



## **CITY OF SALINAS**

# **TRAFFIC AND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION STAFF REPORT**

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**DATE:** JANUARY 10, 2019

**DEPARTMENT:** PUBLIC WORKS

**FROM:** JAMES SERRANO, TRANSPORTATION MANAGER

**TITLE:** EAST ALISAL CORRIDOR PLAN

### RECOMMENDED ACTION:

Staff recommends that the Traffic and Transportation Commission recommend that the City Council accept the East Alisal Corridor Plan.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City of Salinas received a Sustainable Cities Transportation Planning Grant from Caltrans for a complete streets plan, which funded a robust outreach process for East Alisal Street between Front Street and Bardin Road, a significant transportation route in the Alisal Vibrancy Plan that runs through the commercial heart of East Salinas. The resulting East Alisal Street Corridor Plan combines community recommendations and priorities with best practices to create a vision for a safer corridor for users of all modes of transportation.

At its November meeting, the Salinas Traffic and Transportation Commission received a presentation from staff regarding the street facilities concepts proposed for the East Alisal Corridor Plan. With a very tight schedule for completing the plan, staff sought the Traffic Commission's comments regarding the proposed facility improvements. Now that a Draft version of the plan has been completed for public review, staff recommends that the traffic commission review the Plan and recommend that the City Council accept the East Alisal Corridor Complete Streets Plan

### BACKGROUND:

Alisal Street is a major arterial and important east-west connection between the downtown area and commercial businesses in the City, the East Alisal Campus of Hartnell College, and neighborhoods in East Salinas. Alisal Street lacks adequate bicycle and pedestrian facilities connecting to transit stops, schools, parks, employment, and other community resources. The lack of facilities for bicyclists and pedestrians, wide streets, and high vehicle speeds contribute to collisions along the corridor.

The City is completing design on a related project along the West Alisal Corridor. The segment from Blanco Road to Front Street has received funding from federal Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) and Transportation Agency for Monterey County (TAMC) Regional Surface

Transportation Program (RSTP) to make complete street improvements. Construction of improvements for the West Alisal Street segment begins in Summer 2019.

The East Alisal Corridor is an approximately 5-mile east-west major arterial street that crosses the City from Blanco Road to Front Street. The segment provides connection to County Roads and within the downtown area, and the corridor has links to State Route 183 and State Route 68. In 2016, the City of Salinas, in partnership with the Local Government Commission and Building Healthy Communities, received a Caltrans Sustainable Communities grant to prepare a Complete Streets Plan to advance the goals of social equity, health, safety and economic vitality in the East Alisal neighborhood along East Alisal Street.

The East Alisal Corridor Plan (hereinafter “the Corridor Plan”) outlines improvements to mobility, safety, and access for all modes of transportation, including walking, bicycling, transit, and motor vehicles, and addresses some of the underlying socioeconomic challenges faced by residents in the East Alisal community. The Plan also assists in aligning the City’s transportation and development patterns with state and federal transportation goals for improving multimodal mobility, accessibility for all people, and fostering livable, healthy, and socially equitable communities.

#### Coordinated Planning Efforts

The Alisal Vibrancy Plan is a separate but coordinated plan for the entire Alisal Neighborhood. The two plans were developed at the same time, in collaboration with community members. While the Corridor Plan focuses on transportation issues, the Alisal Vibrancy Plan has a larger scope and provides a broader set of strategies for the neighborhood, including the topics of Housing, Community Health and Safety, Economic Development, Transportation and Infrastructure, and Quality of Life. The City intends to complete a first draft of the Alisal Vibrancy Plan in early 2019, which will include the Corridor Plan.

In 2017, the City initiated “Visión Salinas” to coordinate the public outreach and planning efforts of the Alisal Vibrancy Plan, the Chinatown Revitalization Plan and the Parks, Recreation Centers and Libraries Services Masterplan and to ensure a unified planning focus across the plans and guide the future update of the City’s General Plan in 2019.

One of the first objectives of Visión Salinas was to develop “Guiding Principles” to inform the preparation of the three plans and the subsequent update of the City’s General Plan as noted above. The Core Value and eight Guiding Principles are citywide values that will guide the development of each plan. The input that was received from the community as part of the initial Vision Salinas outreach, current planning efforts (including the processes of the Alisal Vibrancy and the Corridor Plan) and recently adopted City documents was compiled by staff and crafted into draft Guiding Principles reflecting those topics that the community voiced as being important to the future of the City. The City put the draft Guiding Principles through an extensive bilingual engagement process that included stakeholder meetings, nine pop-up events, and an online survey.

## **East Alisal Street Complete Streets Corridor Plan Overview**

The Corridor Plan outlines the history and objectives of the grant, details the community engagement process, describes existing conditions and opportunities and constraints, presents corridor concepts, identifies development opportunities, and proposes implementation and phasing considerations.

### **Plan Objectives**

The Corridor Plan addresses the following community sustainability and livability objectives identified in the Caltrans Sustainable Communities grant application:

- Engage residents, especially those that have been left out of City decision-making, in planning processes and in the City's civic life;
- Identify transportation challenges faced by residents located along or near Alisal Street that negatively impact quality of life;
- Identify features of the corridor that are unsafe or uncomfortable for pedestrians, cyclists, transit users, and motorists; and
- Recommend changes that help make streets more complete.

Collectively, the Salinas Guiding Principles and the Caltrans Sustainable Communities Grant Sustainability and Livability objectives offer a cohesive, inclusive, and responsive vision for the future of Salinas. These objectives and goals are not only reflective of Federal and State mandate, but they have been shaped and reinforced by community input that has been conducted to-date and that will continue beyond this current planning process. Nonetheless, these guiding principles, in conjunction with continued community engagement and support, will assist the City as it plans and adapts to community needs now and in the future.

### **Community Outreach and Engagement**

The City of Salinas partnered with community members and grassroots organizations from the greater Alisal neighborhood to engage in a meaningful participatory process and achieve the wider goals of the grant. Engagement for this project included a diverse range of activities, such as pop-ups, street outreach, social media use, interviews, and workshops. The resident-led Alisal Vibrancy Plan Steering Committee, and the Transportation Working Group assisted with project outreach and provided guidance on design alternatives and the draft plan. The primary public involvement tool for the corridor project was an intensive three-day charrette and Community Design Workshop. The charrette included numerous exercises to meaningfully and sincerely engage Alisal residents and stakeholders in crafting new ideas for the future of the East Alisal Street Corridor.

## Corridor Concepts

Existing conditions were analyzed to gain an understanding of what gives this street its unique character, gain insights into what works well and what doesn't, and identify ways to improve the corridor. The Corridor Plan examines how the street is shaped by land uses, building character facing the street, and how pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists and transit users use the street today. The analysis and subsequent conceptual plans for the East Alisal Corridor are divided into three segments described below.

### Segment 1: West Segment (Front Street to Kern Street)

The existing four-lane street configuration is proposed to be converted to a two-lane facility with a two-way left turn lane and 6-foot wide buffered bike lanes on both sides of the street. The buffer is a 3-foot wide lane of separation from the adjacent travel lane. Fifteen-foot sidewalks are proposed instead of the existing 8 feet. Pedestrian crossing enhancements are proposed at all existing crossings. Narrow vehicle lanes (11 feet) are proposed. There are no parking zones on this segment. Figure 4.3 on plan page 4-8 shows proposed concept for this segment.

### Segment 2: Central Segment (Kern Street to Skyway Boulevard)

This segment extends the road diet east from Kern Street. Therefore, the proposed facility reduces vehicle travel lanes from a four- to two-lane street (Figure 4.7 on plan page 4-14 proposed concept for this segment). However, parking is retained throughout the segment. While existing parallel parking is preserved on the south side of the street, back-in diagonal parking is proposed on the north side of the street. Pedestrian facility enhancements include highly visible crosswalks, wider sidewalks, and sidewalk extensions. Figure 4.5 on plan page 4-13 shows the pedestrian improvements and parking configuration in additional detail.

### Segment 3: East Segment (Skyway Boulevard to Bardin Road).

The recommended concept for this segment is to keep the street's two-way configuration and proposes a new two-way cycle track south of the existing street (Figure 4.10 on plan page 4-18). The City has existing right of way south of East Alisal Street that would accommodate a Class IV facility. At the east end of East Alisal Street, the City is planning to install a roundabout at Bardin Road that is part of a Safe Routes to School Project. There is existing sidewalk on the north side of the street but no sidewalk on the south side. A new sidewalk or pedestrian path is proposed south of the cycle track.

## Development Opportunities

The Corridor Plan also looks at ideas to improve the corridor and attract new development. Ideas include parklets, creating temporary and permanent public gathering spaces, installing gateway amenities, and enhancing and activating larger parking lot edges. The Plan also considers two mixed use catalyst development projects at E. Alisal and Murphy Streets and E. Alisal between North Wood and Pearl Streets. The concepts for these two catalyst projects will continue to be refined through the Alisal Vibrancy Plan process.

## **Implementation**

This chapter outlines a preliminary approach and relative timeline to implement corridor improvements, provides potential funding sources and opportunities for high-impact/low cost improvements, and presents phasing considerations.

It is important to note that the Plan effectively captures the perceptions and concerns of the community on the City's streets network. The Caltrans Grant focus is the East Alisal Corridor but the feedback staff receives on our street system is uniform throughout other areas of the Alisal Vibrancy Planning area regarding other key corridors such as East Market Street, Sanborn Road and Williams Road being among them. Furthermore, there is a sense that the community has been ignored in terms of what is desired. These desires include:

- Improve Safety
- Slow traffic
- Adding and improving crossing locations
- Sidewalks and lighting
- Improve amenities for bicyclists
- Improve amenities for transit riders
- Bicycle parking
- Traffic Calming
- Parking
- Impacts to businesses
- Make the area a place to live in (sense of place, Art, open space, etc.)

The Plan therefore takes note of what the community is seeking along these transportation corridors. The Plan responds with conceptual improvement reflecting best practices to address the community's concerns. The next steps towards implementation include funding the necessary traffic, parking and feasibility studies for the recommendations in the East Alisal Corridor Plan. Within these next steps, staff can identify the environmental impacts of implementing the plan, make adjustments and refine these concepts in order to deliver the improvements responding to the community feedback received.

## **Draft Plan Comments**

On November 7, 2018, Public Works staff presented the complete streets concepts to the Transportation Agency for Monterey County Bike and Pedestrian Committee. Comments received focused on aesthetic value of infrastructure and ensuring the safety of bicyclists, pedestrians and motorists through lighting, well-marked crosswalks, and bike lanes. Traffic and Transportation Commission Corridor Plan comments from its November 8, 2018 meeting focused on consideration of cycle tracks, receptivity to back in angle parking, and maintaining current infrastructure and amenities.

The Planning Commission considered the Plan at its December 5, 2019 meeting. Planning Commissioners, though expressing support for the planning effort, expressed several concerns

with Plan. Commissioners expressed concerns regarding the traffic impacts of right-sizing the street. Commissioners also expressed concerns with the potential impacts to businesses with the proposed parking changes and the impact to surrounding residential neighborhood. They therefore stressed the need for traffic and parking studies before implementation. With these caveats, the Planning Commission expressed the support of the Compete Streets Plan, particularly the pedestrian improvements and aspects of safety improvement of the Plan. Staff responded further clarifying the implementation would include the requisite studies to address the concerns expressed. The Planning Commission amended the motion to recommend that the City Council accept the East Alisal Corridor Plan but implementation needs to include appropriately vetting the concepts; conducting the necessary studies regarding traffic and parking; and coordinating with the community and businesses during design and construction. With these recommendations, the Planning Commission voted 6-1 to recommend that the City Council accept the East Alisal Corridor Plan.

#### CEQA CONSIDERATION:

The Draft Corridor Plan is a conceptual planning document. The proposed action is not a project as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) (CEQA Guidelines section 15378). If the Plan progresses to a “project” as defined by CEQA, further analysis will be required to address potential environmental impacts of the proposed project.

#### STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE:

The proposed DRAFT Alisal Corridor Plan supports City Council’s goal of Well Planned City and Excellent Infrastructure.

#### DEPARTMENT COORDINATION:

The Community Development is the lead on the Alisal Vibrancy Plan and the East Alisal Corridor Plan with Public Works providing support. Public Works staff secured the Caltrans Grant and participated in the community outreach meetings. During the development of the Corridor Plan, the various departments of the City were consulted including the Fire, Police, Libraries and Community Services.

#### FISCAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

Funding for the East Alisal Corridor Plan is from the Caltrans Sustainable Communities Strategies with a local match from Measure G. General Fund costs include staff time supporting the corridor plan.

#### ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1 – East Alisal Corridor Plan  
Attachment 2 – Appendices A-E