



THE CITY OF
NOVATO
CALIFORNIA

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Vineyard Road Improvements CIP Project No. 15-017

PUBLIC WORKSHOP

Wednesday, November 15, 2017
7 p.m. to 9 p.m.

Sinaloa Middle School
2045 Vineyard Road
Novato, CA 94947

NOTES

WELCOME/SIGN-IN SHEET:

The meeting started at approximately 7:10 pm.

A total of 22 people signed in but there were approximately 35 people in attendance, not including city staff.

STAFF INTRODUCTIONS:

Sinaloa Middle School Principal, Jim Larson, hosted the workshop and welcomed the public and city staff. Petr Skala introduced himself as the project engineer, and also introduced Deputy Public Works Director/City Engineer, Christopher Blunk.

PRESENTATION OF THE PROJECT:

Christopher Blunk prepared a Power Point Presentation of the Vineyard Road Improvements CIP Project No. 15-017, which is available to the public at the project website:

www.novato.org/vineyardimprovements.

In summary, Vineyard Road is in need of major pavement rehabilitation. The current condition of the roadway has an average Pavement Condition Index=34/100 (Very Poor). The focus of the meeting was on the current status and scope of work of the approved resurfacing project and how the city can move forward to resurface the roadway and address resident's concerns about the lack of continuous bicycle and pedestrian facilities.

The presentation included the following topics:

The project background-Originated in F/Y 14/15 original intent to "...perform pavement maintenance on the traveled way of Vineyard Road from Wilson Ave to Sutro Ave and pending community feedback, install bicycle lanes and property owner-funded frontage improvements."

The Funding/History-Vineyard Road’s functional classification makes it eligible to receive federal funds. A \$750,000 “Priority Conservation Area” grant was awarded to Novato to acquire open space, but the federal grant funds could not be used for property acquisitions, so the federal funds were exchanged with local funds assigned to the Vineyard Rd. pavement rehabilitation project. The original deadline for the use of the federal funds was construction no later than summer 2017. The City was granted a 1-yr extension by Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for construction no later than summer 2018.

Scope of Work- The current project proposes to resurface existing roadway using a “Cold In-Place Recycling” method, upgrade existing sidewalks/curb ramps to meet current accessibility mandates, restripe the roadway after repaving, and modify road sign packages to match the final striping. Sidewalk gap closures were not included in the resurfacing project scope due to funding limitations.

CEQA & NEPA Explanation- A chart was provided in the presentation to try to generally explain the different levels of environmental documentation under both the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA.)

Environmental Documentation/Determination- The current scope of work of the project is maintenance of existing facilities only, and is therefore categorically excluded from NEPA and categorically exempt from CEQA. Adding new sidewalks or other features to the project will likely require a higher level of environmental documentation under CEQA as the project may no longer be categorically exempt. This process will take at least a few months and would delay construction on the project past the current funding deadline of summer 2018. ***NOTE: Following the workshop, city staff reviewed the NEPA Determination made by Caltrans on behalf of FHWA for the project and concluded that the sidewalk gap closure work was included in their NEPA categorical exclusion. This is good news in the sense that the city will not need to reopen the NEPA documentation process with Caltrans/FHWA in order to proceed with future sidewalk construction, but additional CEQA requirements will still apply.***

Funding Restrictions and Deadlines- The original deadline for the use of the federal funds on the project was construction no later than summer 2017. The City was granted a 1-yr extension by Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for construction no later than summer 2018. An additional deadline extension could be requested and may be approved in order to add a sidewalk gap closure between Eucalyptus and Trumbull, however this is not recommended by city staff as the proposed roadway resurfacing work is independent of new sidewalk construction and additional delays to the project usually mean higher costs as a result of additional roadway deterioration and price escalations.

Project Status- Construction Plans are approximately 65% complete, with final roadway striping and sign packages still to be determined. Construction is scheduled and on track for summer 2018. This workshop served as an opportunity for the public to review the proposed pavement markings and sign packages and provide feedback for consideration during finalization of the construction plans and specifications.

Striping Options – The project striping plan is currently proposed with Class II dedicated bicycle lanes where the pavement width will accommodate and “enhanced” Class III shared lanes (bicycle route) where pavement widening would be required to accommodate dedicated lanes. The “enhanced” Class III shared lane striping detail was taken from the National Association of City Transportation officials (NACTO) Urban Bikeway Design Guide and are intended to create a visual impression of a lane-within-a-lane to motorists. The proposed striping

plan also includes enhanced crosswalk striping and signs, new crosswalk locations as requested by parents whose children walk to school, and attempted to maintain as much existing on street parking as possible—only 2-3 parking spaces were proposed to be removed along Vineyard Rd. between Wilson and Sutro. Staff brought two sets of proposed signing and striping plans for attendees to review, ask questions, and provide feedback to consider during finalization.

Improvements Requested to Date-

- Create continuous bicycle and pedestrian facilities to both local schools.
- Close sidewalk gap between Eucalyptus and Trumbull/Sun Ln.
- Add Class II bike lanes per city's Bike/Ped Master Plan
- Add midblock crosswalk between Mosswood Ct & Mill Rd.
- Improve pedestrian access at the island at Vineyard and Mill Rds.

Improvement Challenges-

- Lack of curb/gutter/sidewalk at several locations
- Narrow right of way may require property acquisitions to accommodate future bike lanes
- Utility relocations may be required to install sidewalks or widen for bike lanes
- Residents have expressed a desire to maintain the rural character of the neighborhood

Other Vineyard Rd. Improvements-Next Steps

There are two alternate ways to go about incorporating sidewalks, bike lanes, and/or other improvements to Vineyard Rd. One option is to develop a Vineyard Rd. "Master Plan," as has been suggested by the public during recent walkthroughs, and the other is to prioritize and implement smaller individual projects. The Master Plan would solicit community input to prepare a plan to include bicycle and pedestrian facilities along Vineyard Rd. from Wilson to Sutro. This plan could include a continuous separate Class I path along the south side of Vineyard Rd. similar to the configuration on Eucalyptus Ave. The other method would identify and rank priorities such as closing the sidewalk gap between Eucalyptus and Trumbull, then initiate projects to address those priorities in order. Each method has pros and cons. For example, the "Master Plan" approach would provide a comprehensive planning document depicting all future improvements through an inclusive process. But this process would be expensive and could take several years to reach consensus in the community, during which time no improvements would likely be constructed. Focusing on smaller prioritized projects eliminates the long-term planning process and is the most expedient and cost-effective way to implement improvements. But this process may not reflect a collective/shared vision for the entire neighborhood and the sum of all eventual improvement projects from Wilson to Sutro would likely be higher than those improvements installed on a single larger "Master Plan" project.

QUESTIONS / COMMENTS/RESPONSES AND CONCLUSIONS:

Project Website-Project information and PowerPoint presentation are available on the city's website: www.novato.org/vineyardimprovements

Questions & Answers-There were questions, answers and comments that arose both during and after the presentation. The following are intended to be representative of the questions, answers, and comments discussed during the workshop:

Q: Will funding be lost if not used by 2018?

A: The current funding deadline is construction in summer of 2018. There may be possibilities to ask for and receive another extension. The level of risk of losing the federal grant funding due to project delays is not known. Staff are recommending that the resurfacing work move forward without the sidewalks for three primary reasons: 1) because the asphalt resurfacing work is independent of the sidewalk work and will be performed by different contractors, 2) because the roadway will continue to deteriorate during the time that it would take to add the sidewalk work to a collective project, and 3) because delays usually mean higher construction costs.

Q: Given the age of the project why is it the first outreach?

A: There have been previous outreach efforts dating as far back as 2004. At this point, the project is at 65% complete and the scope of work for the public to provide input is somewhat limited to the future inclusion of bike lanes, sidewalks, and pavement striping options.

Q: What is the minimum width of class I lane?

A: Caltrans Highway Design Manual [Section 1003.1(1) (a)] states that the minimum width of a Class I bike path is 8' with 10' width preferred. A minimum 2' wide adjacent shoulder is required when the bike path is not on a structure. The transition from Class I to Class II and III bike lanes can be difficult because it generally requires riders in one direction to cross the roadway where the path type changes. Ideally, there is one type of path that is continuous along each segment, but city-owned right of way constraints can make this difficult.

Q: What is the width of the City's right of way, city owned?

A: Most of the city-owned right of way along Vineyard Rd. between Eucalyptus and Trumbull is only 35' wide. To put that into context, similar roads in Novato are typically 50' or wider, so improvements to Vineyard Rd. like widening to accommodate Class II bike lanes per the Bicycle & Pedestrian Master Plan become very challenging and expensive due to the fact that additional right of way must be acquired.

Public comment: Closing the sidewalk gap is not the first priority. The pavement is in terrible condition and should be repaved. But the sidewalk gap should be closed in the future for the kids to walk to school.

Q: How will speed be controlled once the road are repaired? [Attendee was concerned that people will drive faster once the roadway is smooth]

A: As the project is currently proposed, the traveled lane widths would be reduced to approximately 11' and "lane within a lane" enhanced Class III bike lane markings are shown. There is also a mid-block crosswalk proposed north of Mill Rd. These striping modifications have been shown to help to calm traffic.

Comment: What if we include, eastbound from Trumbull toward Wilson, a 3 ft. shoulder, 2, 12 ft. travels lanes, and an 8 ft. paved shoulder, striped and marked as a multi-use path.

Q: Would it be possible to include chicanes [curves in the roadway] similar to Eucalyptus as a traffic-calming measure?

A: There may be an opportunity to add some curves in the roadway, but curves generally require more city-owned right of way width to install.

Public comment: The chicanes on Eucalyptus don't really work because people just drive straight over them. And you can't negotiate road any more than 15 mph if you don't drive over them.

Public comment: The [perceived] most dangerous part of Vineyard Rd. is between Eucalyptus and Trumbull where there is no sidewalk, and specifically near the corner of Trumbull where the line of sight is not very good.

Q: Can we install a sidewalk, curb and gutter between Eucalyptus and Sun Lane [end of sidewalk on the south side of Vineyard Rd. about three houses east of Trumbull Ave]?

A: The city could install sidewalk to close the gap to the east of Eucalyptus, but we will not likely have the funding, design, and environmental documentation ready in time for construction next summer along with the roadway resurfacing work.

Q: Why can't the entire city-owned right of way be paved and separated into one 8' wide multi-use path next to two 12' wide traveled lanes to be shared with bicycles, and a 3' wide shoulder to make up the 35' total right of way width, accommodate bikes/pedestrians, and not bother adding the sidewalk?

A: Staff will certainly look into this as an option, but there is some concern about a continuous multi-use path immediately adjacent to the traveled lanes as well as the transitions from Class II and III bike lanes in each direction of Vineyard Rd. transitioning in- and out of a section of Class I multi-use path for about one block.

Q: Are there any additional costs associated with adding a sidewalk aside from the construction costs?

A: Yes. There would be more costs associated with the environmental documentation process--depending on the level of documentation we may need to hire consultants to handle this work. There would also be additional costs associated with the sidewalk design, public outreach efforts, and management of the construction of that work. We do not have an estimate of these costs at this time.

Q: How long will it take from now to add the sidewalk? What are the time frames that will go into the different possible improvements?

A: Consider two options: 1) a larger project to create a uniform pathway along Vineyard from Wilson to Sutro, and 2) a series of smaller projects that would address priorities such as the sidewalk gap closure east of Eucalyptus. The larger project could take 7-10 years before the sidewalk gap is closed because of the lengthier planning, environmental, and design process, not to mention the difficulty in securing the amount of funds required to construct a larger project. The smaller projects to close the sidewalk gap or improve the multi-use path out toward Sutro could be accomplished in 1-2 years assuming there are no major environmental resources to mitigate and that funding is available through grants.

Q: What is the cost next summer to resurface Vineyard Rd. from Wilson to Sutro?

A: Approximately \$1.25 million as it is currently proposed without sidewalk gap closure

Q: Who requested the previous extension of the funding deadline?

A: The city's project engineer.

Q: Is there any mandate to maintain this roadway after resurfacing this roadway?

A: There is no mandate, but there is a desire to take care of our infrastructure. It is anticipated the next maintenance project required after the resurfacing work would be some type of surface-rejuvenating sealant application in 10-12 years. The city would build this into our pavement management plan to protect and ensure the longevity of the new pavement.

Q: What is the purpose of the meeting tonight?

A: City engineering staff are looking for feedback from the public on the proposed 65% design so that we can incorporate changes and requests into the final design for City Council approval.

Q: Can the city ask for a funding deadline extension on the current project and concurrently look for funding on the sidewalk project?

A: Yes we can ask for a funding deadline extension. But this is not recommended as the resurfacing work is independent of the sidewalk work, the resurfacing work is on schedule to be constructed in the summer of 2018, whereas the sidewalk work will likely take more time to prepare for construction, and the costs to resurface the roadway—which make up a majority of the costs of the project—will probably continue to rise during the time the work is delayed.

Q: Why is there a question at all about adding sidewalks?

A: The reason why the sidewalks were not added to the scope of the project in the past was due to the lack of funding. But the right thing to do is to close the sidewalk gap between Eucalyptus and Trumbull so that there is some sort of continuous path of travel along Vineyard Rd. City staff support the closure of the sidewalk and recognize the frustration of several of the attendees that the sidewalk work is not proposed as a part of the resurfacing project.

Public comment: A resident voiced concerns that there was a blind corner at the intersection of Vineyard and Sutro that should be addressed by the resurfacing project.

Public comment: Another resident stated that she was concerned about safety, but does not want to see the rural character of the neighborhood ruined by signage and roadway striping.

Q: What are the signing and striping enhancements that are proposed?

A: The project striping plan is currently proposed with Class II dedicated bicycle lanes where the pavement width will accommodate and “enhanced sharrow” Class III bike lanes (bicycle route) where pavement widening would be required to accommodate dedicated lanes. The proposed striping plan also includes enhanced crosswalk striping and signs, new crosswalk locations as requested by parents whose children walk to school, and attempted to maintain as much existing on street parking as possible—only 2-3 parking spaces are currently proposed to be removed along Vineyard Rd. between Wilson and Sutro. Two copies of the proposed project plans were displayed on tables in the front of the meeting room and the attendees were invited to come up, review the plans, and ask any questions to city staff. The meeting attendees spent approximately 30 minutes studying the plans and discussing changes with staff after the presentation and open-forum opportunity for public questions/comments.

General Conclusions- There was a general consensus among the meeting attendees that Vineyard Rd. needs to be resurfaced and that the sidewalk gap between Eucalyptus and Trumbull should be closed. However the desire for additional sidewalks, bike lanes and other improvements were mixed. Many attendees expressed that they did not want to lose the rural character of the neighborhood, nor did they want to see Vineyard Rd. become a main thoroughfare for recreational cyclists. Many expressed concerns about the safety of drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists and requested traffic calming measures be included to prevent the resurfaced roadway from becoming a “speedway.”

Several people in attendance expressed disbelief and serious concerns that the sidewalk gap closure had not been included in the Vineyard Rd. project scope and demanded to know why. Staff explained that funding had never been available for the sidewalk gap closure work and previous city efforts to obtain donations from fronting property owners were unsuccessful. Staff made a commitment to initiate a new sidewalk gap closure project and seek funding from grants

or other sources. Adding the sidewalk to the resurfacing work would likely delay the current project construction to 2019 as securing funding, environmental documentation, and design work would take several months to complete.

Several attendees requested that the resurfacing work not be further delayed in order to add the sidewalk work as the roadway is in very poor condition and needs to be resurfaced as soon as possible.

Some attendees expressed mistrust in the city government and requested that the sidewalks be added to the scope of work of the resurfacing project regardless of delays to ensure that the sidewalk gap closures would be constructed. There was a level of concern among a few residents that the city would resurface Vineyard Rd. without returning to close the sidewalk gap.

Most of the meeting attendees agreed that the proposed resurfacing project should proceed concurrently with an initiative to close the sidewalk gap along Vineyard Rd. between Eucalyptus and Trumbull as a high priority to provide a continuous path of travel for pedestrians along Vineyard Rd.

Regarding the signing and striping plans proposed for the resurfacing project, most attendees requested that the city minimize the number of signs and amount of pavement markings to avoid creating a sense of urbanization, but wanted to include traffic calming features and crosswalk enhancements. The “enhanced sharrow” Class III bike lane striping was almost universally disliked by the meeting attendees and will be replaced with more traditional Class III bike lane striping with the spacing distance maximized between markings. Some attendees also requested that on-street parking be retained as much as possible, even if that meant replacing planned Class II bike lanes with Class III bike lanes due to the roadway width limitations.

At the conclusion of the workshop, Christopher Blunk stated that staff would recommend that the resurfacing project proceed to construction with edits to minimize the roadway striping & signing and to add traffic calming features as requested by the public at the workshop. He stated that he would also recommend that a new project to close the sidewalk gap between Eucalyptus and Trumbull be initiated simultaneously and implemented by the city as a priority.

