



## City of Santa Barbara Transportation & Circulation Committee *Staff Report*

**DATE:** February 22, 2018

**TO:** Transportation & Circulation Committee (TCC) Members

**FROM:** Robert J. Dayton, Transportation Planning and Parking Manager

**SUBJECT:** State Street Sidewalk Widening and Buffered Bike Lanes Under Highway 101

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee recommend to Council that it include a project in the City's Capital Improvement Program to widen the sidewalks and install buffered bike lanes on State Street under Highway 101, and that staff work with Caltrans for project approval and to apply for funding grants.

### **BACKGROUND**

The State Street undercrossing at Highway 101 was constructed in 1991. At that time, the undercrossing needs were thought to be 5 11-foot vehicle lanes, bike lanes, and 5-foot sidewalks on either side. Since 1991, transportation demands have changed significantly. Pedestrian volumes through the undercrossing have grown exponentially while traffic volumes have remained constant. The State Street sidewalks to the north and south of the undercrossing have been widened, while the number of vehicle lanes north and south of the undercrossing have been reduced. The lack of sidewalk space in the undercrossing has created a bottle neck and barrier to pedestrian travel between the newly-completed Waterfront portion of State Street to Downtown. Additionally, the excessive number of vehicle lanes and road slope have promoted higher vehicle speeds, which have resulted in a clustering of severe collision injuries, the majority of which are bicyclists. The undercrossing is an unattractive environment for pedestrians due to vehicle noise and the darkness of the location, even during the day.

The City's Capital Improvement Program includes a project to explore solutions to address the undercrossing as a pedestrian barrier. The City recently held a public workshop to develop ideas to remove or reduce the various barriers for pedestrians using the undercrossing. Participant comments frequently focused on the narrowness of the sidewalks. Community members suggested various creative ways to improve the experience, including widening the sidewalks and buffered bike lanes. Widening of the sidewalks and construction of buffered bike lanes can be accomplished by reducing the number of lanes from 5 to 3. This reduction in lanes is adequate to accommodate existing and future traffic volumes as this configuration matches the number of lanes on the State Street blocks to the north and south of the undercrossing. In addition to addressing community concerns, such a project will also reduce

the number bicycle collisions resulting in death and severe injuries. The lower State Street corridor is identified as the area with the distinction of having the highest number of deaths and severe injuries as reported in the City's draft Vision Zero Plan. The project components are expected significantly improve safety and reduce such collisions.

The undercrossing was originally constructed by Caltrans as a part of the Crosstown Freeway Widening. The City contracted an engineering firm to assess the feasibility of widening the undercrossing sidewalks and to explore options working with Caltrans on a formal proposal that could meet Caltrans approval. The conclusion of this work is that widening of the sidewalks is feasible and can be performed within Caltrans' guidelines for such projects. Additionally, staff estimates that this sidewalk widening would be a competitive Active Transportation Planning grant application.

The purpose of this action is to formally create a project and include it in the City's Capital Improvement Program by resolution. The action also directs staff to work with Caltrans to gain project approval and funding, as well as to apply for an Active Transportation Planning grant that would be due this July.

The undercrossing sidewalk widening project is estimated to cost approximately \$5-5.5 million. This project is uniquely positioned to be competitive for an Active Transportation Planning Grant. Currently, staff plans to submit a grant application in July. Staff is working to determine if a funding match is needed to increase the likelihood of a successful grant application. No money has been budgeted to date for this purpose.

RD/mj