



County of San Mateo

Inter-Departmental Correspondence

Department: SUSTAINABILITY

File #: 24-223

Board Meeting Date: 3/26/2024

Special Notice / Hearing: None
Vote Required: Majority

To: Honorable Board of Supervisors
From: Carolyn Bloede, Director, Sustainability Department
Subject: Acceptance of the Final Report for the North Fair Oaks Bicycle and Pedestrian Railroad Crossing and Community Connections Study

RECOMMENDATION:

Adopt a resolution accepting the Final Report for the North Fair Oaks Bicycle and Pedestrian Railroad Crossing and Community Connections Study.

BACKGROUND:

The purpose of the North Fair Oaks Bicycle and Pedestrian Railroad Crossing and Community Connections Study (Study) was to build on recommendations from the 2011 North Fair Oaks Community Plan and the 2021 Unincorporated San Mateo County Active Transportation Plan, to explore the potential for a new bicycle and pedestrian grade-separated crossing of the Caltrain tracks with safety and access improvements in the adjacent neighborhoods to better reach local destinations. The Study area was bounded by Middlefield Road to the north, 5th Avenue to the east, El Camino Real to the south and the border with Redwood City to the west in North Fair Oaks.

On August 3, 2021 with Resolution No. 078353, this Board accepted a \$356,163 Sustainable Communities grant from Caltrans and authorized the execution of a grant agreement to provide funding assistance for the Study. On March 8, 2022 this Board adopted Resolution No. 078765 authorizing the execution of an agreement with Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. to develop the Study in an amount not to exceed \$550,000. On July 25, 2023 this Board adopted Resolution No. 079840 authorizing an amendment to the agreement with Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc. increasing the agreement to an amount not to exceed \$680,000 to further refine rail crossing concept plans and provide additional outreach.

DISCUSSION:

Concept planning designs were shaped through extensive community engagement that included input from a Community Advisory Committee, a Technical Advisory Committee, and from community members who were reached through a wide variety of engagement activities. Presentations were also made to the North Fair Oaks Community Council, the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory

Committee, and the Planning Commission.

A community-wide survey was conducted on three different rail crossing options with accompanying bicycle and pedestrian improvements, including:

- Option A: Dumbarton Avenue Tunnel,
- Option B: Dumbarton Avenue Bridge,
- Option C: Middlefield Junction Bridge.

A total of 770 responses were received, with the responses showing a preference for Option B (Dumbarton Avenue Bridge), and a secondary preference for Option C (Middlefield Junction Bridge).

Caltrain subsequently conducted a constructability review to determine the feasibility of a bridge crossing over an Electrified Caltrain Corridor. Caltrain identified significant risks and potential impacts including: potential construction and maintenance conflicts with high voltage electrification infrastructure, disruption of revenue service for which the County would be held liable, and potential impacts to adjacent residents that would warrant further investigation.

The San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) has expressed their opposition to Options A and B due to their proximity to the Palo Alto high pressure water transmission pipeline. Additional concerns, such as the height of the bridge options (approximately five stories high), loss of street parking, and construction challenges impacting the desirability of each of the options were raised by community members and stakeholders.

As a result of these concerns, the Final Report does not recommend a single preferred crossing option. Instead, it provides a summary of potential locations and concept designs for a rail crossing, and the associated technical evaluations and community feedback, should a crossing be revisited in the future.

The Study identified several bicycle and pedestrian improvements on neighborhood streets that could be considered independently of a new rail crossing. Improved sidewalk and crosswalk lighting, high visibility crosswalks, and accessible curb ramps were the most popular street improvements with community members.

The resolution has been reviewed and approved by the County Attorney as to form.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW:

County Attorney's Office determined that environmental review is not required for acceptance of the Final Report as it is not considered a project subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no new Net County Cost for acceptance of the Final Report.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Exhibit A: Final Report for the North Fair Oaks Bicycle and Pedestrian Railroad Crossing and Community Connections Study
- B. Exhibit B: Final Report Appendices for the North Fair Oaks Bicycle and Pedestrian Railroad

Crossing and Community Connections Study

C. Exhibit C: Final Report (Spanish Version) for the North Fair Oaks Bicycle and Pedestrian Railroad Crossing and Community Connections Study