



**Contra
Costa
County**

To: Board of Supervisors

From: John Kopchik, Director, Conservation & Development Department

Date: October 18, 2016

Subject: Approval of the Olympic Corridor Trail Connector Study

RECOMMENDATION(S):

APPROVE the Olympic Corridor Trail Connector Study, AUTHORIZE staff to seek funding for detailed project planning, design, and implementation, and seek subsequent Board approval for specific project elements as appropriate.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None to the General Fund. Staff time for recommended activities are covered under existing budgets (50% Road Fund and 50% Measure J Fund)

BACKGROUND:

Using Measure J - TLC Grant funds that were awarded to the County by the Contra Costa Transportation Authority (CCTA), the Olympic Corridor Trail Connector Study (OCTCS) (Exhibit A) was undertaken to address a bicycle and pedestrian network gap along the Olympic Boulevard corridor. The gap is from the Lafayette-Moraga Trail (LMT) in the City of Lafayette, through the unincorporated areas of Saranap and Parkmead, to the Iron Horse Trail (IHT) in the City of Walnut Creek.

The OCTCS identified strategies to close this gap and provide a safe and enjoyable

☒ APPROVE

☐ OTHER

☒ RECOMMENDATION OF CNTY

☐ RECOMMENDATION OF BOARD

ADMINISTRATOR

COMMITTEE

Action of Board On: **10/18/2016** ☒ APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED ☐ OTHER

Clerks Notes:

VOTE OF SUPERVISORS

AYE: John Gioia, District I Supervisor

Candace Andersen, District II
Supervisor

Mary N. Piepho, District III Supervisor

Karen Mitchoff, District IV Supervisor

Federal D. Glover, District V
Supervisor

I hereby certify that this is a true and correct copy of an action taken and entered on the minutes of the Board of Supervisors on the date shown.

ATTESTED: October 18, 2016

David Twa, County Administrator and Clerk of the Board of Supervisors

Contact: John Cunningham
(925) 674-7833

By: June McHuen, Deputy

cc:

pedestrian and bicycle connection along the corridor.

The importance of the Olympic Corridor Trail Connector (Olympic Connector) has been recognized for some time. In an October 2014 letter from the Board of Supervisors to CCTA, the Olympic Connector was identified as a

BACKGROUND: (CONT'D)

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high-priority project for the County. The Olympic Connector is a critical facility, for the following reasons:

- This Olympic Boulevard corridor is identified as an unfinished segment in the Contra Costa Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan.
- The Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan identifies Olympic Boulevard as an important bicycle corridor.
- The Olympic Connector provides a connection between two significant regional trails in the County.
- The Olympic Connector will help improve the County's trips-by-bicycle rate, which is currently the lowest among all the Bay Area counties.
- Protected bicycle lanes or cycle tracks have shown to be the most effective infrastructure investment in increasing bicycle use.
- Provision of separated bicycle facilities, of the type proposed in the study, are effective in increasing safety for both cyclists and motorists.

The OCTCS was initiated by the County Department of Conservation and Development and the Public Works Department, in collaboration with the Cities of Walnut Creek and Lafayette. A Technical Advisory Committee, consisting of staff from all three jurisdictions and staff from the East Bay Regional Parks District, discussed previous and current planning efforts, identified opportunities and challenges, and guided the alignment selection. The technical work for the plan was developed by the consultant, Alta Planning & Design, with assistance from subconsultants Harrison Engineering, DKS Associates, and Environmental Collaborative. One stakeholder meeting and two community workshops were held in 2014 and 2015, where input and ideas were solicited and received.

Several options were considered to close the gap. Alignments that were eliminated include Paulson Lane, Boulevard Way/Mount Diablo Boulevard, and Las Trampas Creek routes. These alignments were deemed unsuitable due to steep grades, environmental concerns, indirect routes, and/or potential conflicts with adjacent residences. However, some of these alignments, particularly along Paulson Lane, may be considered as a connection in the future.

The preferred alignment identified in the OCTCS spans from the LMT in Lafayette, to the IHT in Walnut Creek in a route that runs along Olympic Boulevard to California Boulevard, continues south on California Boulevard to Newell Avenue, and then on Newell Avenue east to the IHT. (See Olympic Connector overview on Page 5-1 of Exhibit A.) This alignment was chosen for a number of reasons. The primary reason is because it is the most direct route and the current primary route for bicycle trips. The Study also included consideration of environmental factors. The preferred alternative had the least potential impacts. This option was overwhelmingly supported as the most

popular alignment among community members and stakeholders. Minor alternate or supporting routes are proposed along Newell Avenue from Olympic Boulevard to California Boulevard, and other residential streets south of Newell Avenue.

Details of the Olympic Connector

The OCTCS proposes a number of short-term improvements, which are lower cost and require fewer modifications to the roadways along the corridor. In addition, there are longer-term improvements which are more costly and would require substantial reconfiguration of roads and travel lanes along the corridor, and collaboration with private owners for potential right-of-way acquisitions. All improvements, particularly the long-term improvements, would require phasing as funding becomes available. The cost estimates provided below include both the short term improvements and the additional costs of the long term improvements.

Lafayette

The Lafayette segment of the Olympic Connector begins at the terminus of the LMT at Reliez Station Road and heads east along the Olympic Corridor to just west of the intersection of Olympic Boulevard and Windtree Court. The recommended primary short-term improvement to this segment would be the addition of buffered bike lanes, which would be achieved by narrowing existing vehicle lanes and medians. In addition, a number of safety improvements are proposed at the Reliez Station Road and Pleasant Hill Road Intersections, including a roundabout at the Pleasant Hill Intersection, which is currently under construction. The recommended long-term improvement for this segment would be the widening of an existing path on the north side to a shared-use path. The City of Lafayette is currently constructing a roundabout at the intersection of Olympic Boulevard and Pleasant Hill Road.

Cost of all Short-Term Improvements in the City of Lafayette- \$1,194,000

Cost of all Long-Term Improvements in the City of Lafayette- \$1,250,000

Walnut Creek

The Walnut Creek segment of the Olympic Connector starts at Olympic Boulevard and I-680 and winds through Downtown Walnut Creek via South California Boulevard and Newell Avenue towards the Iron Horse Trail. The Connector runs in proximity to a Priority Development Area (PDA) in Downtown Walnut Creek. Recommended short-term improvements would consist of the construction of bicycle lanes in the sections that approach Downtown, while concurrently narrowing vehicle lanes, and the addition of sharrows, or shared lane markings, in the sections within the Downtown area, due to insufficient space to construct bicycle lanes. Recommended long-term improvements would primarily be the construction of a cycle track or bike path alongside Olympic Boulevard, South California Boulevard, and Newell Avenue. To achieve this, several major infrastructure modifications to the roadways would be needed, including removing travel lanes or parking spaces, acquiring private property, and relocating utilities. In addition, a new pedestrian-bicycle bridge would be constructed across Las Trampas Creek on South California Boulevard.

The City of Walnut Creek is actively implementing some Study-identified improvements; green-colored bicycle lanes have been installed on Olympic Boulevard in the vicinity of the I-680 overcrossing and further east. Consistent with the Study recommendations, staff is seeking to advance the project to push back the abutments at the I-680 overcrossing along Olympic Boulevard in order to increase available right-of-way for additional improvements.

Cost of all Short-Term Improvements in the City of Walnut Creek- \$221,000

Cost of all Long-Term Improvements in the City of Walnut Creek- \$4,748,000

County

The County segment of the Olympic Connector extends from Olympic Boulevard just west of Windtree Court to Olympic Boulevard at I-680, along with a number of supportive alignments south of Olympic Boulevard.

Olympic Boulevard from Windtree Court to Newell Court

This section of Olympic Boulevard is currently a two-lane road with a striped median, with bicycle lanes in each direction. The north side of the roadway has a pedestrian pathway. At the Newell Court intersection, the pedestrian path on the north side connects via a crosswalk to a Class I path on the south side of Olympic Boulevard. The recommended short-term improvement to this section would be the creation of buffered bike lanes, which would be achieved by narrowing the vehicle lanes. The recommended long-term improvement would be the widening of the path on the north side from 4 feet to a shared 10-foot path. This would be achieved by narrowing the median and shifting some sections of the northern vehicle lane south.

Cost of Short-Term Improvements in this Segment- \$118,000

Cost of Long-Term Improvements in this Segment- \$490,000

Olympic Boulevard from Newell Court to Tice Valley Boulevard/Boulevard Way

In this section, Olympic Boulevard is currently a two-lane roadway, with an additional frontage road to the south. There are bicycle lanes in each direction. On-street parking is prohibited on this section. A sidewalk on the north side of Olympic Boulevard runs west from the Tice Valley Boulevard/Boulevard Way intersection, terminating before the Bridgefield Road intersection, leaving a sidewalk gap until Newell Court. The entire length of the south side has a Class I path. Recommended short-term improvements to this section would consist of buffered bicycle lanes and improved intersection crossings for pedestrians and bicyclists. The recommended long-term improvement to this section would be an extension of the north side sidewalk into one continuous path.

Cost of Short-Term Improvements in this Segment- \$223,000

Cost of Long-Term Improvements in this Segment- \$614,000

Olympic Boulevard from Tice Valley Boulevard/Boulevard Way to Newell Avenue

This section of Olympic Boulevard is a divided 4-lane road with left turn pockets. There is an existing path along the north side of the roadway. No bicycle lanes exist in this section. Some residences on the north side have direct access onto Olympic Boulevard. The south side of the roadway has commercial buildings and residences that have direct

access onto Olympic Boulevard. On-street parking is currently allowed on the south side of the roadway. Recommended short-term improvements consist of the addition of bicycle lanes, which would require the narrowing of existing travel lanes, and an improved sidepath on the north side of Olympic Boulevard. At the southwest corner of Olympic Boulevard and Newell Avenue, an existing narrow drainage opening can be modified to allow a right turn for bicyclists from eastbound Olympic Boulevard to the supportive route on Newell Avenue (described in depth below). The recommended long-term improvement would be an extension of the sidepath on the north side to Newell Avenue, which would require utilizing space from an existing bus pullout and landscaped street frontage. Another long-term improvement would be the addition of high-visibility crosswalks at the intersection of Olympic Boulevard and Newell Avenue.

Cost of Short-Term Improvements in this Segment- \$645,000

Cost of Long-Term Improvements in this Segment- \$632,000

Olympic Boulevard from Newell Avenue to Southbound I-680 On/Off-Ramps

In this section, Olympic Boulevard continues as a divided 4-lane road with left turn pockets. There are currently no bicycle lanes in either direction in this section of Olympic Boulevard. There is also no sidewalk on the south side, due to the minimal space between the curb and the residential backyard fences, while the north side has an existing sidewalk. The north side has about 30 parking spaces, primarily in front of an adjacent condominium complex. The recommended short-term improvement would be the implementation of bicycle lanes or, if space permits, buffered bicycle lanes, which would be achieved by re-striping and narrowing the existing travel lanes. Recommended long-term improvements would involve a major shifting of the road, including a narrowing of all travel lanes to 11 feet, and a narrowing of the median to various widths to accommodate a new 10-foot wide sidepath on the north side of Olympic Boulevard. The realignment would be done in a way to minimize parking loss; however, the realignment would likely result in a loss of 7 to 8 on-street parking spaces. A parking study and parking mitigation measures will be undertaken to address this impact at the time this segment/phase moves ahead. Because of the current lack of bicycle facilities and the low cost of short-term improvements, this section should be given a higher priority for implementation.

Cost of Short-Term Improvements in this Segment- \$161,000

Cost of Long-Term Improvements in this Segment- \$1,661,000

Newell Avenue, West of I-680

Newell Avenue west of I-680 is a two-lane roadway that passes through a residential neighborhood and by Parkmead Elementary School and Tice Creek Middle School. Since this road has lower vehicular traffic volumes than Olympic Boulevard, it is a popular route for bicyclists, particularly weekend bicyclists who are going towards the IHT. Recommended improvements to this segment would consist of the installation of wayfinding signage and maps on the routes leading up to Newell Avenue, west of I-680, that signify that this segment is an alternate to the main route on Olympic Boulevard. In addition, signage can direct bicyclists to additional connections from Newell Avenue south (described in more detail below) to the IHT. No physical improvements are

proposed for this segment. Once long-term improvements are implemented on the main route on Olympic Boulevard and California Boulevard, this alignment will continue to serve as the low-stress route along this section of the Olympic Connector.

Costs of Short-Term Improvements in this Segment- \$15,000

Southern Connections to the Iron Horse Trail

Some bicyclists use the roads south of Newell Avenue, such as Lilac Drive and Lancaster Road, to connect to the IHT to the south, particularly if they are heading in the direction of Danville and San Ramon. In addition, some of these routes are ideal for bicyclists heading to Kaiser Hospital or Las Lomas High School. The installation of wayfinding signage and maps are recommended to identify these routes as optional connections between the Olympic Connector and IHT. No physical improvements are being considered for this segment.

Costs of Short-Term Improvements in this Segment- \$15,000

Funding

The total cost of all short-term improvements for the Olympic Connector is approximately \$2,592,000, with the cost of all short-term improvements within the County's segment totaling \$1,177,000. The total cost of all long-term improvements for the Olympic Corridor is approximately \$9,395,000, with the cost of all long-term improvements within the County's segment totaling \$3,397,000. Potential funding sources for these improvements include the following:

Federal

- Fixing America's Surface Transportation Act (FAST Act)
- Congestion Management and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)
- Partnership for Sustainable Communities
- Federal Transit Act
- Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) Grants
- Community Transformation Grants

State

- Active Transportation Program
- State Highway Account
- Climate Ready Grant Program - CA State Coastal Conservancy
- Office of Traffic Safety Grants

Local/Regional

- Measure J
- One Bay Area Grant Program
- Transportation Fund for Clean Air
- Developer Impact Fees
- New Construction
- Proposed Measure X (November 2016 ballot)

Private Sources

- Bikes Belong Grant Program
- Bank of America Charitable Foundation, Inc.
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- Community Action for a Renewed Environment
- Corporate Donations

Next Steps

The next steps for this project are identified below:

1. *Secure Funding*: Staff will pursue grants to fund activities identified below.
2. *Site Survey - Base Map and Information*: Detailed maps will be created that identify the areas of improvement, adjacent areas, and other pertinent geographical and topographical data
3. *Community Outreach for Individual Trail Segments*: Expanding on the OCTCS and public outreach conducted for it, staff will conduct outreach efforts to inform and receive feedback from the affected property owners and school communities on more detailed design work for individual segments of the Olympic Connector.
4. *Preliminary Design*: Preliminary design will include more detailed plans, including relatively accurate locations, dimensions, materials, and features, which will assist in developing a corresponding preliminary cost estimate. The preliminary plans would be the basis for environmental documents for the project. Following the preliminary design, additional community outreach will be conducted so residents can understand how their feedback was incorporated into the design.
5. *Environmental Studies and Documentation*: Environmental studies and findings are required to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). If federal funds are involved, additional documents would be required to address the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The environmental studies must review and address a broad range of potential environmental issues.
6. *Technical Studies*: Technical studies are in-depth studies of various features related to the project, such as geotechnical studies, traffic, and hydrology.
7. *Finalize Layout*: Based upon additional environmental, technical, and community feedback, the layout of the facilities for each segment will be revised if needed and finalized to move forward with construction documents.
8. *Permits*: Project sponsors must obtain the necessary permits and agreements for the project to proceed. Examples of some permits that may be required are the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers 401 Permit(s), Streambed Alteration Agreement from the California Department of Fish and Game, and an Encroachment Permit from Caltrans.
9. *Construction Documents*: The preliminary plans will be refined into definitive plans that contain construction drawings, specifications, and cost estimates.
10. *Right-of-Way Acquisition*: Real Estate Services will work with property owners to acquire easement or other type of temporary or permanent land rights to allow the project to be implemented.
11. *Bidding and Contracting*: Contract bid documents will be prepared and the project will be advertised for public bid. Bids will be analyzed and the sponsoring agency

will contract with the most qualified contractor.

12. *Construction*: The contractor will construct the project, while the responsible agency(-ies) will oversee the work of the contractor.

Staff will provide updates on the development of the Olympic Connector to the Board, through the Transportation, Water, and Infrastructure Committee, as subsequent steps are taken.

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Findings

This activity is statutorily exempt from CEQA, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15262, which provides that CEQA does not apply to projects involving only feasibility or planning studies for future actions that have not been approved or funded. The OCTCS identifies possible future actions to be undertaken during the project development process, but approval of the OCTCS does not confer final approval of or require the County to take any future actions. Additional CEQA analysis will be undertaken when project development is initiated.

CONSEQUENCE OF NEGATIVE ACTION:

The pedestrian and bicycle gap along the Olympic Corridor between the Lafayette-Moraga Trail and the Iron Horse Trail will continue to exist. Goals and policies of the General Plan and other policies will not be implemented relative to this project.

ATTACHMENTS

Exhibit A - Olympic Corridor Trail Connector Study