

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Jennifer Ott, City Manager

Date: March 14, 2025

Supplemental Memo Regarding Agenda Item 7B: Recommendation to Endorse Design Concepts for the Fernside Traffic Calming and Bikeways Project.

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

This memo is being provided to supplement the staff report already published for the March 18, 2025 City Council meeting, and lays out an updated recommendation to expedite the process for implementing safety improvements at the intersection of Fernside Blvd/High St/Gibbons Dr (Fernside/High/Gibbons), specifically at Gibbons and High.

BACKGROUND

The Fernside/High/Gibbons intersection is a skewed, 5-way gateway intersection with long pedestrian crossings and a layout that encourages high vehicle speeds. Community input indicated difficulties for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers, highlighting the need safety improvements. In 2025, the City is already planning the following improvements in this area:

- New pedestrian crossing signs and striping at Buena Vista Ave/Northwood Dr.
- Create a design that simplifies and improves safety at the Versailles Ave/Central Ave/Gibbons Dr intersection as part of the Versailles Neighborhood Greenway, after public engagement, which will be constructed in 2026.

While developing the Fernside Project in anticipation of including this corridor in the City's annual pavement management program in 2026, staff and the consultant team identified an opportunity to potentially also add near-term safety enhancements at this intersection, despite it initially not being in the Project's near-term scope. The proposed design simplifies the south leg of the intersection at Gibbons Dr. and High St. by removing its fifth leg and limiting eastbound Gibbons traffic to right-turn only onto High Street. This change aims to simplify the intersection, shorten pedestrian crossings, reduce vehicle speeds on Gibbons, and reduce traffic signal wait times.

Due to the time sensitivity associated with implementing the pavement management program on-time, staff quickly sought community input. More than 50 people attended an on-site pop-up event, and approximately 180 people filled out an online survey. Feedback predominantly included significant concerns, particularly about spillover traffic onto nearby streets. Due to the time sensitive and opportunistic nature of the outreach, staff did not yet have a completed traffic study to fully address these concerns or answer questions about spillover traffic. Therefore, staff recommended further public engagement *after* a traffic study, which extended the timeline beyond the Fernside Project's near-term scope as part of the City's 2026 pavement management project. This recommendation was communicated via email newsletter, the project webpage, and Transportation Commission agenda, clearly outlining the decision-making process in the materials prepared for the November 20, 2024 Transportation Commission meeting. The agenda included a summary of initial public input as [shown here](#). In this scenario, the full intersection was proposed to be improved with the long-term Fernside Project, as described below:

Full Intersection with Long-Term Fernside Project (2030)

Description	Actions	Benefits	Tradeoffs	New Funding Required	Year
Construct updates to the full intersection as part of the long-term Fernside Project. Pending traffic study, includes proposed changes at both the north and south legs of the intersection.	Conduct traffic study, public outreach, and design for proposed updates to the full intersection, and construct with the full project.	Increases safety at full intersection. Allows traffic study and public engagement for all proposed changes at the same time.	No safety improvements in near term, with existing conditions in place for at least 5 years.	Pending grant funding. Full intersection improvements would be included in grant efforts for larger Fernside Project.	2030 depending on funding availability

DISCUSSION

Since then, additional community members have expressed support for implementing the design update sooner. Given that the Fernside Project’s long-term implementation is at least five years away and these intersection improvements focus on important near-term safety measures, staff recommends that the City Council consider a revised recommendation to include near term safety improvements at Gibbons Dr. and High St. consistent with staff’s proposal shared at the November 2024 Pop-up Event. The remaining northeast part of the intersection would be completed with the long-term project:

Near Term Gibbons Dr. and High St. Safety Improvements (2026)

Description	Actions	Benefits	Tradeoffs	New Funding Required	Year
Pending results of a traffic study, construct safety improvements at Gibbons and High (south leg of Fernside intersection) with the near-term Fernside Project.	Conduct traffic study and return to City Council for final direction.	Brings safety improvements more quickly for pedestrians and decrease speeds on Gibbons. Coordinates with long-term concept.	Level of spillover on nearby streets to be determined in traffic study. Delay grant applications for full Fernside Project due to limited staffing.	\$350,000 from General Fund	Begin 2026

Staff will communicate this updated staff recommendation to the Fernside neighborhood today.

NEXT STEPS

Should the City Council approve the revised staff recommendation, staff will prepare a budget proposal for the additional \$350,000 needed to implement the Gibbons Dr. and High St. safety improvements as part of the FY2026-2027 biennial budget.

Respectfully submitted,
Allen Tai, Planning, Building, and Transportation Director

By:

Exhibit:

1. November 2024 Pop-Up Event Flyer with Staff Annotations
Exhibit 1

GIBBONS DR AT FERNside BLVD/HIGH ST: INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENTS PROPOSAL POP-UP

Current conditions

The Fernside Blvd/High St/Gibbons Dr intersection is a key gateway but it experiences high numbers of crashes. Community input has indicated that people walking, biking, and driving find it difficult to navigate this intersection, and that safety improvements are desired. The City has an opportunity to improve the intersection as part of a planned resurfacing project on Fernside Blvd between Tilden Way and High St in 2026.

To simplify the intersection and improve safety, the City is considering limiting eastbound Gibbons traffic to right-turn only onto High St as part of the 2026 pavement project.

Proposal benefits:

- Shorter pedestrian crossings
- Simpler geometry
- Shorter traffic signal wait times
- Reduced vehicle speeds entering Gibbons Dr from Fernside Blvd/High St
- Less cut-through traffic on Gibbons

Revised staff recommendation to include Gibbons/High safety improvements as part of Near-Term Fernside Project 2026