



Staff Report

STATUS REPORT ON DOWNTOWN URBAN PLANNING/"TRANSFORMING EL CAMINO REAL" PROJECT

Honorable Chair and Board Members:

Summary/Background

At the June 7, 2006 Planning Commission meeting, the Commission conducted a study session to review the Project Area Plan for the San Mateo County "Transforming El Camino Real" project. This project focuses on the multi-city planning effort for potential improvements to Caltrain station areas and adjoining streets and intersections within Belmont, San Carlos, and Redwood City. This recent Planning Commission study session served as the *second* "stakeholders" meeting to review a context map, plan area conditions, and potential design approaches for streetscape improvements to the adjoining Caltrain streets (See attached Project Boundary Area). The study area is approximately 3,000 feet in length – from the 500 Block of El Camino Real (U-Haul building) to the north to Harbor Boulevard to the south.

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) & SamTrans is administering a grant from the Transportation for Livable Communities (TLC) Program for the project. The project serves to build upon the recommendations made as part of the 2003 Peninsula Corridor Plan that was prepared by Project for Public Spaces, Inc., and facilitate the planning/design efforts around such improvements to the CalTrain Station/surrounding areas. Staff can provide copies of the Peninsula Corridor Plan for the Agency if desired.

Major objectives of the project include:

- Promoting a smart growth corridor, linking transportation with economic development
- Improving pedestrian access to Cal Train station areas
- Expand non-auto circulation opportunities throughout the corridor
- Enhancing the visual quality and image of the corridor

Goals for Belmont from the Peninsula Corridor Plan are as follows:

- The train station should be a community public space on both sides (El Camino Real and Old County Rd)
- Crossings should be improved along El Camino Real

- Green buffer or edge on east side of El Camino along frontage parking area should be created
- Widen/upgrade/repair sidewalks on both sides of El Camino Real
- Lanes at El Camino Real should be narrowed to allow for wider sidewalks and to create pedestrian refuges at medians in the street
- Bus stops and shelters should generally be improved

This Priority Calendar Item (Review of the Transforming El Camino Real Project) was adopted by the City Council during their Spring 2005 review; as discussed earlier, the Planning Commission was deemed to be the major “stakeholder” in the draft plan formulation phase for the project.

Commission Discussion – June 7, 2006 Meeting

The Commission previously reviewed the project on November 1, 2005. At that meeting, the Commission offered a number of comments/suggestions in relation to the preliminary design plan. The Design Consultant, Bottomly Associates, incorporated such comments/suggestions into the proposed concept plans (attached as part of this staff report) that focus on:

- Overall Improvement Plans & Design Concept for the project area (approximately 3,000 linear feet along El Camino Real)
- Streetscape cross sections (addressing existing conditions, proposed median/sidewalk area improvement concepts, and plan views of such areas)
- Streetscape cross sections addressing parking zone planting & bus stop conditions and proposed concept improvements
- Plan view of a potential “Transit Oriented Development” (TOD) opportunity area for the land formerly housing the “Pink Building” (Plaza Area across from Wendy’s – Old County Road & Ralston Avenue)

At the June 7, 2006 meeting, the Commission indicated that they were very pleased with the proposed Master Plan improvements for the project study area at this time. Suggestions were offered to consider bike lane improvements/enhancements as part of any aggregate lane width reductions in concert with bulb-out improvements, widened sidewalk areas, expanded/improved areas for pedestrian crossings, and enhanced landscaping areas. The Commission also requested that an additional El Camino Real pedestrian crossing area be considered between O’Neill Avenue and Broadway Street. The Commission further requested delineation of species for proposed tree installation, and identified their recommended top three project study areas/components for implementation as follows:

- The pedestrian crossing improvements (refuge areas, widened crosswalks and associated bulb-outs) for the El Camino Real & Ralston Avenue intersection.

- The proposed improvements along the west side of El Camino Real from O’Neill Avenue (north) to Harbor Boulevard (south).
- The proposed improvements along the west side of El Camino Real from Ralston Avenue (south) to Middle Road (north).

A final Commission meeting will be scheduled to “fine-tune” the draft recommendations for area plan improvements to be forwarded to the Redevelopment Agency for final approval (expected in Fall 2006).

Expanded Grant Opportunity

Staff has been recently made aware of the expanded opportunities of the “Transportation for Livable Communities” (TLC) Capital Program administered by the MTC. Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).

This *Capital Program* funds transportation infrastructure improvements to pedestrian, bicycle and transit facilities. The key objectives of this program are to encourage pedestrian, bicycle and transit trips; support a community’s larger infill development or revitalization effort; and provide for a wider range of transportation choices, improved internal mobility, and stronger sense of place.

Typical TLC capital projects include new or improved pedestrian facilities, bicycle facilities, transit access improvements, pedestrian plazas, and streetscapes. Funds can be used for preliminary engineering (design and environmental), right-of-way acquisition, and/or construction.

Staff wants to seize upon this opportunity for potential additional funding to assist in the implementation of the some of higher priority component areas/design concepts envisioned as part of “Transforming El Camino Real/Grand Boulevard” project. Grant applications are due at the end of this month. Thus a goal from the June 13, 2006 meeting is to confirm Agency direction on the proposed Project Study Area improvements thus far, in order for staff to incorporate key components of this “Master Plan” for the study area (at this stage of the review) as part of the TLC grant application submittal.

As discussed earlier, a final Planning Commission and subsequent Redevelopment Agency meeting will be scheduled to refine the area plan improvements for Agency approval (expected in Fall 2006).

Staff will be prepared make a presentation (Powerpoint) of the proposed Project Study Area improvements, if requested by the Agency, at the June 13, 2006 meeting.

Fiscal Impact

None at this time.

Public Contact

1. Posting of the Redevelopment Agency Agenda.

Recommendation

1. Confirm that the proposed Project Study Area improvements for the Transforming El Camino Real project are acceptable at this time. A final plan with fine-tuned specific elements for the study area will be presented for Agency review and approval in Fall 2006.

Alternative

1. Direct staff to prepare an alternative course of action.

Attachments

- A. Revised Project Area Plan and Streetscape Concepts (Six Sheets)

Respectfully submitted,

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PLEASE NOTE:

Attachment A is not included as part of this document - please contact the City Clerk's Office at (650) 595-7413 for further information on this attachment.

