



Contra
Costa
County

To: Board of Supervisors

From: TRANSPORTATION, WATER & INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE

Date: July 14, 2020

Subject: Iron Horse Corridor Active Transportation Study

RECOMMENDATION(S):

APPROVE the Iron Horse Corridor Active Transportation Study and DIRECT staff from the Departments of Conservation and Development and Public Works to pursue next steps (e.g. project development activities and public outreach) as outlined in the Study in coordination with the Iron Horse Corridor Management Program Advisory Committee and affected committees.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None to the General Fund. A Contra Costa Transportation Authority – Measure J Transportation for Livable Communities grant funded development of the Iron Horse Corridor Active Transportation Study. Staff time for recommended activities are covered under existing budgets (50% Road Fund and 50% Measure J Fund).

☒ APPROVE

☐ OTHER

☒ RECOMMENDATION OF CNTY
ADMINISTRATOR

☐ RECOMMENDATION OF BOARD
COMMITTEE

Action of Board On: **07/14/2020** ☒ APPROVED AS RECOMMENDED ☐ OTHER

Clerks Notes:

VOTE OF SUPERVISORS

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: July 14, 2020

Contact: Jamar Stamps,
(925) 674-7832

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

By: , Deputy

cc:

BACKGROUND:

The Iron Horse Corridor Active Transportation Study (“Study”) (Attachment F) was undertaken with the intent of further developing active transportation (e.g. bicyclists, pedestrians, equestrians, e-bikes) features by analyzing opportunities and constraints within the Corridor. The Study also discusses the potential for accommodating more efficient, long-distance bicycle travel (i.e. bike superhighway). The scope of the Study includes the entire 22 mile length of the Iron Horse Trail within Contra Costa County (State Route 4 to County Line).

In August 2018, the County Department of Conservation and Development and Public Works Department initiated the Study. The County contracted with Alta Planning + Design to develop the Study and provide technical analysis.

The County also conducted outreach to, and collaborated with all of the cities along the corridor as well as with the following stakeholders:

- Alamo Municipal Advisory Council
- Southwest Transportation Advisory Committee (SWAT)
- TRANSPAC - Central County Regional Transportation Advisory Committee
- Iron Horse Corridor Management Program Advisory Committee (“IHCMPAC”),
- City of Dublin
- East Bay Regional Park District (“EBRPD”)
- Contra Costa Transportation Authority (“CCTA”)
- CCTA's Countywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
- Bike Concord
- Bike East Bay
- Transportation, Water, and Infrastructure Committee
- City of San Ramon Transportation Advisory Committee
- 511 Contra Costa
- Utility companies
- Local community and advocacy organizations (e.g. Center for Independent Living, Bay Area Outreach + Recreation Program (adaptive sports + recreation))

A summary of Study tasks included:

- Received public input via web-based mapping tool.
- Completed technical memos, including the Existing Conditions, Corridor Analysis, Shared Autonomous Vehicle (“SAV”), Demand Analysis and Needs Analysis.
- Held public outreach events along the Iron Horse Trail in various locations.
- Defined study goals and develop improvement concepts and evaluation criteria.
- Convened three Technical Advisory Committee (“TAC”) meetings (October 2018, March and October 2019).

Public Outreach

The Study benefited from public input through a comprehensive public outreach strategy that surveyed a variety of communities and disciplines. Outreach activities began immediately after initiating the Study and continued through Summer/Fall 2019.

County staff and the consultant team engaged in several public and stakeholder outreach events. On December 2, 2018 the consultant team conducted a bike ride of the entire Iron Horse Trail (within Contra Costa County) to help inform our work on the Study. TAC members and members of the public were invited to participate and during the ride were asked to consider the following:

- How you use the trail today?
- How you would like to use the trail in the future?
- Which crossings need improvement?
- How to improve access to the trail?

In January 2019, County staff and the consultant team met with staff from the Center for Independent Living and the Bay Area Outreach and Recreation Program representatives to introduce the project and discuss potential project goals.

In Spring/Summer 2019, the consultant and County staff held six in-person public engagement events where we received feedback from approximately 260 people. Generally, people expressed a desire for: adding amenities (e.g. lighting, shade, and bike stations), increasing access points, prioritizing trail users at road crossings, and providing user separation along the trail.

The online public engagement webmap tool, open from January to August 2019, gathered over 1,100 unique interactions (407 comments and 769 comment likes/votes). Synthesizing this input revealed themes centered primarily around: improving mobility, increasing safety, increasing access/equity and improving the user experience.

Comments from the TAC on the Administrative Draft Study were due on December 13, 2019 and were incorporated into the public Draft Study, which was published on January 21, 2020. The public comment deadline was originally February 13, 2020 but was extended to March 13, 2020 after requests from the public. Staff received significant public comment, most expressing various concerns including lack of notice of availability of the Draft Study, insufficient public outreach, general dissatisfaction with any improvements to the Corridor, and rejection of any conceptual study of micro mobility travel modes (e.g. shared autonomous vehicles (SAVs) and e-scooters). The Alamo Municipal Advisory Council ("MAC") held two meetings to discuss the Study and also provided comments. The Alamo MAC recommended accepting the Study, noting preferences for divided activity lanes, enhanced planting, and downward, low level lighting only, and that project development activities (i.e. funding, design, etc.) need to be disclosed to the Alamo MAC and community prior to implementation to allow for discussion. Lastly, SAVs are vehemently opposed by the Alamo Community. County

staff and the consultant attempted to address comments received by making additional revisions to the Draft Study. Public and agency comment summaries are provided as Attachments B through E.

Vision and Goals

The Study envisions a trail that can serve as an active transportation spine that supports the region's mobility goals and continues to provide a treasured recreational resource for users of all ages and abilities.

- Safety: Enhances trail condition and improves traffic and intersection safety.
- Mobility: Provides connections to transit, trails and on-street facilities; accommodates user demand and enhances user comfort.
- Access & Equity: Provides access to jobs, destinations, parks and open space, and health services; presents opportunities for new access points.
- User Experience: Improves trail conditions and amenities; presents opportunities for stormwater filtration, ecology, new amenities, and placemaking.
- Project Synergy: Aligns with planned projects and existing land uses and allows for future expansion of new technologies.

Potential Trail Improvements

The Corridor was divided into 15 segments, each approximately 0.5 miles to 2.5 miles. Each of the seven Corridor jurisdictions (six incorporated areas and unincorporated County) contain 2 to 3 segments.

The Study recommends improvements for each segment that were developed by paring the corridor and community needs. A data driven corridor analysis documented how the trail connects to regional networks and adjacent land uses, as well as how it currently serves surrounding communities. Each segment's list of potential improvements intends to improve the on-trail experience (e.g. user separation), intersections, access points (existing and new), and connections to existing and planned bikeways and trails. Implementing a coordinated vision will also improve travel for higher speed cyclists by providing an efficient route for faster, long-distance travel (i.e. commuting or other utilitarian purposes).

The Study also investigates potential for emerging mobility modes, such as SAV, e-bikes and e-scooters. This is consistent with goals of the CCTA "Innovate 680" program, which seeks to accommodate alternative transportation modes and emerging mobility options that could serve as a first/last mile connection to fixed-route transit, improve mobility options and reduce vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions. The Study also acknowledges implementing emerging mobility in the Corridor could face challenges due to limited data from such an application in other trail corridors, conflicts with existing utilities, and operation and maintenance needs. For SAVs to safely operate within the Corridor they would need to run on a facility fully separated from other non-motorized

modes. The Corridor has space for this type of infrastructure in only a few areas (mainly Walnut Creek and Danville/San Ramon areas). It should be noted significant levels of concern and outright rejection arose about this concept from both the public and other agencies. Ultimately, if further development of this concept were to be pursued, additional study and extensive public outreach, including through the IHCPMAC which has representatives from each Corridor jurisdiction and CCTA, would be necessary.

Project Prioritization/Evaluation

Five evaluation criteria (safety, mobility, access & equity, user experience) were developed by the TAC based on the community-driven goals. Those five criteria were used to evaluate the performance of each project type per segment. The TAC provided feedback on the proposed improvements and results of the recommended prioritization.

An evaluation was conducted to project how many additional users are likely to use the trail if certain design improvements are made. This evaluation modeled three proposed improvement scenarios (improved intersections, increased/improved access, and increase in E-Bikes) and measured how each would impact future demand as well as perception of trip and travel time. Results of the evaluations indicate the following:

Improved Intersections – The Study evaluated how trail priority at all intersections would impact trail users and total bikeable trips. If arterial crossings were separated from the street, collector crossings had signals to decrease trail user waiting times, and local crossings required vehicles to stop, the trail would feel 14% shorter in length than existing conditions. Trail priority would enhance user experience and could encourage more commuters and recreational users to use the trail.

Improved Trail Access – The Study modeled better trail connections. Currently, few comfortable on-street bike facilities connect users to the trail. With the addition of comfortable low-stress bikeways leading to the trail at regular intervals, there would be a significant number of new trips to the trail (up to 23% more trips).

E-Bikes – The Study considered how the presence of e-bikes would impact trail usage. With an increase of electric bikes and scooters, trail user speeds would increase and allow for longer and faster trips. E-bikes would allow users to make trips that are 22% longer and would increase the number of bikeable trips significantly (approximately 27%).

Operation and Maintenance

An important point of discussion among TAC members was how to operate and maintain the Iron Horse Corridor if improvements are implemented. The improvements outlined in this Study will increase operation and maintenance costs significantly, and may require a new strategy.

Currently, the Corridor is owned by Contra Costa County and maintained through the

Iron Horse Corridor Management Program Advisory Committee. The Committee was recently expanded pursuant to AB 1025 (2019) to include a seat for the Contra Costa Transportation Authority and to establish a mechanism to implement emerging mobility technology in the corridor. Please see detail below in the AB 1025 section.

The County also has a license agreement with the East Bay Regional Park District wherein EBRPD they agrees to maintain the 12-foot paved trail portion of the Corridor plus four feet on either side.

Section 6 of the Study discusses potential governance and revenue models. The existing management structure for the Iron Horse Trail is sufficient for the corridor as it exists today. However, a new strategy may be needed to ensure there are adequate funds available to implement and maintain the proposed projects outlined in the Study. Establishing this new strategy will require a coordinated effort between the Corridor stakeholders.

Assembly Bill (“AB”) 1025 (2019)

In the 1980’s, the California Transportation Commission allocated a series of grant funds to the County for a feasibility study and pay for the partial acquisition of the San Ramon Branch Corridor’s right-of-way within which the Iron Horse Trail now resides. Allocation of those funds required the county to reimburse the state if the County failed to meet specified conditions. Specifically, those conditions required the County to (1) conduct a transit system feasibility study, and (2) facilitate the planning and construction of a busway or exclusive mass transit guideway. The feasibility study, completed in 1987, investigated possible transportation improvements within the right-of-way and the Interstate Route 680 corridor between the Cities of Concord and Pleasanton. The feasibility study recommended implementing a light-rail or bus service in the Corridor between Rudgear Road and Sycamore Valley Road.

Consistent with requirements in the grants, the County maintained a 34-foot wide transit area throughout the right-of-way for a busway or exclusive mass transit guideway. However, over time the Corridor experienced significant growth from surrounding areas and accommodated more active transportation uses and eventually became one of the largest and oldest multiuse trails in the San Francisco Bay area, the East Bay Regional Park District’s most used trail, and a cherished community amenity. Requests from adjacent cities and companies to make improvements to the right-of-way (e.g. access and intersection improvements) continues to be a challenge while maintaining the 34-foot wide clear area to accommodate the busway or exclusive mass transit guideway. Under these circumstances, a busway or exclusive mass transit guideway was no longer considered a best practice or appropriate use of the right-of-way. Additionally, the construction of a busway or exclusive mass transit guideway is no longer operationally or financially viable due to the cost of developing these modes of transportation in compact, established communities with substantial density immediately adjacent to urban and suburban uses, and the corresponding density of road and trail crossings, the

overwhelming presence of active mode users, and the status in the community of the Corridor and trail as a linear park, recreational and multiuse facility.

In October 2019, the Governor signed AB 1025 (Grayson). The bill relieved the County of those aforementioned obsolete legacy grant conditions from the 1980s related to the acquisition of the Iron Horse Corridor. Specifically, AB 1025 provides the following:

- Relinquishes the rights of the state to reimbursement of funds appropriated to the County in the 1980s from the Transportation Planning and Development Account for the acquisition of a specified right-of-way, and for associated projects, relating to the San Ramon Branch Corridor.
- Requires the County to revise the bylaws of the Iron Horse Corridor Management Program Advisory Committee to:
 - Include a seat for a Contra Costa Transportation Authority representative,
 - Expand the management program elements to include a new, 7th element that considers proposals to study new and emerging mobility modes and technologies in the corridor, and
 - Include a new task in the committee's work program to recommend a framework for acting on these proposals. The bill would also make findings and declarations in support of these requirements.

AB 1025 cites this Study as evidence that the County remains committed to continuing its good faith effort in working with corridor-adjacent cities and CCTA to collaboratively invest, study, and develop the corridor for the public benefit, including the examination of new transportation modes and technologies as they evolve.

Next Steps

Following adoption of the Study, County staff will continue working with Corridor agencies, stakeholders and communities to design and fund projects derived from the Study. Phasing implementation will be necessary given the size and scope of Study corridor. County staff will report to the County Transportation, Water and Infrastructure Committee as future Study implementation and public outreach efforts occur.

CONSEQUENCE OF NEGATIVE ACTION:

Approval of the Iron Horse Corridor Active Transportation Study is necessary to fulfill the intent of AB 1025 and provide clarity to staff and our corridor partners on the County's vision for the future of the Iron Horse Corridor.

CLERK'S ADDENDUM

Written commentary received from: Jason Bezis, Law Offices of Jason A. Bezis; Sandra Fink, Alamo.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - PowerPoint Presentation

Attachment B - Agency Comments (Round 1)

Attachment C - Agency Comments (Round 2)

Attachment D - Public Comments (Round 1)

Attachment E - Public Comments (Round 2)

Attachment F - Final Study

Attachment G - Final Study Appendices