



# PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Council Meeting Date: December 18, 2007  
Staff Report #: 07-215  
Agenda Item #: F-1

**REGULAR: Acceptance of the California Department of Transportation Plan to Replace the Existing U.S. 101 Pedestrian/Bicycle Overcrossing at Ringwood Avenue within Close Proximity to its Current Location as Part of the U.S. 101 Auxiliary Lane Project.**

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## RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council accept the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) plan to replace the existing U.S. 101 pedestrian overcrossing at Ringwood Avenue within close proximity to its current location as part of the U.S. 101 Auxiliary Lane project.

## BACKGROUND

In October 2007, staff received a notice from Caltrans that it is in the “Environmental Study” stages of adding auxiliary lanes to U.S. 101 between Embarcadero Road in Palo Alto and Marsh Road in Menlo Park. Auxiliary lanes provide a merging area for traffic as it enters and exits the freeway.

Caltrans also noted that, with this project, it will need to reconstruct the pedestrian overcrossing located at Ringwood Avenue to comply with new Americans with Disabilities Act regulations. Caltrans asked to meet with the City’s Bicycle Commission to receive input on whether the pedestrian overcrossing at Ringwood Avenue should be replaced and where the access points should be located to best serve the community.

On December 3, 2007, the Caltrans manager of the project sent a letter to the City (Attachment A) saying that Caltrans was currently in the environmental review process and that, to keep the project on schedule, the City needs to determine whether it wanted the overcrossing replaced in the same location, replaced in another location, or removed completely.

## ANALYSIS

### Bicycle Commission Meeting

On November 5, 2007, Caltrans representatives made a presentation to the Bicycle Commission at its regularly scheduled meeting. The City had sent Caltrans the mailing addresses for approximately 2,700 residences in the Belle Haven and Flood Triangle areas for public noticing of the meeting. In addition, the City sent out a notice of its own to the residents within 500 feet of the overcrossing, notifying them of the upcoming meeting. Caltrans later acknowledged that its notice did not reach residents until

approximately two days after the meeting. Approximately 25 residents attended the meeting.

At the presentation, Caltrans offered the Bicycle Commission four options for the overcrossing, which were as follows:

1. Remove the overcrossing and not replace it.
2. Replace the overcrossing in the same location with the same access points (which would eliminate the crossing during construction).
3. Replace the existing overcrossing in close proximity to its current location and with the same access points (preserving the existing crossing until the new one is completed).
4. Remove the existing overcrossing and replace it with an overcrossing located in a completely different location.

Some residents in attendance at the Bicycle Commission meeting mentioned they use the overcrossing regularly and do not want to see it removed. Several residents, including some from around Ringwood Avenue, raised concerns regarding safety on the overcrossing and possible crime around it. These residents asked Caltrans whether the crossing could be moved closer to the businesses on Willow Road or possibly be completely removed. They also asked if bus service could be provided for students, whom the residents believe are the primary users of the overcrossing. Residents also discussed whether timed gates and video surveillance could be added to the new facility in order to enhance safety.

The Caltrans representatives said the Willow Road/U.S. 101 interchange is in the process of being replaced and will have better pedestrian/bicycle access, and safety features could be addressed during the design phase of the project.

After discussing the issue at length, the Bicycle Commission unanimously recommended that the City Council replace the existing overcrossing because there is a need for a pedestrian/bicycle overcrossing of U.S. 101 in the vicinity of the existing crossing, and that during construction of this new crossing, the existing crossing should be kept serviceable.

### **Overcrossing Use**

Staff contacted Menlo-Atherton High School to determine the school peak hours and when school children walk and ride to school. Staff conducted a brief study of the number of pedestrians using the overcrossing during these times in the morning and afternoon. The study found that 48 pedestrians and bicyclists used the overcrossing before school and 49 pedestrians and bicyclists used the overcrossing after school.

Staff's current workload including previously identified project priorities and Caltrans' expressed urgency for a response on the location of the overcrossing, limited staff's ability to conduct a more detailed analysis of the overcrossing.

## **Bicycle Plan**

One of the projects recommended in the City of Menlo Park Comprehensive Bicycle Plan is the Ringwood Avenue Bicycle/Pedestrian Bridge Improvement project. According to the plan, “The Ringwood Avenue Pedestrian and Bicycle Bridge Improvement project would provide safety and security improvements to this important non-motorized connection between east and west Menlo Park.” The plan also says that “currently this bridge is the only dedicated bicycle/pedestrian facility across U.S. 101 in Menlo Park; cyclists must otherwise cross at the freeway interchanges at Willow or Marsh, both of which have heavy, high speed traffic entering and exiting the freeway.” The plan lists some options for enhancing the safety and security of the structure and encouraging its use:

- Improve the lighting on the bridge span and ramps on both sides.
- Install emergency call boxes on the bridge or bridge landings.
- Install a closed-circuit security camera to monitor the structure and deter criminal activity.

In its letter to the City, Caltrans said it could work with staff during the design phase of the project to address security, visibility, and other crime-related issues raised by the community.

On the basis of the City of Menlo Park Comprehensive Bicycle Plan, the recommendation of the Bicycle Commission, and the number of students currently using the overcrossing to travel to and from Menlo-Atherton High School, staff recommends replacing the overcrossing within close proximity of its current location and with the same access points.

## **IMPACT ON CITY RESOURCES**

The proposed project will have no impact on City resources because it will be completely managed and funded by the California Department of Transportation.

## **POLICY ISSUES**

Replacement of the overcrossing is consistent with Policy II-E to promote walking as a commute alternative and for short trips.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The California Department of Transportation is the responsible agency for the project and will conduct all required environmental reviews.

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Richard Angulo  
Transportation Technician II

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Charles Taylor  
Transportation Manager

**PUBLIC NOTICE:** Public Notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

**ATTACHMENTS:** A. Letter from California Department of Transportation to City, dated December 3, 2007

**DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

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December 3, 2007

Mr. Glen Rojas, City Manager  
City of Menlo Park  
701 Laurel Street  
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Dear Mr. Rojas:

Thank you for giving the California Department of Transportation (Department) an opportunity to present our US 101 auxiliary lane project proposal to the Menlo Park Bicycle Commission and community on November 5, 2007. As we have discussed previously, the Department is in the process of finalizing the Administrative Draft Environmental Document for this project and is planning on having the Draft available for public comment in March 2008. To be able to keep this important project on schedule, we need to determine if the existing pedestrian over crossing at Ringwood Avenue should be replaced and where the access points should be located to provide the best service to the community.

It was our understanding at the conclusion of the meeting with the Bicycle Commission that a motion will be made to recommend to the City Council to replace the existing pedestrian over crossing with a new structure with ADA compliant ramps and access points in the same vicinity as the existing one. The Department concurs with this recommendation and will finalize our Draft Environmental Document under these conditions unless informed otherwise by the City. The exact location and structure type will be established during the design phase of the project. The City will have an opportunity to work with the Department to address security, visibility and other crime related issues that were raised by the community, during the design of the new over crossing.

Thank you for your cooperation on this matter as it will have an impact on the community of Menlo Park for many generations to come. We would appreciate any concerns with our proposal be brought to our attention by January 15, 2008 so that we would still be able to meet our schedule. Please contact me at 510-286-5073 should you have any questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ron Moriguchi", written over a circular scribble.

**RON MORIGUCHI**  
Regional Project Manager (SM County)  
Division of Project Management South

- c: Richard Napier (City and County Association of Governments of San Mateo County)  
Joe Hurley (San Mateo County Transportation Authority)  
Chip Taylor (City of Menlo Park)