TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL
FROM: CITY MANAGER
DEPARTMENT: PLANNING 
AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

DATE: JULY 21, 2008
CMR: 315:08

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON OREGON EXPRESSWAY IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

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

BACKGROUND
The County of Santa Clara initiated a Comprehensive County Expressway Planning Study in September 2001 to provide a long-term plan for the improvement and maintenance of the County Expressway System. The study objectives included the recommendation of project priorities, implementation strategies and funding needs.

As part of the study, the Oregon Expressway Improvements Project was identified and placed on the high priority list. Funding for this project has become available and the project has now been moved to the implementation phase. Santa Clara County has secured approximately $3.5 million, including a federal grant and County match funds, to implement the Oregon Expressway Improvements Project. The project proposes to make operational, pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements at intersections along Oregon Expressway between West Bayshore and El Camino Real. The proposed improvements include the following:

- Replace signal poles and optimize signal timing plans to avoid impacts on safety at unsignalized intersections.

- Construct pedestrian ramps with relocation of traffic signal poles at signalized intersections.

- Study operational changes at the unsignalized intersections at Waverley Street, Ross Road, and Indian Drive that avoid increasing traffic impacts on cross and parallel streets; enhance bicycle and pedestrian safety and maintain vehicle safety.

- Conduct feasibility study of adding a turn lane at Middlefield Road and converting to 8-phase signal operation to enhance efficiency and safety without taking right-of-way.
The Council previously approved an action on August 11, 2003 (CMR:376:03) endorsing key aspects of the proposed County Expressway System improvements, which included the improvements listed above for the Oregon Expressway Project.

**DISCUSSION**

To date, the County has held two well-attended community meetings, in which City staff also participated. Over 3,200 invitations were mailed out to residents who live within a quarter mile radius from the project limits. The first meeting was held on April 3, 2008 where approximately 90 residents attended and over 200 comments were submitted. The purpose of this first meeting was to introduce the project and to collect public input to refine the project description. The second meeting was held on June 9, 2008 and 63 residents attended. The purpose of this meeting was to present the neighborhood with the proposed concepts and plans based on input received and preliminary engineering principles. The deadline to submit comments on the proposed alternatives was July 19, 2008 where comments could be made by visiting the County project website: www.oregonexpressway.info.

In addition, County and City staff has had meetings with the Palo Alto Bicycle Advisory Committee (PABAC), the Ohlone School Traffic Safety Committee and representatives from the Midtown Residents Association, to further discuss the proposed alternatives in more detail and to hear each group’s concerns and comments. Additional meetings will also be held if necessary.

City staff are coordinating with the County in the review, development and recommendation of the final project alternatives and are assessing concerns raised by residents, schools and the cycling community. The main issue of concern for the area residents has been the proposed widening of Middlefield Road. County staff is also doing some additional technical/traffic analysis to help respond to comments and prepare alternative refinements. City staff expects to receive the traffic report in late July 2008, and will review and comment accordingly.

City staff will be using comments received on the proposed alternatives to determine the level of support and concerns/issues that may need to be addressed in a preferred alternative. City staff will take into consideration all of the concerns raised, prior to developing staff recommendations to present at a public hearing with the Planning and Transportation Commission. Staff expects to bring the recommendations to the Commission late fall. The Commission’s recommendations will then be forwarded to the City Council for final action.

Because resident response has been very positive towards the proposed safety elements of this project, the County has initiated the placement of pedestrian countdown signals at the intersections along Oregon Expressway, in advance of the design and construction of the other elements of the project.
The County will begin design and construction for this project in 2009 and 2010 respectively, pending City Council and Commission approval. Additional information on the status and schedule of the project can be found on the following website at: www.oregonexpressway.info.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS
These project recommendations support and conform to Comprehensive Plan Policy T-4: “An efficient Roadway Network for all users” and Policy T-28: “Make effective use of the traffic-carrying ability of Palo Alto’s major street network without compromising the needs of pedestrians and bicyclist also using this network”.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW
This is an information item and no environmental review is required.

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COURTESY COPIES
Palo Alto Bicycle Advisory Committee
Midtown Residents Association
Ohlone Traffic Safety Representatives
Project email distribution list (sent electronically)