternatives, analysis, and evaluation included the use of the City of Santa Barbara's new traffic model and a substantial amount of traffic level of service analysis. The results of the modeling and traffic analysis effort are summarized in the report's Appendix A.

IV. REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Circulation Options Report categorizes the recommended project options into three groups.

- Freeway-Related Improvements – Projects involving Highway 101 traffic lanes or interchanges
- Local Street Improvements – Projects involving local City of Santa Barbara streets
- Alternative Transportation Improvements – Projects involving transit, pedestrian, or bicycle improvements

The first group of recommendations includes improvements or changes to freeway ramps or lanes on Highway 101. These improvements fall under the authority of Caltrans, and a PSR must be prepared for Caltrans approval prior to the initiation of preliminary engineering or environmental review. Recommended improvements include:

1. Alternative 2B – Las Positas Northbound Hook Off-Ramp and Sub-Alternative – Las Positas Northbound Hook Off-Ramp between Bettie and Leslie Drives.
2. Widen Las Positas Road Southbound Off-Ramp.
3. Widen Mission Street Southbound Off-Ramp.
4. Widen Mission Street Northbound Off-Ramp.
5. Adding auxiliary lanes on Highway 101 in selected locations between La Cumbre Road and Carrillo Street.
6. Widening the intersection of Las Positas Road and Calle Real (This option needs to be part of the PSR).

The second group of recommendations includes local street improvements that would fall under the authority of the City of Santa Barbara. These projects do not need to be part of a PSR process unless the local street improvement is directly tied to a recommended freeway improvement. At the last joint meeting, Commissioners and Committee Members asked if the local improvements can move forward separately. The City has decision-making authority over these projects and their ability to proceed with them is not contingent upon the PSR. Some of the recommended improvements that are not tied to the PSR include:

1. Two-way traffic on De la Vina Street between Constance Street and Pueblo Street.
2. Traffic signal and operation improvements at the following intersections: Mission/Bath, Mission/Castillo and potentially other signals in the vicinity.

Alternative transportation improvements fall into two subcategories. Recommended transit improvements would require coordination with the Santa Barbara MTD, Clean Air Express and Coastal Express Operators. Similar to the local street improvements, pedestrian and bicycle improvements fall under the authority of the City. The City is able to proceed to the preliminary engineering and environmental review phases for these project options through its own authority. Recommended improvements include:

1. Construct sidewalks on Calle Real.
2. Union Pacific Rail Corridor Commuter Rail Station.
3. Shuttle Bus Service from Downtown Amtrak Station (Dependent upon implementation of commuter light rail).
4. Extend Class II Bike Lanes on Castillo and Bath Streets.

Please refer to Section 6 of the report, Recommendations and Next Steps, for a detailed explanation of these recommendations.

Given the list of recommendations, the Transportation Division recommends initiating the PSR process for the Las Positas Interchange. The PSR would study the following project options: •

- Las Positas Road Hook On and Off-Ramp (Alternative 2B) and Sub-Alternative – Las Positas Northbound Hook Off-Ramp between Bettie and Leslie Drives
- Widening the Southbound Highway 101 Off-Ramp to Las Positas Road
- Widening the Las Positas Road/Calle Real intersection

Other projects options that would require the preparation of PSR include improvements to the Mission Street interchange and the addition of auxiliary lanes on northbound Highway 101 between Mission Street and Arrellaga Street. These project options are not proposed to be included in the PSR prepared as part of the Las Positas Road interchange modifications. Instead, these project options would be studied in the future as part of a separate PSR process. This approach reduces the chance that a challenge or constraint at one interchange would delay improvements at both locations and reduces the competition between projects for funding.

The PSR process will involve a more detailed examination of the design and operation of the proposed hook ramp and evaluate the opportunities and constraints associated with the location of the hook ramp.

Local street, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements that would occur outside of Caltrans right-of-way would not require the preparation of PSR. The City of Santa Barbara has authority over the initiation of more detailed analysis and design studies for these local street improvements. As noted above, the improvements proposed at the Las Positas Road/Calle Real intersection would be included as part of the PSR for the Las Positas Road interchange. Other recommended local street improvements such as the extension of two-way traffic on De la Vina Street, new traffic signals on Pueblo Street at De la Vina Street and State Street, and the extension of the one-way couplet on Castillo Street and Bath Street would proceed separately.

V. NEXT STEPS

This report will go to Council for review during summer 2009. The findings from the Circulation Options Report will feed into the PSR, which is needed for the second phase of this study in order to pursue project funding opportunities. Staff will also be presenting the possible new northbound hook ramp to the 19th District Agricultural Association, which oversees the state-owned Earl Warren Showgrounds to receive feedback.

Exhibit: 1. Draft Las Positas/Mission Circulation Options Report