

## Details

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Title: Adoption of Resolution Establishing Policies on Street Width, Lane Width, Crosswalks and Bulb-Outs to Promote Safe, Livable Streets and Environmentally Sustainable Transportation Choices; and Recommendation to Provide Direction to Staff on Tools for Improving Safety at Intersections. (Planning, Building and Transportation 4227287) [Not heard on March 17, 2020]

Attachments: 1. [Exhibit 1 - Street Width Guidelines](#), 2. [Resolution](#), 3. [Correspondence - Updated 4-21](#)

Text

Title

Adoption of Resolution Establishing Policies on Street Width, Lane Width, Crosswalks and Bulb-Outs to Promote Safe, Livable Streets and Environmentally Sustainable Transportation Choices; and Recommendation to Provide Direction to Staff on Tools for Improving Safety at Intersections. (Planning, Building and Transportation 4227287) [Not heard on March 17, 2020]

Body

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

On September 3, 2019, the City Council approved a Council Referral to "Consider Providing Direction to Staff on Transportation Priorities in Advance of the Active Transportation Plan Work." The enclosed resolution addresses several of the requested short term actions, including an updated policy on lane widths and bike lanes, and, by addressing crosswalks and bulb-outs, it provides direction for the development of a "safety toolkit." Staff are continuing to work on the additional items outlined in the referral, which will be brought to future City Council meetings and/or, as appropriate, will be included in the upcoming Active Transportation Plan.

The purpose of the enclosed resolution for City Council consideration is to increase safety for all and to promote walking, biking and transit use to meet objectives in the City of Alameda General Plan, Climate Action & Resiliency Plan, and Vision Zero policy. The draft policy, if approved, will be included in the Active Transportation Plan.

Staff is also seeking public and Transportation Commission input on standards for crosswalk placement and protection, including the use of lower cost, rapid installation treatments for pedestrian bulb outs. Public input on these issues will inform the development of a "safety toolkit" of standard improvements that may be cost effectively used by the City of Alameda (City) to improve pedestrian safety throughout the City.

**BACKGROUND**

Between 2009 and 2018, each year an average of two people died and nine suffered severe injuries while traveling by car, bicycle or on foot on Alameda's streets. In the fall of 2019, 12 collisions involving school-aged children walking or biking occurred on City streets. As of mid-February 2020, there have already been two pedestrian fatalities in Alameda this calendar year.

On November 5, 2019, the City Council adopted a Vision Zero policy aimed at reducing and ultimately eliminating severe and fatal injuries caused by traffic collisions in Alameda. The policy establishes safety as the number one priority for the design, reconfiguration and maintenance of City streets. Vision Zero dictates that we change the way the public right of way looks, feels and operates to achieve Alameda's transportation, safety and climate action goals. The Vision Zero policy directs staff to "immediately evaluate and recommend modifications to existing standards and policies for auto travel lane widths; street width for fire access; bike lane and buffer design; crosswalk design; and rapid installation bulb outs and other pedestrian safety facilities, with the goal of improving roadway safety for all users." The enclosed resolution addresses all five of these areas.

The Vision Zero policy formalizes the City's use of the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Guides, which are endorsed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Caltrans and utilized by cities across the country. NACTO's Urban Street Design Guide and the Urban Bikeway Design Guide contain forward-thinking strategies for designing streets that are safer for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists.

On February 4, 2020, the Public Works Department reported to the City Council on the City's recent responses and coming work plan to make City streets safer.

On February 26, 2020, the Transportation Commission reviewed the staff's proposed draft policy on lane widths and right of way priorities. The Commission voted 6-0 in support of the draft policy. The Commission was in strong support of the larger goals and priorities included in the policy, but a number of Commissioners raised concerns about the lack of locally available data to support the more specific elements and dimensions described in the policy. The Commission discussed the importance of good data in support of the more detailed guidelines and the importance of benchmarking to ensure and confirm that changes to roadway configurations result in the predicted outcomes.

**DISCUSSION****Safety Above All Else:**

The enclosed resolution lays out guiding principles and establishes a hierarchy for allocating right-of-way space when designing, redesigning and resurfacing streets. Safe and convenient access for vulnerable road users comes first, including children, seniors, and people bicycling and walking. Transit priority comes next, as well as Americans with Disabilities Act accessibility. Accepting these priorities necessarily de-prioritizes the preservation of on-street parking. Adoption of this resolution will result in less space in the public right-of-way for the short- and long-term storage of private vehicles.

While the proposed resolution is prescriptive in nature, it also preserves needed flexibility. The City Engineer will have the ability to make exceptions to the proposed standards at individual locations and in special circumstances to ensure safe conditions, given Alameda's myriad of unique street widths and conditions. To ensure public safety, the Fire Chief will also have the authority to require adequate space in specific locations for access to specific buildings for aerial apparatus (i.e. ladder trucks).

**Travel Lane Widths:**

Measures that reduce motor vehicle speeds can save lives: a person walking has only a 50% chance of living if hit by a car traveling 42 miles per hour, but that same person has a 90% chance of living if the car is traveling 23 miles per hour. Per NACTO's Urban Street Design Guide, wider travel lanes are correlated with higher vehicle speeds.

When residents feel unsafe on City streets, it diminishes their quality of life. The resolution makes clear that auto travel lanes should not be overly wide, which increases speeding, as well as the number and severity of collisions, which, in turn, makes people less likely to walk, bike or ride transit. According to NACTO, 10-foot wide travel lanes are appropriate in urban areas and have positive safety benefits without impacting traffic operations. The draft policy establishes 10 feet as the standard travel lane width in Alameda, except on designated truck and/or transit routes, where 11 feet is preferred. To maintain safe and efficient operations, NACTO provides further guidance for lanes used by transit, recommending 19 to 21 feet for combined travel and parking lane widths, and 22 to 24 feet in combined width for adjacent opposing lanes used for transit.

#### **Bicycle Lane and Parking Lane Widths:**

Allocating space between automobile travel lanes and the curb for bicycle lanes and on-street parking lanes requires a careful balance and marking of space to ensure the safety of the person bicycling, who is the most vulnerable among these users. The draft policy establishes use of space for the safety of people bicycling as a higher priority than the use of space for on-street parking. The policy states that a standard width for parking is 8 feet, but acknowledges that 7 feet is sometimes needed. (7-foot parking lanes are not uncommon in Alameda.) In some scenarios, due to existing conditions or the desire to accommodate bicycle or transit facilities, 7-foot parking lanes may be permitted.

Public Works Department staff prepared design guidance (Exhibit 1), which is reflective of the draft policy, to govern how bike lanes, buffers and parking lanes will be marked when there is non-metered parking. Class II bike lanes will typically be 5 or 6 feet wide. Where additional street width exists, wider parking lanes would be marked to create a door-zone buffer. Door-zone conflicts are a known cause of injury collisions for people biking. This space can also provide an informal accessible path of travel for those with mobility issues, as they enter and exit their vehicles.

#### **Crosswalks and Bulb-outs:**

In Alameda, pedestrians and children walking and biking are being struck by automobiles in crosswalks. Marked crosswalks alert motorists to expect people crossing the street and serve as a reminder to motorists and pedestrians that the public roadway is also serving the walking public, who is the most vulnerable among these users. Shortening crossing distances, slowing turning movements and visually narrowing the roadway through the use of marked bulb-outs increases pedestrian safety. The safety impacts are even greater when accompanied by the use of bollards and/or other physical barriers and indicators.

The City of Oakland found an 80 percent increase in the frequency of drivers yielding to pedestrians after installing a paint-and-bollard bulb-out at the uncontrolled intersection of Harrison Street and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. In addition to a number of striped bulb-outs, 2019 also brought Alameda's first installation of a paint-and-bollard bulb-out at the intersection of Broadway and Bayview Drive. These types of bulb-outs can be implemented relatively quickly and inexpensively compared to permanently extending the sidewalk with concrete to create a new curb line.

The resolution states that marked crosswalks shall be placed at regular and frequent intervals on arterial and collector streets. Under current Public Works guidelines, crossings have to meet specific pedestrian volumes, or warrants, to be considered for marked crosswalks. Going forward, this policy ensures that people, who would use a marked crosswalk if it existed, are counted when placement of crosswalks is considered. Looking ahead, placement will be prioritized according to high injury corridors, uncontrolled crossings of arterial and collector streets, and locations, corridors and typologies identified in the upcoming Active Transportation and Vision Zero Action Plans.

#### **Outstanding Questions:**

Restriping, adding crosswalks, and adding bulb-outs requires additional expenditures of limited public funds for roadway improvements and annual maintenance. Bollards and striping must be maintained and replaced. Bollards and physical barriers on streets that protect people walking and bicycling also reduce the efficiency of the City's street sweeping program. These increased costs will need to be reflected in future City budgets and may impact the City's ability to improve pavement conditions or deliver other improvements.

As staff continues to develop an updated toolkit of policies and design guidelines, staff would appreciate input and direction on a number of key questions:

- Should crosswalks always be placed at intersections in pairs or quads? Are there compelling safety, automobile congestion, or cost saving reasons to channel pedestrians to cross at one side of an intersection?
- Given limited public resources, what types of intersections or conditions should merit the highest priority for installation of bollards or other physical barriers to calm traffic and exclude vehicles from encroaching on marked bulb-outs? Examples are the highest collision locations and intersections near schools and/or parks.
- Any collision, whether there is an injury or not, between a vulnerable user (people walking or bicycling) and an automobile is unacceptable. When reported, collisions often result in the strong desire by the public and City staff to immediately do something to prevent a future collision at that location. How should the City balance the need and desire to implement immediate changes at a specific location of a recent collision (of any severity) and the need to prioritize limited resources of time and money on the other locations that may be a higher priority, such as locations with a documented record of frequent collisions, serious or fatal collisions, or locations near schools and/or parks that may have a higher number of vulnerable youth or seniors in need of protection?
- Bollards, particularly low cost versions, may be criticized for being "ugly" and reducing the aesthetic environment in neighborhoods. Should aesthetic concerns play a role in the decision-making process, and if so, how?

#### **Update on Alameda Active Transportation and Vision Zero Action Plans:**

Last year, the City embarked on updating its decade-old Bicycle and Pedestrian Plans as one combined Active Transportation Plan (ATP). In July 2019, the City awarded a contract to Toole Design to complete the ATP as well as a Vision Zero Action Plan.

The City and Toole launched the ATP project in August 2019 and since then have been busy with project start-up activities, extensive public engagement, compiling and analyzing existing conditions, and developing the Plan Vision and Goals. Staff and the consultant last provided an update to the Transportation Commission in January 2020, which included soliciting feedback on the draft Vision and Goals. Staff and the consultants are now developing the network, program and policy recommendations, which will be presented to the public for feedback in May. Overall, the ATP project continues to be on track to present a draft Plan to the Transportation Commission in October 2020 and to the City Council before the end of 2020. The project website includes an overview of the project, plus all outreach activities at [www.activealameda.org](http://www.activealameda.org) <<http://www.activealameda.org>>.

Staff is working to implement the City Council-adopted Vision Zero policy. The enclosed resolution helps fulfill one Vision Zero policy resolution item, as noted above. Staff also convened the first Vision Zero Task Force meeting on January 14, 2019. Facilitated by Toole Design, these meetings will take place regularly over the coming year to help develop the Alameda Vision Zero Action Plan by early 2021. The Task Force comprises community members such as a traffic violence victim family member, an Alameda Point Collaborative resident, and an AUSD parent/Safe Routes to School champion; representatives from the Commission on Disability and the Transportation Commission; staff from external agencies including AUSD, AC Transit, and the Alameda County

Public Health Dept.; and City staff from the City Manager's Office, Police, Fire, Public Works, Economic Development, ARPD's Mastick Senior Center, and Planning, Building, and Transportation.

A multidisciplinary staff-level Vision Zero Implementation Team was also established and has met bi-weekly since November 2019. This group works on collision response and near-term traffic safety improvements, and will eventually be responsible for implementing the Vision Zero Action Plan. The group recently agreed upon a collision response protocol that includes a requirement that staff from Police, Public Works, and Planning, Building, and Transportation meet on-site after all fatal and severe crashes.

The Vision Zero project webpage includes resources such as high injury network maps, a collision map, and meeting materials; along with links to Public Works' new traffic calming and safety webpages at [www.AlamedaCA.gov/VisionZero](http://www.AlamedaCA.gov/VisionZero) <<http://www.AlamedaCA.gov/VisionZero>>.

#### ALTERNATIVES

- Adopt the policy as recommended and give direction on the questions raised in this report.
- Make changes to the policy prior to adoption and give direction.

#### FINANCIAL IMPACT

Implementation of the proposed policy will be incorporated into existing contracts and projects, which have dedicated funding sources. No funding allocation is being requested at this time; however, future requests for funding related to this policy will need to balance the need to increase traffic safety with other priorities such as the amount of roadway miles that can be resurfaced each year.

#### MUNICIPAL CODE/POLICY DOCUMENT CROSS REFERENCE

Adopting a resolution on safe street design and traffic safety countermeasures is consistent with many existing City policies and planning documents, including:

- Vision Zero policy (adopted in 2019) to reduce the number of traffic deaths and severe injuries;
- Climate Action and Resiliency Plan (2019) requirement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 50% below 2005 levels by 2030; and
- Transportation Choices Plan (2018) Goal #2 to increase the share of walking, bicycling, bus and carpooling trips within Alameda.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Approval to develop planning documents is statutorily exempt from further review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3), the general rule that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Adoption of this policy does not have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Any future physical changes to the environment or roadway network that requires discretionary action by the City Council or Transportation Commission will be subject to future environmental review.

#### CLIMATE IMPACTS

Transportation is the largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Alameda. Making streets safer and easier for people who walk, bike and/or use transit will encourage more of these trips and fewer automobile trips.

#### RECOMMENDATION

Adopt a resolution establishing policies on street width, lane width, crosswalks and bulb-outs to promote safe, livable streets and environmentally sustainable transportation choices.

#### CITY MANAGER RECOMMENDATION

The City Manager recommends the adoption of the resolution establishing policies on street width, lane width, crosswalks and bulb-outs to promote safe, livable streets and environmentally sustainable transportation choices.

Respectfully submitted,  
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By,  
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Financial Impact section reviewed,  
Elena Adair, Finance Director

Exhibit:  
1. Street Width Guidelines

cc: Eric Levitt, City Manager