

Transportation Commission

May 27, 2015

Item 5B - Discussion

Discuss Central Avenue Complete Street Concept Proposal

Background

In January 2009, the City Council approved the [Transportation Element of the General Plan](#) that lists Central Avenue as a truck route, a transit priority street and a bicycle priority street. The Transportation Element also lists Central Avenue as in school and recreation zones and as an island arterial. The proposed bikeway project directly supports General Plan Policy 4.3.3.a, “Maintain and implement the Bicycle Master Plan with regard to physical system improvements (especially the identified priority projects), as well as programs and policies relating to encouragement, education and enforcement.” Further, the project supports General Plan City Design Element policies maximizing access to the shoreline.

In November 2010, the City Council approved the [Bicycle Plan Update](#) that prioritized the Central Avenue bikeway project as a high-priority project. In October 2012, the Alameda County Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC) included the project in the [Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans](#) as part of the Bicycle Vision Network. Consistent with these abovementioned plans and policies, Public Works staff secured a grant from Caltrans in 2013 to develop a concept proposal to improve Central Avenue between Pacific Avenue/Main Street and Sherman Street/Encinal Avenue (Figure 1). The concept proposal will focus on school, transit, truck and jobs access, two five-legged intersections, bikeway treatments, a potential reduction of travel lanes and the extension of paths along the bay waterfront.

Figure 1: Central Avenue Concept Proposal Location



Discussion

The purpose of this "complete street" concept proposal effort is to make Central Avenue safer and more convenient and comfortable for all roadway users - motorists, bicyclists, pedestrians and truck and bus drivers. Each corridor has its own unique needs, demands and existing conditions that are better understood through community outreach and listening to Alamedans as is currently occurring for the Central Avenue corridor between Pacific Avenue/Main Street and Sherman Street/Encinal Avenue. In general, complete streets no longer just provide easy and fast access via automobiles but also focus on safe travel for Alamedans who want to bicycle, walk and take transit.

Central Avenue is designated as State Highway 61 between Webster Street and Sherman Street. Sidewalks and on-street parking exist on both sides of the street except not on the west side of Central Avenue between Lincoln Avenue and Pacific Avenue/Main Street. From Pacific Avenue/Main Street to Third Street in the west end, there are two motor vehicle travel lanes with 9,300 vehicles per day and speeds ranging between 30 and 31 miles per hour. Between Third Street and Sherman Street, four motor vehicle travel lanes exist without a center turn lane totaling 7,600 vehicles per day and speeds ranging between 32 and 33 miles per hour. AC Transit Lines 20, W, 631 and 661 run along various segments of Central Avenue.

No bikeways exist except for a path between Lincoln Avenue and Pacific Avenue/Main Street. There are a total of eight public schools in the west end totaling an estimated enrollment of 4,500 students. Six out of eight of these schools have a citywide catchment area meaning that most of these schools have students enrolled from all over Alameda, which has caused an increase in congestion since these new charter and magnet schools have formed. There also is an increase in demand for the ferry service, which has a ferry terminal on Main Street in the west end and a potential future ferry terminal in the Sea Plane Lagoon at the terminus of Ralph Appezato Memorial Parkway.

Outreach

The outreach on this concept proposal consists of reports to the *Transportation Commission* at this meeting and a request to approve the concept proposal expected at the November 2015 meeting, a *Technical Advisory Committee* with the key stakeholders represented including the Alameda Police Department, Alameda Unified School District, Paden School, Encinal High School, Bike Walk Alameda, West Alameda Business Association, AC Transit, Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) for the SF Bay Trail and Caltrans, *community workshops* in April, June and November 2015 and an *on-line Open Forum* (<http://alamedaca.gov/public-works/open-forum>). Staff and the community based organization, which is Bike Walk Alameda, distributed *outreach materials* on the project via a press release, flyer, project web page (<http://alamedaca.gov/public-works/central-avenue-complete-street>), email list servs, neighborhood barricades and a letter to properties within 300 feet radius of the project. Exhibit 1 shows a compilation of community comments from the Open Forum and Community Workshop #1. The community workshop attracted about 75 participants. The Open Forum attracted about 70 respondents and 246 visitors. The Central Avenue concept list serv totals about 213 emails.

Goals

During the outreach for the concept proposal, community member and Open Forum participants ranked the below project goals in priority order. Staff also heard about the importance of "safety" and to "Minimize disruptions to motorists," and attempted to place the comments in priority order based on frequency of occurrence.

1. Improve safety (**new!**)
2. Encourage bicycling and walking.
3. Traffic calming.
4. Minimize disruptions to motorists (**new!**)
5. Improve the streetscape.
6. Encourage transit use.
7. Revitalize West Alameda.
8. Improve public access to the San Francisco Bay.
9. Improve truck access.

Road Diet and Bike Lane Consideration

Complete Streets projects often involve "**road diets**" or reduction of travel lanes as occurred on Shore Line Drive and Westline Drive. These road diets provide the opportunity to reallocate space on the street for bicycling and on-street parking, make it easier and safer for pedestrians to cross the street and reduce speeding. The complete street changes on Shore Line Drive and Westline Drive did just that - speeds are reduced, bicyclists have their own lanes and on-street parking has increased for the condo/apartment dwellers with no more towing on the beach side of the street. For Central Avenue, city staff is working with the community on how to move forward with a potential complete street project. The question for the community is whether to have a road diet with bike lanes and a center two-way left-turn lane like Broadway, Atlantic Avenue and Fernside Blvd. or to go with the status quo (Table 1).

Table 1: Comparison of Traffic Volumes

| Street Name | Vehicles/Day |
|---|---------------------|
| Atlantic Avenue (Buena Vista to Constitution Way) | 10,956 |
| Broadway (Santa Clara Avenue to Otis Drive) | 10,552 |
| Fernside Blvd (Tilden Way to High Street) | 8,550 |
| Central Avenue (Main to Webster) | 9,327 |
| Central Avenue (Webster to Sherman) | 7,600 |

The **Federal Highway Administration** (FHWA) advises that streets with average daily traffic of 20,000 vehicles per day or less may be good candidates for a road diet. According to the FHWA, road diet benefits are as follows:

- Decrease vehicle travel lanes for pedestrians to cross;
- Allow for better visibility of pedestrians waiting or attempting to cross the street;
- Improve circulation for bicyclists when a bikeway is added;
- Provide the opportunity for additional on-street parking, which is also a buffer between pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles;
- Reduce rear-end, sideswipe and left-turn collisions by 19 to 47 percent through the use of a center two-way left-turn lane;
- Improve speed limit compliance by 3 to 5 miles per hour, which reduces the severity of collisions; and
- Improve travel flow since through vehicles are separated from left-turning vehicles.

The consulting team/staff is in the process of analyzing traffic volumes that include **future build-out** from the expected cumulative developments using a 2035 build-out scenario of the travel demand model. Note that this future build-out analysis is considered conservative because not all the development could occur. The travel demand model also assumes the current mode split without reductions to motor vehicle travel after the implementation of improved bikeways and transportation demand management strategies by the developments. With existing four lanes in 2035, there is one capacity constraint expected at the Webster Street/Central Avenue intersection with increased delays expected on Webster Street southbound. All other intersections are expected to operate below capacity. With a three-lane road diet, there are expected to be three capacity constraints in 2035 if cumulative build-out were to occur:

- Fifth Street/Central Avenue intersection - delays at the all-way stop
- Webster Street/Central Avenue intersection
- Eighth Street/Central Avenue intersection

For the **bikeway approach**, the consultant/staff team considered cycle tracks, buffered/protected bike lanes, conventional Class II bike lanes similar to Broadway as well as Class III bike routes similar to Oak Street by the Main Library and the status quo/do nothing. Staff recommends moving forward with the following options for consideration (Figures 2 through 4):

- A. Do Nothing / Status Quo (Figure 2)
- B. Sharrow Markings (Class III Bike Route): shared lane for motorists and bicyclists (Figure 3)
- C. Class II Bike Lanes (Figure 4)

Figure 2: Do Nothing / Status Quo (Option A)



Figure 3: Sharrow Markings - Class III Bike Route (Option B)



Figure 4: Class II Bike Lanes (Option C)



The cycle track options were eliminated because of the frequency of driveways and intersections, especially east of Washington Park/Eighth Street. The buffered/protected bike lane options were eliminated since they would have removed two motor vehicle travel lanes prohibiting space for a center two-way left-turn lane.

Concept Proposal Components

When developing the concept to request Transportation Commission approval in November, staff will use the above concept goals as a guide, and will consider the following components:

- a) **Bikeway:** As stated above, staff is considering three options: Do nothing/status quo (Option A), Sharrow Markings (Option B) and Class II Bike Lanes (Option C).
- b) **Intersections/Driveways:** Staff will consider enhancements such as a traffic signal at the Third Street/Taylor Avenue intersection, green pavement, high visibility marked crosswalks, lighting, flashing lights, curb bulb-outs and parking restrictions to ensure safety and enhance visibility when requested.
- c) **Sidewalk Improvements:** Staff will work to ensure all curb ramps are accessible and that a continuous path of travel exists along the sidewalks.
- d) **Streetscape Improvements:** Staff will identify short-, medium- and long-term goals for overall tree health and longevity and will identify areas for new trees within the corridor.
- e) **Transit Improvements:** Staff will work with AC Transit to come up with strategies to improve transit in the west end as well as to improve bus stops with potential benches or bus shelters as well as access/egress, locations and loading/unloading of passengers.
- f) **Utility Improvements:** Staff will coordinate sewer and storm water utility improvements to occur before potential street improvements. Public Works staff will work with Alameda Municipal Power staff to potentially underground overhead utility lines and thereby eliminating some of the utility poles on the street.
- g) **Street Reconfiguration - West End:** Staff will consider options on moving the street further west into Alameda Point and away from the residents along Central Avenue, which also could provide more bikeway and on-street parking options in this street segment as well as removing the intersection offset at Main Street/Pacific Avenue.
- h) **Pavement Resurfacing:** Staff will prioritize pavement resurfacing to occur after sidewalk and utility improvements, and will consider drainage improvements with the resurfacing.
- i) **San Francisco Bay Trail Gap Closure:** The consulting team and staff considered extending the San Francisco Bay Trail east behind Encinal High School. Due to limited space behind Encinal High School and where it would connect to Third Street, staff will not be pursuing this bay trail extension. It is considered too costly and disruptive to Encinal High School. Instead, staff will work with the community to consider ways to improve Boat Ramp Road as the continued way for bay trail access.
- j) **Disabled Parking Spaces:** Staff will consider potential locations for designated disabled parking spots.
- k) **Truck Access:** As a truck route, this street needs to have adequate travel lane widths, turning radii and loading zones for deliveries.

Budget Considerations/Fiscal Impact

There is no impact to the General Fund. This complete street corridor concept proposal is funded by Caltrans through a Community-based Transportation Planning grant totaling \$232,000. The local match is paid for by the Alameda County Transportation Commission through Measure B - Alameda County's transportation sales tax - totaling \$25,800.

Environmental Review

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), this project is Categorical Exempt under the CEQA Guidelines Section 15301(c) – Existing Facilities and 15304(b) - Minor Alterations to Land and 15304(h). In accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act, this project is a Categorical Exclusion under 23 Code of Federal Regulations 771.117(c): activity (c)(3) - Construction of bicycle and pedestrian lanes, paths and facilities.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Transportation Commission discuss the Central Avenue Complete Street Concept Proposal.

Respectfully submitted,

Gail Payne, Public Works

Exhibits

- 1: Compilation of Comments (Community Workshop #1 and Open Forum)
- 2: PowerPoint for Transportation Commission Meeting (May 27, 2015)