



CITY OF MORGAN HILL

CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: June 3, 2020

PREPARED BY: Chris Ghione, Public Services Director
APPROVED BY: City Manager

PROVIDE DIRECTION REGARDING MONTEREY ROAD COMPLETE STREETS/LANE REDUCTION AND USE OF DOWNTOWN PUBLIC SPACES

RECOMMENDATION(S)

Provide direction to staff on revisiting the Monterey Road Complete Streets/Lane Reduction Project and on the use of other public spaces in the Downtown.

COUNCIL PRIORITIES, GOALS & STRATEGIES

Ongoing Priorities

Supporting Our Youth
Seniors
and Entire Community

2020-2021 Strategic Priorities

Economic Development

GUIDING DOCUMENTS

Bikeways
Trails
Parks and Recreation Masterplan
Economic Blueprint
Vision Zero

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS:

While reviewing this report the City Council may wish to consider the following questions:

1. Should the City revisit the permanent implementation of the Monterey Road Complete Streets/Lane Reduction Program?
2. Should the City consider other uses of public space in combination or separately from the Monterey Road Complete Streets/Lane Reduction Program?

REPORT NARRATIVE:

The purpose of this item is to provide background information and seek direction from the City Council regarding the use of the public right of way and City owned property in the Downtown. City staff are bringing this item forward at the request of the Council and in follow-up to numerous requests from private business owners and residents. Most of the requests involved revisiting the Monterey Road Complete Streets/Lane Reduction project which, on a trial basis in 2015, reduced the Monterey Road through the Downtown to a single travel lane in each direction. There have also been conversations involving temporary and permanent street closures that may be used to support businesses in meeting Covid-19 space requirements when they are allowed to reopen.

Based on these conversations staff has outlined the following key areas for review and discussion:

- Monterey Road Complete Streets/Lane Reduction Project
- Complete Closure of Monterey Road on weekends
- Closure of Downtown Side Streets
- Use of other public property to support businesses

Each of these areas will be reviewed to allow the Council to provide direction to City staff moving forward. This direction will be critical as the City has limited resources available from both a funding and staff time perspective.

Monterey Road Complete Streets/Lane Reduction

Background

The revitalization of the Downtown has long been a priority for the City. In 2014, due to the loss of redevelopment, the City was provided a limited time to invest Redevelopment Agency bond proceeds in the Downtown. The limited timeframe provided a short timetable and resulted in the development of the Downtown Placemaking Investment Strategy. The strategy was built upon the General Plan and Downtown Specific Plan with the goal of making the Downtown the most walkable, bike friendly, urban, family-oriented and transit-oriented neighborhood in Morgan Hill as envisioned in the City's General Plan, the Downtown Specific Plan and the Downtown Placemaking Investment Strategy (Strategy). One of the initiatives of the Strategy was the Monterey Road Complete Streets Pilot Project.

The intent of the Pilot Project was to slow down traffic and make the Downtown a more vibrant and inviting destination to shop, dine, and gather. Additionally, it was anticipated the project could improve safety for pedestrians and bicyclists visiting Downtown. To test these assumptions, the project was implemented, reducing the traffic lanes from two lanes in each direction to a single travel lane with a bicycle lane through the Downtown. The Pilot Project resulted in one of the most significant engagement efforts the City has ever made with significant community discussion on numerous aspects. The Pilot Project received a significant amount of feedback both for and against instituting the lane configuration permanently. The engagement included a business vitality survey, resident exit survey, business exit survey and the formal observations made by the City's consultant. These comments are available in the weblink attached to this report.

On August 5, 2015, the results of the Pilot Project were presented to the City Council (Attachment 1 - Weblink). This included the presentation of the Project Performance Monitoring Report prepared by consultants Alta Planning and Design. Based on the positive results of the Report, City staff recommended that the Monterey Road Complete Streets improvements be implemented permanently. The results included several key findings:

- Number of people walking increased by 6%

- 54% increase in diversity among people riding bicycles (age, gender, race, and ethnicity)
- 614% increase in the number of youth riding bicycles
- 48% decrease in people riding bicycles on sidewalks
- Noise levels declined to a more comfortable level, as sound energy levels decreased
- An increase in parking occupancy occurred, and parking turnover rates increased
- People riding bikes nearly tripled, from 74 to 214
- Transit ridership increased by 3%
- Impact to public transit was an average of 29 seconds per trip
- Travel time reliability increased slightly
- The speed of traffic remained the same at 27 miles per hour
- Emergency response experienced little change
- A slight increase in collisions occurred
- 20% of traffic diverted to Butterfield Blvd were semi-trucks, pick-up trucks, vans, and other loud and large vehicles.
- AM Peak Hour travel time improved

Survey results from the project indicated 67% of residents surveyed were not in favor of the project and businesses surveyed were ultimately split on making the changes permanent. Ultimately, the City Council elected to return to the prior configuration of two travel lanes in each direction, while electing to make other improvements to the Downtown for increased safety. The Council noted that it would like the Project to be reviewed in the future upon completion of future congestion management projects, including the Hale Avenue Extension Project.

Discussion

Although the Pilot Project is five years old, City staff does not believe that additional data collection would be necessary to move forward with the lane reconfiguration/reduction decision. The City's General Plan Transportation Element provides the option for the existing or reduced configuration and the Pilot Project showed the changes in the traffic flow. It is also unknown at this time what type of long-term traffic impacts may result from Covid-19. Additionally, City staff also does not believe that community opinion has changed significantly during the past 5 years. The City Council has the data available to make an informed decision on the Project in relation to the Council's current priorities.

The cost to duplicate the previous Complete Street Improvement Designs ranges from \$50,000 to over \$100,000 depending on the need to slurry seal the pavement (likely recommended). These costs would not include any barriers to separate the travel way from expanded dining and retail space in the parklet areas. Should the City Council wish to pursue this option, City staff would bring back a report detailing cost estimates for enhancements.

Monterey Road Complete Closure

An alternative option to the Monterey Road Complete Streets/Lane Reduction Project is a permanent or weekend-only closure of Monterey Road to vehicular traffic.

The permanent closure of Monterey Road would require updating the City's General Plan Transportation Element (with associated environmental review). City staff do not recommend this option due to added complications to congestion management efforts and the cost and resources necessary to explore this alternative.

The weekend-only closure of Monterey Road would cost over \$250,000 annually to implement on a weekly basis. This alternative would only provide temporary benefits and cause confusion for traffic flow. Support for businesses would be limited as the need for expanded space is not limited to weekends only. City staff does not recommend moving forward with reviewing this option.

Side Streets Closures

Closure of side streets has been done for one-time or routine special events. The current special events street closure policy requires access for Downtown residents to reach their homes via vehicle.

City staff has done a preliminary analysis on potential side street closures. Attachment 2 outlines the Downtown streets and business locations. Businesses on the side streets are most commonly located near Monterey Road and closure of entire blocks on an ongoing or permanent basis will create conflicts with resident access. However, closure of portions of the side streets that continue to allow access from Depot Street and Del Monte Avenue may be feasible. However, any closures would need to be reviewed independently by staff from Engineering and Public Safety and in coordination with adjacent businesses and residents. The preliminary analysis by staff, indicates that this may be a cost-effective way to provide additional space for some of the businesses facing the side streets but would not achieve the goals of slowing down traffic on Monterey Road and creating a more walkable, bikeable Downtown.

Use of other Public Property Downtown

In addition to the streets and sidewalks, the City owns multiple parking lots and park spaces in the Downtown. The City could make these spaces available for use to local businesses to expand restaurant and retail space to these areas, further supporting the "Morgan Hill Dine al Fresco" effort. Many other cities have begun reviewing this in preparation of the reopening of retail and restaurants. With the development of a priority use policy, these facilities could be made available for use via encroachment permit to local businesses for a limited time in alignment with future requirements of the shelter in place orders established by the State and County.

City staff are also continuing to move forward in supporting the use of the parking spaces on Monterey Road and sidewalk space adjacent to businesses throughout the Downtown. Staff will continue to work to streamline the application for use of sidewalk space and parklets. Additionally, City staff will also continue to evaluate the potential for

City support for the holistic implementation of a parklet program that uses all the parking spaces located on Monterey Road in a consistent manner.

Options and Direction

City staff are requesting specific direction on the items outlined in this report. Specifically, City staff requests that the Council provide clarity on the following:

1. **Provide direction on the City Council's preference to move forward with revisiting the Monterey Road Complete Streets/Lane Reduction Project.** Should the Council direct staff to move forward, staff will begin the work to establish a plan to implement the project long term. City staff does not recommend implementing this project for the short term or reviewing alternate options due to costs and limitations on staff resources.
2. **Provide direction to staff to move forward with evaluating options for partial side street closures to support businesses in the near term.**
3. **Provide direction to staff to move forward in allowing use of public spaces by businesses for the near term.**

Given the direction provided by the City Council, City staff in the Engineering Division will work with the Economic Development team to coordinate options and plans with Downtown businesses for potential implementation.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: Involve

Prior community engagement on the Monterey Road Complete Streets/Lane Reduction Project was completed and the detail of that previous work is outlined in the August 15, 2015 staff report and associated documentation. In revisiting the conversation an updated webpage on the City's website was developed, including numerous background documents associated with the previous Pilot Program. The future discussion was shared via the City's various communications channels and a virtual Town Hall meeting was held with this item as the key topic. Communications received on the item are included as a supplemental item.

This agenda item is to receive Council direction only and future engagement will be necessary with both businesses and the community.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:

An alternate design to the Complete Streets Pilot Project design is removing a lane of traffic each direction without the bike lane. While this design option would create additional space for business use, this configuration would eliminate one of the key benefits of the prior projects in providing bicycle access as well as spacing from vehicle traffic. Not having a bicycle lane as a buffer, would create significant safety concerns and make the project more expensive from a design and implementation perspective. The implementation of a Parklet program with the original configuration is recommended over this option.

Council direction has been requested on specific actions as outlined in this report. The City Council may choose to provide additional direction.

PRIOR CITY COUNCIL AND COMMISSION ACTIONS:

The City Council last took action on the Monterey Road Complete Streets Project on August 5, 2015. The City Council directed the re-establishment of two travel lanes in each direction. The Council did request the item be revisited at a later date should circumstances change. Prior to August 2015, the Council made several actions leading to the Pilot Project.

The City Council last discussed street closures in relationship to Downtown Special Events on March 6, 2019.

FISCAL AND RESOURCE IMPACT:

Preliminary estimates on costs associated with various improvements are outlined in the report. Detailed costs will be developed for the various areas outlined after direction is received by the City Council. Costs associated with any improvements and any work associated will impact the General Fund. Dependent upon direction by Council, staff resources expended on this effort may result in other projects being delayed.

CEQA (California Environmental Quality Act):

Project and Categorical Exemption

The Transportation Element of the General Plan provides the option for the City of Morgan Hill to narrow Monterey Road from its existing four lanes to a two-lane arterial through Downtown. The Master EIR for the Downtown Specific Plan and the EIR prepared for the 2010 Transportation Element Update contain information about impacts and LOS conditions under both scenarios.

Changes outside the Monterey Road Complete Streets/Lane Reduction project are exempt per CEQA Guidelines Section 15304 - Minor alterations to land not involving the removal of mature trees and having no permanent effects on the environment.

LINKS/ATTACHMENTS:

1. August 5, 2015 Pilot Project Staff Report and related Documents (weblink)
2. Public Spaces DT
3. Comments from the Public
4. 15 Presentation
5. 15 Supplement 1
6. 15 Supplement 2
7. 15 Supplement 3