



Meeting Date: March 22, 2022

Subject: Approval of Class IIB - Buffered Bicycle Lane Installation on El Camino Real – City Limits between Adobe Creek and ~500-FT South of Rengstorff Avenue as part of Caltrans Street Resurfacing Improvements scheduled for Summer 2023; Approve Removal of Street Parking to Accommodate this Improvement

Prepared by: Marisa Lee, Transportation Services Manager

Reviewed by: James Sandoval, Engineering Services Director

Approved by: Gabriel Engeland, City Manager

Attachment(s): -

1. Parking Study by Traffic Patterns
2. Resolution 2022-xxxx

Initiated by: Transportation Services Department

Previous Council Consideration: None

Fiscal Impact:

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) plans to resurface El Camino Real between Palo Alto and Mountain View in the Summer of 2023. The costs related to the physical installation of Bike Lanes on El Camino Real is being funded wholly by Caltrans through a combination of State and Grant funding, including all signage & striping improvements. The City funded the cost of a Traffic Patterns parking study, which cost approximately \$12,000 and was paid out of the department’s Professional Services Budget.

Environmental Review:

The lane restriping project is exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (Existing Facilities) in that the project consists of minor alterations to existing public facilities involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former uses, it will not create additional automobile lanes, and none of the circumstances described in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 applies. Section 15301 expressly applies to the creation or expansion of bicycle facilities within existing rights-of-way where no additional automobile lanes are created. See 14 CCR § 15301(c).

City Manager

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NON-BCI 27915307

Reviewed By:

City Attorney

 JH

Finance Director

 JF



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Policy Question(s) for Council Consideration:

Does the Council support the installation of Class IIB – Buffered Bike Lanes along El Camino Real, on both sides of the street within the City Limits (Adobe Creek to 500-FT South of Rengstorff Avenue) including the removal of 248 On-Street Parking Spaces? This conversion from parking to bike lanes aligns with regional planning efforts including the VTA Bicycle Superhighway, the Los Altos Complete Streets Master Plan, the goals of the Los Altos Climate Action Plan. The proposed installation was approved by the Complete Streets Commission on August 10, 2021.

Summary:

- Caltrans is requesting a City Council resolution that approves the installation of Class IIB – Buffered Bike Lanes on both sides of El Camino Real between Adobe Creek and approximately 500-FT South of Rengstorff Avenue as part of Caltrans’ upcoming street resurfacing project.
- Caltrans is requesting City Council approval of the removal of 248 on-street parking spaces to accommodate this improvement.

Staff Recommendation:

Approval of Class IIB (Buffered Bike Lanes) on El Camino Real within City Limits, between Adobe Creek and ~500-FT South of Rengstorff Avenue, as part of Caltrans Street Resurfacing Improvements scheduled for Summer 2023 including the approval of the parking removal.

Purpose

Staff is requesting City Council policy approval for the installation of Class IIB – Buffered Bike Lanes along El Camino Real between the City Limits (Adobe Creek to ~500-FT South of Rengstorff Avenue) on both sides of the street including approval of the parking removal necessary to accommodate the proposed improvements.

Background

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) plans to resurface the length of El Camino Real between the Palo Alto/Menlo Park City Border to just south of Highway 85 in Mountain View, which includes the length of El Camino Real within the City of Los Altos. The Los Altos portion of El Camino Real includes both sides of the boulevard up to the face of curb on the northeast side (i.e., Bay side) of the corridor.



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Caltrans staff is working with each local agency through the project limits to identify the appropriate types of signage & striping improvements that will be installed at the completion of the resurfacing project. This introduces a once in a 25- to 30-year opportunity to make mobility-transformative changes for the community along this corridor.

Caltrans is supportive of bike facility installations along El Camino Real as part of the project and they secured grant funding to pay for the bike lane installations if each local agency can provide City Council policy approvals supporting the bike lane installations as part of their project. City staff is recommending the installation of Class IIB – Buffered Bike Lanes along El Camino Real as part of the Caltrans Resurfacing project. This configuration would retain all the existing vehicle lanes on El Camino Real, and would replace the current parking lane on each side with a bike lane and a buffer. The Draft Complete Streets Master Plan, scheduled for City Council approval in March, recommends Class IV – Protected Bike Lane facilities on El Camino Real. The only difference between these two treatment types is the addition of vertical elements within the buffered space between the bicycle lanes and vehicle travel lanes. Vertical elements could include a variety of treatments including flexible bollards or low-profile curbs. The Caltrans funding provisions cannot support the cost of vertical elements within buffered bike lane space. City staff recommends starting the project with Class IIB – Buffered Bike Lane facilities that are designed to support future vertical elements. The exact type of vertical element is yet to be determined, and would be discussed in a future phase of the project, accompanying Complete Streets Commission input as well as community outreach. The type of vertical element depicted in the image below is for illustrative purposes only.



Buffered Bike Lane (Class IIB) – Striping only



Buffered Bike Lane with Vertical Element (Class IV)



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The Los Altos Complete Streets Commission first discussed this item at its April 28, 2021 meeting. They were strongly in favor of a future Class IV (Protected Bike Lane with physical separation) treatment given the context of El Camino Real, and supportive of approving the Class IIB (Buffered Bike Lane) for this project so that they may be transitioned to Class IV (Protected Bike Lane) at a later date. They suggested coordination with neighboring cities in hopes of creating a continuous bike facility of a consistent typology, yet also suggested that Los Altos should be a leader in this rare opportunity to transition to bike facilities on El Camino, even if adjacent cities won't be doing the same. The Commission requested that staff conduct a focused outreach meeting with residents and businesses along El Camino Real.

The City held a focused community outreach meeting on June 23, 2021 attended by about a dozen residents and business owners. Attendees at the outreach meeting included residents, business, and property owners along El Camino Real, who expressed overwhelming support for the project, citing El Camino Real as an important cross-town route for people biking. They felt the project would provide connection to key destinations that aren't well served by the rest of the network, and would support business, school, commute, and recreational biking activities. Many of the residents of El Camino Real said they bicycle as their primary mode of transportation. During the community meeting only one business (located in the City of Mountain View -- ZombieRunner Coffee at 1980 El Camino Real near Clark Avenue) expressed concerns with the parking removal adjacent to their business (within Mountain View City Limits) required to support bike lane installation. The City referred the business to the City of Mountain View staff as bike lane installations within the City of Mountain View are being implemented in stages, whether the bike lanes will be installed in the area near ZombieRunner Coffee was not yet confirmed. On August 27, 2021, staff received an email from the owners of 1-2-3 Acupuncture Clinic at 4666 El Camino Real, in Los Altos, who also expressed concerns about the loss of the on-street parking spaces adjacent to their clinic. This business has off-street parking spaces specifically dedicated to their business. Additionally, the business' parking lot is directly adjacent to another, even larger parking lot.

The Complete Streets Commission discussed this item again at its August 10, 2021 meeting and unanimously agreed to forward a recommendation to the City Council to consider approval of the bike lane installations along El Camino Real within the City Limits including the removal of parking to make this change possible.

In total, three public meetings were conducted: the focused community outreach meeting on June 23, 2021, and two meetings with the Complete Streets Commission (conducted in April and August). To encourage community participation at each of the three meetings, staff sent out mailers to all properties within 1,000-FT of the project limits within both Los Altos and Mountain



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View including a dozen on-street sandwich boards to help advertise the meetings to passer-by motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

To assess the impact of the bike lane installations along El Camino Real, the City commissioned a parking study in Spring of 2021, as the bike lane installation requires the removal of existing on-street parking, approximately 248 total spaces on both sides of the street within the City Limits (Adobe Creek to ~500-FT South of Rengstorff Avenue). The parking study was conducted by the City’s on-call traffic engineering firm Traffic Patterns. Parking utilization was counted from 8am to 8pm on both weekdays and weekends. The study found that the utilization of parking spaces on El Camino Real is currently low. In most areas the utilization is lower than 50%, and in a few short segments utilization was no higher than 85%. About one-third of the curb face along El Camino Real is already parking-prohibited and marked with red curb, so those areas would experience no change. The current low utilization of parking suggests that the removal of on-street parking could be feasible.

While the parking loss proposed with this project is a big change, the under-utilized current conditions combined with the visioning of the Complete Streets Master Plan and Climate Action Plan suggest that parking is perhaps not the best use of this space for the future of what this corridor and Los Altos could be. Re-utilizing this space for bicycle lanes could have many benefits: an improved regional transportation network that aligns with regional goals and visions; greater choice for travelers in Los Altos to safely and efficiently use different modes of transport; reduced greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled; and decreased congestion due to expanded options for bicycling.

Discussion/Analysis

Caltrans staff has been in contact with each of the local agencies within the segment including Los Altos to identify the striping configuration preferences within each community, and Caltrans is supportive of the installation of bike lane facilities along El Camino Real. If a bike lane installation is preferred by any City, Caltrans is requiring a local City Council approval via the attached Resolution. The full cost of the bike lane installation will be covered by Caltrans using a combination of state and grant funding secured by Caltrans.

City staff is recommending the installation of Class IIB (Buffered Bike Lane) facilities with the Caltrans Resurfacing project. This configuration would retain all the existing vehicle lanes on El Camino Real, and would replace the current parking lane on each side with a bike lane and a buffer. Class IIB (Buffered Bike Lanes) support the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) Bicycle



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Superhighway Program that includes bike lanes on El Camino Real and the City’s own Draft Complete Streets Master Plan (CSMP) that the City Council reviewed November 9th. The CSMP proposes Class IV (Protected Bikeway) facilities on El Camino Real. Starting the El Camino Real bike lanes with Class IIB (Buffered Bike Lane) facilities supports easy installation of vertical elements later.

This project is a rare opportunity for major progress in bicycle network connectivity, an improved regional transportation network, and greenhouse gas emission (GHG) reduction in the region, and reduced congestion resulting from expanded options in modes of transit for travelers in Los Altos. It aligns with VTA’s regional planning initiatives, including the Bicycle Superhighway project. It also aligns with the goals and visions of Los Altos’ own Complete Streets Master Plan and Climate Action Plan. The Complete Streets Commission voted unanimously in support of this project and sends their recommendation of approval to the Los Altos City Council.

Recommendation

Staff recommends that City Council approve the installation of Class IIB facilities along El Camino Real via the attached resolution.