



CITY OF SALINAS

COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

DATE: OCTOBER 4, 2022

DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC WORKS, TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION DIVISION

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TITLE: ALISAL STREET COMPLETE STREETS BEFORE AND AFTER STUDY

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

This is an informational report only. There is no recommended motion.

RECOMMENDATION:

None.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City recently completed a long-planned project on Alisal Street that reconfigured the street from four (4) lanes to three (3) lanes from Front Street to Blanco Road. The project made safety improvements, installed dedicated bike lanes, enhanced crosswalks, and provided protected left turn phases at the traffic signals. The City collected traffic data before and after the project to analyze the effects of the Downtown Complete Streets Project along Alisal Street. This report summarizes the before and after data collected by City staff.

BACKGROUND:

Planning for the Downtown Complete Streets began as early as 2009 when the City began evaluating circulation and parking downtown. Two of the goals were to reduce the number of traffic collisions along West Alisal and improve bicycle and pedestrian mobility and safety. Staff developed concepts that proposed right-sizing Alisal Street to accommodate all road users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders and drivers. Portions of the proposed concepts for Alisal Street were incorporated into community discussions for the Downtown Vibrancy Plan and the Marina-Salinas Multimodal Corridor Plan.

Council approved the Salinas Downtown Vibrancy Plan in March 2015 of which the Downtown Complete Streets Project is an element. On August 16, 2016, the City Council accepted a federal grant from the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) for \$2.34 Million for Phase I of the Downtown Complete Streets Project. In April 2017, the Council approved a Memorandum of

Agreement with TAMC and other central coast agencies to support complete streets improvements on the Marina-Salinas Multimodal Corridor that includes West Alisal Street and Lincoln Avenue.

On July 2, 2019, City Council approved the plans and specifications for the Downtown Complete Streets Project (Resolution No. 21665). On October 8, 2019, City Council awarded the Downtown Complete Streets Project to Monterey Peninsula Engineering in the amount of \$7,324,483.99. Construction began on April 6, 2020, and work was deemed substantially complete on April 23, 2021. The project was accepted for maintenance and responsibility by City Council on June 22, 2021 (Resolution No. 22138).

Before the project broke ground, the City hired a consultant to compile before and after traffic data and prepare a report to measure if the project had its intended effects. The project has been complete for over a year, and traffic has had time to acclimate to the new conditions. The City's consultant recently finished collecting the after data and has prepared the attached Before and After Report. It should also be noted that the project was constructed during the COVID-19 pandemic when traffic on roadways is lower than usual conditions. The pandemic has had a lingering effect on society and in particularly travel patterns. The before and after data may provide insights but the pandemic may have had a larger effect on traffic conditions than the project did. All data trends shown in the Before and After Study may not be correlated to the project and could be attributed to the pandemic or other influencing factors.

Summary of Findings:

- There is an overall decrease in traffic volumes and speed within Alisal Street with the implementation of complete streets features.
- The project implementation did contribute to traffic calming on Alisal Street.
- Traffic Speeds on Alisal Street have declined but the prevailing speeds would still justify keeping the posted speed limits.
- The number of vehicles traveling 10+ mph over the posted speed limit declined significantly within Alisal Street (61 percent) and the adjacent corridors (54 percent).
- The traffic volumes have decreased on adjacent corridors. There is no indication that the traffic is diverted from Alisal Street to the adjacent streets due to the roadway capacity reduction on Alisal Street.
- There is an overall decline in pedestrian volumes along Alisal Street and other intersections by 38 percent. The overall decline in pedestrian volumes indicates that the project improvements did not have a direct impact on changes in pedestrian volumes. Travel pattern changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic may be attributed to this change.
- The bicycle counts along Alisal Street decreased in the AM peak (31 percent) and mid-day peak (8 percent) while the bicycle counts increased in the PM peak by 15 percent. The increase in the PM peak bicycle usage for recreational purposes along Alisal Street may be attributed to the project improvements but cannot be concluded without additional analysis.
- The average travel time has increased in both eastbound and westbound directions during the AM peak and Noon peak. The average travel time has decreased during the PM peak. The decrease in PM peak traffic volume is more than the decrease in AM peak and noon peak traffic volumes. In addition to a travel lane removal, there are other factors like the exclusive pedestrian phase contributing to delay and subsequent reduction of travel times

on Alisal Street. The following recommendations are made to mitigate the unnecessary delays.

- a. Remove the exclusive pedestrian phases
- b. Consider the implementation of leading pedestrian intervals
- c. Consider adaptive signal timing strategies on Alisal Street Corridor
- A reduction of 63 percent in overall crashes is observed post-project implementation. The reduction of broadside crashes may be attributed to new protected left-turn phase improvements. However, the sample size of crashes is small. It is recommended that the city continuously monitor the crashes to measure the safety effectiveness of the project.
- Sales tax receipts for businesses near Alisal Street Corridor have increased by five (5) percent. There may be various factors influencing this increase and may not be attributed to project improvements.

Next Steps:

The City has received feedback from residents and downtown stakeholders. Criticism related to travel time delays and signal operations has been a common concern. While many residents have expressed the desire to reduce delays and allow for more fast-moving traffic, other residents who participated in the Downtown Vibrancy Plan recall that the plan deliberately intended to slow vehicle traffic downtown to create a walkable downtown environment for pedestrians. A goal of the Downtown Vibrancy Plan was to eliminate commuter bypass traffic driving through the heart of Salinas and instead to create a downtown destination worth driving to.

The City can consider implementing the recommended adjustments to the signal system to improve travel times. The pedestrian exclusive phases attribute to longer red times and increased delays for both vehicles and pedestrians. Field observations indicate that the compliance to the pedestrian exclusive phase is poor and that pedestrians still prefer to cross the streets with the traffic flow instead of waiting for the exclusive pedestrian phase. The City could remove the pedestrian exclusive phase which would reduce the overall cycle length and improve travel times. Pedestrian would then cross with vehicle traffic as they tend to already. A leading pedestrian interval could be implemented as an alternative pedestrian feature that improves pedestrian safety without causing excessive delays. Leading pedestrian intervals give pedestrians the walk symbol before the vehicle traffic gets the green light, this treatment gives pedestrians a head start in the intersection so that they are more visible to motorists. The cost to remove the pedestrian exclusive phase and install leading pedestrian intervals is roughly \$12,000 per intersection.

Additionally, the City could consider installing an adaptive traffic signal control system on Alisal Street to improve the flow of traffic. Adaptive traffic signal control systems are technologies that take traffic data inputs and make responsive adjustments to signal timing along the corridor to optimize traffic throughput. There are a variety of adaptive traffic signal control systems available, and they generally require software and/or hardware from a 3rd party vendor. Adaptive traffic signal software is typically a proprietary algorithm, which requires a subscription service usually around \$10,000 per year per intersection. Once implemented the adaptive software controls the signal timing and the City may not be able make timing adjustments without support from the vendor. The signal upgrades were designed to be compatible with an adaptive traffic signal control system that the City currently has implemented on North Sanborn Road.

Lastly, the Downtown Complete Streets Project is composed of two phases the Alisal Street corridor between Blanco Road and Front Street and the Lincoln Avenue phase corridor between West Market Street and West Alisal Street. The Alisal Complete Streets Project is complete, and the City plans to install the Lincoln Avenue improvements in Spring 2023.

TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION:

The Alisal Street Complete Streets Before and After Study was presented to the Traffic and Transportation Commission on August 11, 2022. The Commission was not asked to make a recommendation but was asked to receive the presentation and provide feedback. The Commission provided comments and suggestions for Alisal Street. The commissioners were all unanimously in support of the pedestrian exclusive feature. Specifically, the Commissioners mentioned that they would like to see the project features extended down East Alisal Street. One commissioner mentioned that he would like to see more “no right turn on red” signs at Alisal Street and Salinas Street. One commissioner suggested considering removing the protected left turn phase at Alisal Street and Monterey Street. Another commissioner commented that it would be nice to consider dedicated bus lanes on Alisal Street.

CEQA CONSIDERATION:

The Alisal Street Complete Streets Before and After Study is **not a Project** as project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (CEQA Guidelines Section 15378).

STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE:

This Downtown Complete Streets Project supports the Council’s initiative of Infrastructure and Environmental Sustainability and Public Safety.

FISCAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

Before and after studies help the City demonstrate if a project had its intended effect. The data can be used to help secure future grant funds for similar safety improvement projects. The Alisal Street Complete Streets Before and After Study cost \$49,890.00 to prepare. Funding came from the Traffic and Transportation Division Engineering Services account 1000.50.5122-63.5400, and the Traffic Signal Installation account 5800.50.9654-63.5400.

The total project cost including all soft costs in addition to the construction cost was just over \$8.4 million. The project funding came from a variety of sources as shown below.

Measure X bond proceeds	\$1,365,033.75
Measure X revenue	\$517,912.54
SB 1	\$82,442.30
HSIP	\$2,199,458.17
RSTP*	\$3,112,627.65
Measure G	\$1,140,206.81
Project Total	\$8,417,681.22

*\$300K set aside for Lincoln phase of Downtown Complete Streets

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: West Alisal Street Complete Streets Before and After Study