



CITY OF SALINAS COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

DATE: JANUARY 27, 2026

DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

FROM: DAVID JACOBS P.E., L.S., PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

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TITLE: HARDEN PARKWAY PATH AND SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

A motion to approve a Resolution approving the Harden Parkway Path and Safe Routes to School Project and finding the Project categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15301, Class 1(c).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

On December 6, 2022, City Council adopted the Salinas Safe Routes to Schools Plan as a key strategic planning document. At its May 16, 2023, meeting, City Council accepted \$8 million in Active Transportation Program (ATP) grant funds for the Harden Parkway Path and Safe Routes to School Project ("Project"). The proposed improvements include a road diet, roundabout at the Harden Parkway/McKinnon St. intersection and bike and pedestrian improvements along McKinnon St and Westminster Dr. Improvements are proposed within the existing right of way and are minor based on the preliminary environmental study (PES).

Staff is requesting City Council approve the proposed Harden Parkway Path and Safe Routes to School Project and find the Project categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15301, Class 1(c) for minor alterations to existing roadway facilities.

BACKGROUND:

Salinas Safe Routes to Schools Plan

On December 6, 2022, the City of Salinas adopted the Salinas Safe Routes to Schools Plan as a strategic planning document by Resolution No. 22533. Public input was the foundation of the process of creating the Safe Routes to Schools Plan. Staff developed an outreach plan and sought input from community members to understand school transportation needs and barriers and refine the draft recommendations. Parent and student surveys, presentations at parent meetings, and walking audits with school staff all contributed input on the barriers to walking and biking to schools in Salinas and the types of improvements that community members would like to see.

According to the 2021 Citywide Safe Routes to Schools survey, the top barriers to children walking and bicycling in Salinas are “driver behavior” and “traffic speed”. These concerns have been validated through school site audits, speed surveys and photos. The feedback from the parent community clearly expresses a need for routes with slower traffic or more space and protection from motorized vehicles. This means that on certain streets, bicycle lanes are not comfortable enough to encourage children and less confident riders to take the trip by bicycle instead of by car.

Harden Parkway/McKinnon St Existing Conditions

Harden Parkway and McKinnon Street both currently have bicycle lanes and sidewalks but have safety concerns that need to be addressed to encourage higher levels of cycling and walking. Harden Parkway provides access to the Harden Ranch Plaza and Northridge Mall, major shopping and employment hubs on North Main Street, a 6-lane arterial street which runs north-south through the community. Just a 10-minute bike ride to the south is the Sherwood Park neighborhood. In combination with several other streets and paths, Harden Parkway and McKinnon Street provide one of the only routes for students and residents of the Sherwood Park neighborhood and Harden Plaza affordable housing complex to access Harden Middle School, North Salinas High School and the Northridge Mall while minimizing travel on North Main Street.

The intersection of Harden Parkway and McKinnon Street is currently controlled by an all-way stop with crosswalks on three approaches. During school hours, the intersection is congested with both vehicular traffic and students crossing the intersection. In 2020, City staff presented an intersection priority list to the City Council. The City Council approved Resolution No. 21915 prioritizing the intersection of Harden Parkway at McKinnon Street for improvements. The City conducted an Intersection Control Evaluation to test the benefit and cost performance of different intersection improvements for Harden Parkway at McKinnon Street over a 20-year period. The analysis found a roundabout-controlled intersection would be the preferred alternative.

Pop Up Demonstration Project

In April 2022, as part of the Safe Routes to Schools planning effort, the City implemented a pop-up demonstration project for Harden Middle School. The pop-up event temporarily installed cost-effective infrastructure recommendations from the Safe Routes to School Plan. This event was an opportunity for the community to try out recommendations from the Safe Routes to Schools Plan and provide feedback, before the City takes steps to install permanent improvements. Feedback from the community was used to help refine the recommendations in the Safe Routes to School Plan, before taking the Plan to City Council for adoption. After the pop-up demonstration project, the team conducted a survey (Attachment 2) and found that 60% of the respondents wanted to see the changes made permanent, 9% wanted to see the changes made permanent with some changes, 20% did not support the changes, and 11% were undecided. Additionally, students from California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB) conducted a study (Attachment 3) to analyze how the pop-up demonstration project influenced student behavior. The study found that the pop-up demonstration project increased overall pedestrian traffic during the month the temporary improvements were installed. The data suggests that with the improvements more students would feel safe and comfortable walking to school, which could encourage more active and sustainable transportation behaviors.

Harden Parkway Path and Safe Routes to School Project

The Salinas Safe Routes to Schools Project includes a 0.77-mile multi-use path with a road diet on Harden Parkway from El Dorado Drive to Regency Circle. The new configuration will transform a 4-lane roadway to a 2-lane roadway with a roundabout at McKinnon Street, 2-way bike path separated by a planted median, accessible sidewalks and stormwater improvements. Connecting to Harden Parkway, the Project includes safe routes to school improvements on McKinnon Street including protected bike lanes connecting the proposed multiuse path on Harden Parkway to bike facilities on East Alvin Drive, high-visibility crosswalk in front of Harden Middle School and curb extensions along Westminster Drive connecting McKinnon Street to El Dorado Park.

Attachment 1 provides an exhibit of the proposed improvements.

CEQA Findings

Consistent with regulations of the Active Transportation Program, a Preliminary Environmental Study (PES) was conducted and submitted to Caltrans. The study analyzed the impacts of Air Quality, Water Quality, Biological Resources, Hazardous Materials/Hazardous Waste, Noise, Traffic, Visual Impacts, Land Use, and Federal Highway Administration Section 4(f) (historic sites and publicly owned public parks).

The proposed improvements are located within the existing right-of-way and constructed roadway facilities; it proposes minimal impactful land disturbance and was found to be categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15301, Class 1(c).

Project Outreach and Coordination

Kimley-Horn began work on the Project in June 2025. As part of the design development, City staff and Kimley-Horn have met with the Fire Department, Monterey Salinas Transit, and Salinas Unified School District to provide an overview on the Project and to explore road cross section alternatives for Harden Parkway. A community meeting was hosted on October 30, 2025 where the Project was presented to the community along with roundabout safety information. A survey was released to gather community input and receive feedback on the proposed improvements for the Project. Links to the survey are provided below:

<https://tinyurl.com/HardenSRTS-Survey>
<https://tinyurl.com/HardenSRTS-Encuesta>

A second community meeting is anticipated for March 2026, along with a presentation to TAMC's Pedestrian and Bike Committee, to continue informing the community about the Project and its next steps.

CEQA CONSIDERATION:

The City of Salinas has determined that the project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines (Section 15301, Class 1(c)) because the project proposes minor operations and alterations of an existing City street. A notice of exemption has been prepared and will be filed with the County Clerk's office.

CALIFORNIA GOVERNMENT CODE §84308 APPLIES:

No

STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE:

This action supports the Council's Goal of Infrastructure and Public Safety by enhancing bicycle and pedestrian facilities as well as improving traffic flow along Harden parkway.

DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION:

The Public Works Department and Finance Department manage the project accounting. The Public Works Department manages engineering services and construction contracts, inspection, and final acceptance of construction projects. Design has been coordinated with the Fire Department and external agencies like MST and TAMC.

FISCAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

This action has no direct fiscal impact to the General Fund.

Fund	General Ledger Number (Operating/CIP)	General Ledger Account Name	Remaining Budget Appropriation	Amount Requested
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

ATTACHMENTS:

Resolution - Harden Parkway Path and Safe Routes to Schools

Attachment 1 Project Improvements Map

Attachment 2 Summary Report of Bicycle & Pedestrian Counts for Temporary Installations on McKinnon Street & Westminster Drive

Attachment 3 Temporary Demonstration Survey Results