TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER

DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC WORKS

DATE: DECEMBER 6, 2004

CMR:499:04

SUBJECT: CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE AND STATUS OF TUNNEL OPENING FOR HOMER AVENUE CALTRAIN UNDERCROSSING, CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM PROJECT PE-10121

This is an informational report and no Council action is required.

BACKGROUND
On July 14, 2003, Council approved staff’s recommendation to award a construction contract to Anderson Pacific Engineering allowing the City to proceed with the construction phase of the Homer Avenue Undercrossing Project (CMR 218:03). The expected construction schedule was one year and completion was to be in the fall of 2004. The overall project is approximately 90% complete including the completion of the tunnel structure (piles, concrete and steel reinforcement), retaining and landscape walls, underground utilities (storm drain, electrical and water services).

DISCUSSION
The Homer Undercrossing is scheduled to be open December 10 with limited access while construction continues on the project. The project is about four months behind schedule due to a change in the planned Joint Powers Board (JBP) weekend track closures that took place in 2003 and through the winter 2004 at the beginning of the project. Originally both tracks were to be closed on weekends through March 15, 2004 and the project contractor Anderson Pacific Construction planned to take advantage of these closures to drill and place the underground pile support system for the tunnel. As it turned out the JPB needed to allow limited access to the tracks for freight trains during weekends constraining site access for construction of the tunnel at these times. This required the contractor to change drilling methods for the pile installation, which caused some of the piles to be misaligned. As a result, the design of the tunnel structure had to be modified to incorporate the misaligned piles, causing a design review process involving JPB structural engineers. A reinforced concrete beam needed to be designed and added to both sides of the tunnel spanning the railroad tracks to ensure structural integrity over the already installed piles. The design of the beams and subsequent review and approval process added about four months to the project schedule. The project is within budget with the design revision and resulting beam construction done at no cost to the City.

New traffic signals will be in place when the Undercrossing opens to allow pedestrians and bicyclists to proceed across Alma Street while automobiles are stopped on both Alma and Homer Avenue. Pedestrians and bicyclists will be able to pass through the tunnel using the new ramps on
either side while work on the stairways and completion of other project elements proceeds. During this time bicyclists will need to walk their bikes and temporary handrails will be in place on the ramps for safety and accessibility. Also, the tunnel and outside ramp areas will be lighted at night with temporary light fixtures. Major construction activities to be completed while the tunnel is open are listed below with their scheduled completion dates:

Complete stairways January 3, 2005
Complete painting of tunnel and outside retaining walls January 15
Complete installation of metal handrails January 30
Complete site landscaping January 30
Complete installation of permanent light fixtures February 15
Substantial completion of the project February 15

Staff will coordinate a grand opening celebration for this important project to coincide with completion of the work. A specific date will be determined after the first of the year when the project is closer to completion.

The new traffic signals at the Homer/Alma Street intersection will have an “all red” phase (all red for autos; “walk” for bikes and pedestrians crossing Alma Street).

All bicyclists will be able to cross as pedestrians when the pedestrian “walk” phase is activated, and westbound bicyclists will also be able to cross Alma Street with the Homer Avenue vehicular phase. The Transportation Division is considering adding separate bicycle signal heads after the tunnel is in operation as a supplementary measure as has been done in the City of Davis, California as an added safety benefit. The California Vehicle Code provisions governing bicycle signals will expire on December 31, 2004. State legislation must be enacted to renew authority to use these signals. The City of Davis staff is currently working with their local legislators on this issue. Palo Alto will wait for the new legislation before installing bicycle signal heads.

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