



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: JULY 5, 2005

ITEM NUMBER:

SUBJECT: NEWPORT BOULEVARD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AND MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION

DATE: JUNE 15, 2005

FROM: PUBLIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT/TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DIVISION

PRESENTATION BY: WILLIAM J. MORRIS, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC SERVICES

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: PETER NAGHAVI, TRANSPORTATION SERVICES MANAGER (714) 754-5182

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Adopt attached resolution approving the Newport Boulevard Improvement Project between 17th Street and 19th Street and Mitigated Negative Declaration (Attachment 1) and;
2. Authorize staff to proceed with final design and right-of-way phases.

BACKGROUND:

On August 6, 2001, the City Council considered different alternatives for potential improvements on Newport Boulevard between 17th and 19th Streets apart from other aesthetic and landscaping improvements. The geometric alternatives for the circulation improvement part of the project included:

1. No Project: Maintain existing six (6) lanes, (3 lanes per direction);
2. Eight lanes: Add a fourth lane both northbound and southbound between 17th and 19th Streets;
3. Partial eight (8) lanes: Add one lane each direction only between 19th Street and Broadway, and;
4. 7/8 lanes: Add one lane northbound between 17th and 19th Streets, and one lane southbound between 19th Street and Broadway.

At this meeting, the City Council directed staff to commence with the environmental analysis of the 7/8-lane alternative (No. 4 above) for Newport Boulevard extending from 17th Street to 19th Street, illustrated by Attachment 2.

Currently the segment of Newport Boulevard between 17th Street to 19th Street is a six-lane roadway and operates at near capacity levels. During peak seasonal periods, the roadway demand exceeds capacity and grid-lock frequently occurs at the intersections of 17th Street and 19th Street. The subject environmental study was initiated to address all needed improvements and to establish the extent of potential project impacts along this heavily traveled commuter corridor, consistent with Council adopted Community Objective 98-B12.

On October 15, 2001, City Council established the Downtown and Eastside Ad Hoc Committee to work with staff on this project to ensure that residential and business community needs are clearly represented. The makeup of the membership of this committee is shown in Attachment 3 (last section). The City Council, in their meeting of April 1st, 2002, reconfirmed their direction to staff and the Downtown and Eastside Ad Hoc Committee to proceed with the environmental analysis of Newport Boulevard between 17th and 19th Streets.

In June of 2002, the City Council approved a cooperative agreement with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to initiate project development. The cooperative agreement No. 12-452, defined the terms and conditions under which the project would be developed. The agreement designated responsibilities whereby the City would develop the project through its fiscal allocations (grants), and that Caltrans and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) would provide environmental and design oversight at no cost to the City.

On January 21, 2003, the City Council awarded a contract to Sequeira Infrastructure Associates to commence preliminary design and environmental analysis of the proposed improvements. The consultant services included analyzing traffic and parking conditions, potential improvements to streetscape and pedestrian accessibility, alignment alternative and associated impacts to adjacent business centers including noise and air quality as further specified within the Analysis section below. For the following year, the committee worked closely with the consultant and provided input during the development of the environmental document.

On February 17, 2004, the City Council received a final report from the Downtown and Eastside Transportation Ad Hoc Committee regarding their assessment of the project and the environmental findings. This report (Attachment 3) is the summation of over two years of project oversight by the Committee, and provides recommendations in "Attachment 7" of the Ad Hoc report for City Council's consideration as part of this public hearing. All Ad Hoc Committee recommendations have been incorporated within the scope of the proposed project and include improvements to **landscaping; street lighting; maintaining existing sidewalk widths; maintaining parking** along the eastside of Newport Boulevard; and **enhancing pedestrian accessibility**. The majority of the Ad Hoc Committee (6 to 3 vote) approved advancing the 7/8 lane alignment alternative and to proceed with the proposed scope of improvements. Attachment 4 outlines the Committee's recommendations provided in the proposed project scope.

Based on the award of Federal grant funds for this work, the environmental analysis required compliance with both National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) procedures. On May 11, 2005, Caltrans and FHWA approved the NEPA document and established a "Finding Of No Significant Impact" (FONSI), Attachment 5. The City Council is required to consider approval of the Project and the Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) through a public hearing process. The notice for this public hearing is provided as Attachment 6.

ANALYSIS:

Following intensive and lengthy review of the project by Caltrans, FHWA, and City staff, it was determined that a combined Initial Study/Environmental Assessment (IS/EA) was the appropriate document to evaluate potential environmental impacts of the Newport Boulevard Improvement Project. The "Initial Study" was developed to address CEQA requirements and the "Environmental Assessment" initiated to meet Federal environmental criteria. The following topics were evaluated to determine potential environmental impacts based on the proposed scope of improvements:

- Aesthetics
- Agricultural Resources
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Geology/Soils
- Hazards & Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology/Water Quality
- Land Use/Planning
- Mineral Resources
- Noise
- Population/Housing
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation/Traffic/Parking
- Utilities/Service Systems
- Mandatory Findings of Significance

Based on the environmental analysis of these elements, the project was determined to **not have any significant** impacts with the incorporation of identified mitigation measures.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:

Pursuant to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as well as the City of Costa Mesa guidelines, the Initial Study/Environmental Assessment document was circulated for public review between July 7 and August 20, 2004. Three (3) public open houses have been held to present the project and solicit public comments.

A copy of the Initial Study/Environmental Assessment document is forwarded separately, including public comments and responses in Appendix E of the document. The Final IS/EA document was made available for public review in advance of this meeting at the 4th floor Public Services counter of City Hall, and available for viewing at the two Costa Mesa Libraries located at 1845 Park Avenue and at 2969 E. Mesa Verde Drive. All parties that have provided comments to the document have received formal responses.

Section 6.0 of the IS/EA document identifies the Summary of Mitigation Measures proposed for the project. In general, mitigations include compliance with the City's Streetscape and Median Development Standards for all tree replacements; establishment of a Traffic Management Plan to minimize construction related traffic impacts; coordination with an archaeologist should cultural materials be found; and adherence to hazardous waste procedures and air quality control requirements during construction. Based on these findings and compliance requirements, anticipated impacts would be mitigated to a **non-significant** level meeting CEQA and NEPA standards.

The attached resolution provides for City Council approval of the Mitigated Negative Declaration for the Newport Boulevard Improvement Project and authorizes staff to proceed with final design. If approved by the City Council, the final design and right-of-way phases of the project are expected to be completed by March 2006, and construction is projected to begin by February 2007.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

The City Council may elect to not approve the proposed project and Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND). This would result in continued and future traffic congestion in the area due to regional traffic growth, thereby not meeting the City's General Plan Goals and Objectives. Denial of the project would also result in forfeiture of approved Federal and OCTA awarded grant funding of approximately \$4,345,290.

FISCAL REVIEW:

The total cost of design, right-of-way and construction for this project is estimated at \$7,025,000. The project is funded by a combination of OCTA Measure M funds, Federal Regional Surface Transportation Program (RSTP) funds and City match. The project to date has cumulatively received awards of \$5,640,290 through the various County and Federal grant sources. The remaining funding would be City match, derived from a variety of resources.

In June of 2002, the City Council approved the 2002-2003 Capital Improvement Program (CIP) which established an appropriation of \$795,000 to prepare the Environmental Study and Preliminary Engineering Design for this phase of the project. The project scope conformed with Council Objective 98-B12 to review traffic and pedestrian improvements within the Downtown area.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The City Attorney has reviewed and approved the attached resolution for its content and form.

CONCLUSION:

The Newport Boulevard Improvement project consists of providing various streetscape and pedestrian accessibility improvements, a fourth northbound lane from 17th Street to 19th Street, and a fourth southbound lane from 19th Street to Broadway. An Initial Study/Environmental Assessment (IS/EA) document has been prepared for the Newport Boulevard Improvement Project to assess the potential environmental impacts. Based on the study findings, it was determined by Caltrans, FHWA and City staff that a Mitigated Negative Declaration (MND) was an appropriate environmental determination for the project. The environmental document fully complies with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA guidelines, and the City of Costa Mesa Environmental Guidelines. No significant issues were found from the analysis, and therefore staff recommends that City Council 1) adopt the attached resolution approving the Newport Boulevard Improvement Project and MND and 2) authorize staff to proceed with final design, right-of-way and construction bidding phases.

PETER NAGHAVI
Transportation Services Manager

WILLIAM J. MORRIS
Director of Public Services

MICHAEL R. ROBINSON
Assistant Development Services Director

- ATTACHMENTS:
- 1. [Resolution](#)
 - 2. [Project Plan](#)
 - 3. [Ad Hoc report dated February 4, 2004](#)
 - 4. [Ad Hoc Recommendations in Project Scope](#)
 - 5. [FHWA Finding Of No Significant Impact \(FONSI\)](#)
 - 6. [Notice of Public Hearing](#)
- * IS/EA Document forwarded as separate package

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