



CITY OF SALINAS COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

DATE: JANUARY 22, 2019

DEPARTMENT: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

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TITLE: EAST ALISAL STREET CORRIDOR PLAN

RECOMMENDED MOTION:

A motion to accept the East Alisal Street Corridor Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council, with the recommendation from the Planning Commission, approve a Resolution accepting the East Alisal Street Corridor Plan.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City of Salinas received a Sustainable Cities Transportation Planning Grant from Caltrans for a complete streets plan along East Alisal Street between Front Street and Bardin Road. The grant also funded a robust outreach process for this significant transportation route 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. It is understood that additional technical studies and community engagement will be needed to design and construct plan priorities and during this process, some recommendations may be infeasible to implement. However, the plan will allow the City to be well poised to apply for future implementation funding. The Caltrans Grant Award Agreement requires the submission of a Council accepted complete streets corridor plan by February 28, 2019.

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 2019.

The East Alisal Corridor is an approximately 2.5-mile east-west major arterial from Front Street to Bardin Road. 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 Street 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, addressing 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 Spring 2019, which will include the Corridor Plan.

In 2017, the City commenced “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 Library Services Masterplan 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 primary purposes 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 Guiding Principles were intended to be aspirational in nature and reflect the community’s values and vision for the future.

The City began drafting the Guiding Principles based on the prior public input received from the community as part of the initial Visión Salinas outreach process in 2017, other current City planning efforts (the Alisal Vibrancy and Corridor Plans; Chinatown Revitalization Plan; Library, Parks and Recreation Master Plan, etc.), and recently adopted City documents (the Housing and Economic Development Elements, Downtown Vibrancy Plan, etc.). To ensure the draft Guiding Principles accurately reflected the community's values and vision, the City undertook an extensive bilingual public engagement process between May and August of 2018 to obtain feedback. This engagement process included stakeholder meetings, 9 pop-up events and an online survey, which was sent to approximately 1,200 community members. Over 500 members of the community were directly engaged and provided input as part of this process, with the vast majority of community members indicating strong support for the draft Guiding Principles. The comments that were received from the public and stakeholders during the engagement process were incorporated into the draft document.

The Guiding Principles consist of an overarching “Core Value” and eight individual Guiding Principles. The Core Value is a general value statement that is woven into each Guiding Principle. It emphasizes the community's desire for Salinas to be an inclusive, diverse and welcoming environment where all persons can thrive. The eight individual Guiding Principles address the following specific topic areas:

- Economic Prosperity, Equity and Diversity
- Housing Opportunity for All
- Healthy and Safe Community
- Youth are the Future
- Collaborative, Inclusive and Engaged Decision-making
- Livable and Sustainable Community
- Connectivity, Access and Mobility
- A Community to Celebrate

The draft Guiding Principles were presented to the Planning Commission at their December 5, 2018 meeting. The Commission voiced their support of the draft Principles and did not request any changes. There were no comments from the public at the meeting.

These Guiding Principles were utilized to inform the drafting of the East Alisal Street Corridor Plan and have been incorporated into the document. This is the first time that these principles have been included in a Salinas plan and will be integrated into future planning documents including the General Plan. Please see below for further discussion of this issue.

East Alisal Street 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
- Recommend changes that help make streets more complete

Collectively, the Visión 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. 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 concept alternatives and the draft plan. The primary community engagement tool for the corridor project was an intensive three-day charrette and Community Design Workshop in January 2018. 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.

Based on community comments received during the charrette process, the Consultant Team created three conceptual alternatives for the street. City Staff vetted these alternatives at six public events in May and June of 2018. The Consultant Team incorporated feedback into the concepts that appear in the Corridor Plan. Staff presented the preferred concepts at two AVP Steering Committee meetings, and Ciclovía 2018. Staff also made a concentrated effort to reach the business community in the Alisal. Over 600 business received an informational flyer insert sent out in the Salinas United Business Association (SUBA) newsletter. The flyer outlined concerns heard through past engagement, outlined best practice strategies, and presented the corridor concept. Recipients were provided space to comment. Three pop-ups were held at the WIC offices

to allow business owners the opportunity to come in person to see and comment on the corridor concepts. A more detailed community engagement summary is in Chapter 2 of the Corridor Plan.

Corridor Concepts

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. Existing conditions were analyzed to gain an understanding of what gives E. Alisal Street its unique character, gain insights into what works well and what doesn't, and identify ways to improve the corridor. The Corridor Plan concepts combine community priorities identified during engagement with technical best practices in the transportation field to effectively address long-standing perceptions and concerns of the community. Community priorities 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.)

These are high-level concepts that do not represent a final design. Further study on feasibility, circulation, environmental impacts, and continued engagement will all influence final design and construction plans. 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 existing or proposed 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 kept on the south side of the street, back-in diagonal parking is proposed on the north

side of the street. This configuration would alternate by block throughout this segment. Back-in diagonal parking allows for more parking spots in the same length of space than parallel parking and is safer for drivers entering traffic than standard diagonal parking. 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. This configuration would add five on-street parking spaces on the block between Wood Street and Pearl Street. In response to Planning Commission comments about parking, the consultant team ran a high-level count of on-street parking for the entire Central Segment using back-in angled and parallel parking and estimated this could add about 30 on-street spots. The actual number would depend on the final design and balance of additional amenities, but this demonstrates a potential parking increase in the central business area of East Alisal Street while also adding improvements for other modes of transportation.

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.

The next steps towards implementation include funding the necessary traffic, parking and feasibility studies for the recommendations in the East Alisal Corridor Plan. With these 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 feedback received. Final design and construction plans may differ from initial concepts, but they should always reflect the priorities and desires of the community. To ensure this, the City is committed to continued engagement throughout the feasibility, environmental review, and final design phases.

Draft Plan Comments

On November 7, 2018, Public Works staff presented the Corridor Plan 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 complete streets concepts comments at its November 8th meeting focused on consideration of cycle tracks, receptivity to back in angle parking, and maintaining current infrastructure and amenities. Staff will be returning to the Traffic and Transportation Commission for review and comment on the entire draft Corridor Plan on January 10th.

The Planning Commission considered the Plan at its December 5, 2018 meeting. Planning Commissioners supported the planning effort, and the proposed safety and pedestrian improvements. They also expressed several concerns regarding traffic flow and parking. Commissioners' concerns included

- traffic impacts of right-sizing the street,
- potential impacts to businesses with the proposed parking changes, and
- resulting parking impacts to surrounding residential neighborhood.

Commissioners stressed the need for traffic and parking studies before initiating Corridor Plan implementation. Staff responded that prior to implementation there would be 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 provided that implementation include further vetting of the Corridor 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 Street 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" level further CEQA analysis will be required to address potential environmental impacts of the proposed project.

STRATEGIC PLAN INITIATIVE:

The East Alisal Corridor Plan is a corridor plan under the Alisal Vibrancy Plan, a key objective of the Council's Strategic Plan. The Alisal Vibrancy Plan and Corridor Plan promote and support all the Council goals: Economic Diversity and Prosperity; Safe, Livable Community; Effective Sustainable Government; Excellent Infrastructure, and Quality of Life.

DEPARTMENTAL COORDINATION:

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

FISCAL AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT:

East Alisal Corridor Plan funding sources are a Caltrans Sustainable Communities Strategies Grant Award of \$260,782 with a local match of \$33,796 from Measure G, and in-kind contribution of staff time to organize and implement community engagement and support Corridor Plan preparation.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Resolution
2. East Alisal Street Corridor Plan
3. Appendices A-E