

# **Transportation Commission**

January 27, 2016

Item 5D - Recommendation

## **Recommend Design Concept for Cross Alameda Trail Gap Closure on Atlantic Avenue between Webster Street and Constitution Way**

### ***Background***

Starting in 1991, the City Council began enacting policies, via the General Plan, to “Pursue opportunities to utilize the corridor of the former Alameda Belt Line railroad for transit, bicycle and pedestrian transportation<sup>1</sup>.” Since then, the City has worked to implement what is now known as the “Cross Alameda Trail” in this corridor. Today, there are two segments of the Cross Alameda Trail under development with funding from grants. The Public Works Department is implementing the section along Ralph Appezato Memorial Parkway (RAMP) and the Alameda Recreation and Parks Department (ARPD) is developing the Jean Sweeney Park segment. Once fully built, these sections will create a 1.5 mile trail from Main Street to Sherman Street that is completely separated from cars and will likely attract a large number and variety of people, including children, people less comfortable riding, and seniors. The entire Cross Alameda Trail, when complete, will be a major east-west walking and bicycling corridor, stretching from Alameda Point to Tilden Way for a total of 3.75 miles.

Between the two planned and funded segments of the trail is a crucial one-block gap along Atlantic Avenue, between Webster Street and Constitution Way. The Public Works Department has taken the lead in developing a design option for this segment, since it impacts the street right-of-way and potentially has traffic impacts. Public Works is working in collaboration with the ARPD.

### ***Discussion***

Since staff provided the Transportation Commission (TC) with a brief update on the project at its November 2015 meeting, staff have analyzed the options for providing a high-quality, comfortable connection through this 500-foot block, that will meet the needs of people using the Cross Alameda Trail. Staff are recommending the attached concept drawing (Exhibit 1) that would serve people bicycling with two-way separated bicycle lanes (also known as a cycle track), and people who are walking with the existing sidewalk on the southern side of the street.

### ***Analysis***

This short block has many complexities and constraints that make designing a high-quality walking and bicycling facility a challenge. There is no wide continuous right-of-way here, like on the RAMP and Jean Sweeney Park segments of the trail, since the land on the southern side of Atlantic Avenue was developed as the Webster Square shopping area. While the City does have easements in this area, they are very limited in the area near the existing building that houses Starbucks, especially since there are utilities and doors that encroach into this easement. The easement near the Walgreen’s parking lot

---

<sup>1</sup> Policy 4.1.7.d from the Transportation Element of the City of Alameda General Plan (2009)

is a landscaped berm, and building in this area would require removing some of this landscaping and constructing a retaining wall. There are also busy driveways in this block, major utilities, a fire hydrant, and bus stops. As well, this block is bordered by two of the most congested intersections in the City (Atlantic Avenue/Webster Street and Atlantic Avenue/Constitution Way), and the busiest transit intersection (Atlantic Avenue/Webster Street). Finally, Atlantic Avenue is a truck route, with high volumes of trucks serving Webster Street businesses, the College of Alameda, and Marina Village Shopping Center.

At the same time, this project requires new funding, beyond our current grants. City staff have determined that there is \$200,000 in Measure B/BB funding that can be budgeted towards this segment.

Public Works, with consultant support, reviewed these traffic, right-of-way, easement, and financial constraints, looking for a solution that would work within them, and at the same time provide as much separation between people biking and walking and cars/trucks as possible, to create a safe and comfortable experience. Staff evaluated multiple options:

- combined sidewalk-grade two-way separated bicycle lanes (SBL) between Webster Street and the driveway, with an in-street two-way SBL, between the driveway and Constitution Way;
- two-way SBL that reconfigured Atlantic Avenue to leave all through travel lanes, but removed the left turn pockets at each intersection;
- two-way SBL that reconfigured Atlantic Avenue to remove one through traffic lane, but retain the left turn pockets at both intersections;
- multi-use trail at sidewalk grade; and
- standard bicycle lanes.

### **Recommended Option**

Given the constraints of the project, and the goals, staff are recommending the option shown in Exhibit 1. This option creates ten-foot wide, two-way separated bicycle lanes on the southern side of Atlantic Avenue, with a three-foot barrier between the travel lane and the SBL. People walking would continue to use the existing sidewalk, which would not be changed. Improvements would be made to the two intersections and at the driveway into the parking lot, to minimize the conflicts between people walking and biking, and motorists; and to increase safety and comfort. These improvements include striping, the use of green paint to mark “conflict-zones”, warning signs, push-buttons, leading pedestrian intervals (for use by people walking and bicycling), and in-pavement loop detectors. Project details will be further developed, as staff continues to analyze the best methods of moving people biking and walking, through these busy intersections.

The new separated bicycle lanes are created by removing one of the eastbound travel lanes between Webster Street and Constitution Way. This results in there being one, instead of two, through travel lanes between Webster Street and the driveway. Between the driveway and Constitution Way, there will be two, instead of three lanes, as follows: the left turn lane will remain, the through lane will become a through/right lane, and the through/right lane next to the curb would be removed. The westbound travel lanes would remain as they are now.

An analysis of the traffic impacts, via the peak-hour arterial level of service (LOS), is shown in Exhibit 1. While the recommended option does have traffic impacts, it is less than the other options that were considered that also impacted the travel lanes. The attached LOS analysis shows no impact to the westbound AM peak, and a slight deterioration of the westbound PM peak LOS. The eastbound traffic is impacted more significantly, in both the AM and PM peak hours.

### **Next Steps**

Staff have begun, and will continue, to collect input from key stakeholders, including Bike Walk Alameda, the West Alameda Business Association, AC Transit, and others. Staff will report on their input at the meeting.

The design details will be refined, especially at the intersections. Then staff will proceed with creating final designs, construction drawings, and going to bid to have the project built. The goal is to have this segment open when the other two trail segments on either end are also ready to open. Staff believe this is feasible, since there is over a year until the Jean Sweeney Park segment could be completed, and the project will be funded with local money and therefore does not need to meet the cumbersome federal requirements.

Staff are also considering applying for funds to create a mid-block pedestrian crossing in this segment, to improve the connection between the senior housing residents on the north side of Atlantic Avenue and the Webster Square shopping center on the south side. If the grant applications are successful, the designs for the separated bicycle lanes would be modified to accommodate it.

### ***Financial Impact***

The recommended concept will cost under \$200,000. Staff have identified Measure B/BB funding that can be used for this project. Additional funding would need be secured via a grant.

### ***Recommendation***

That staff refine and implement the attached design concept for two-way separated bicycle lanes and sidewalk, as the Cross Alameda Trail on Atlantic Avenue between Webster Street and Constitution Way, to be developed in coordination with the trail segments to the east and west of this one-block segment.

Respectfully submitted,

Rochelle Wheeler, Transportation Planner

Virendra Patel, Transportation Engineer

Exhibit:

1. Concept Drawing and Level of Service Analysis for Recommended Option