



CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: APRIL 17, 2007

ITEM NUMBER:

SUBJECT: GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT 07-01 AMENDING THE MASTER PLAN OF HIGHWAYS IN THE CIRCULATION ELEMENT OF THE GENERAL PLAN

DATE: APRIL 5, 2007

FROM: PUBLIC SERVICES DEPARTMENT - TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DIVISION

PRESENTATION BY: PETER NAGHAVI, TRANSPORTATION SERVICES MANAGER

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

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve Resolution (Attachment 1) amending the Master Plan of Highways (MPH) in the Circulation Element of the General Plan (GP-07-01).

BACKGROUND:

The Orange County Transportation Authority's (OCTA) Master Plan of Arterial Highways (MPAH) currently designates two future crossings over the Santa Ana River south of the I-405 Freeway. These Santa Ana River Crossings, referred to as SARX, are located at Gisler Avenue/Garfield Avenue (within the Cities of Costa Mesa, Fountain Valley, and Huntington Beach) and at 19th Street/Banning Avenue (within the Cities of Costa Mesa, Huntington Beach).

Over the years, and after a significant amount of studies and public input, the Costa Mesa City Council has determined that the construction of bridges at these locations would impose a significant impact to a number of residential neighborhoods, schools, and parks that are in the immediate area. The City Council and staff further believe that a 19th Street/Banning Avenue bridge would create significant adverse impacts on the existing wetlands and biological resources along the Santa Ana River bed. In consideration of these impacts, the City of Costa Mesa, since November 1991, has been working with involved agencies to remove these bridges from the MPAH.

The Cities of Costa Mesa, Fountain Valley, and Huntington Beach in association with OCTA entered into a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) to conduct a detailed traffic analysis for **Garfield Avenue/Gisler Avenue bridge** (Attachment 2) which resulted in a study titled "Circulation Feasibility Study and Cost Estimate." This study documented the traffic impacts with the Garfield Avenue/Gisler Avenue bridge ("Gisler Bridge") in place, as well as roadway improvement alternatives without the bridge, based on the most recent traffic and transportation model data acceptable to all cities. Along with this study, a

preliminary layout of the bridge was prepared so that the physical impacts and preliminary costs of constructing the bridge could be ascertained.

The study process, as well as the study conclusions, were reviewed by a Policy Advisory Committee (PAC). This committee was made up of elected officials representing involved jurisdictions.

ANALYSIS:

The Circulation Feasibility Study and Cost Estimate (Garfield/Gisler Study) analyzed the following four scenarios for future year (2030) conditions (Attachment 3):

- No Project – Build Garfield/Gisler bridge;
- Proposed Project – Do not build Garfield/Gisler bridge, widen Talbert/MacArthur bridge and construct a new slip onramp from eastbound Ellis Avenue to southbound I-405 Freeway;
- Smart Street Strategy “A” – Do not build Garfield/Gisler bridge, widen Talbert/MacArthur bridge, and implement smart street improvements on Brookhurst Street, Adams Avenue, Harbor Boulevard and Fairview Road; and
- Smart Street Strategy “B” – Do not build Garfield/Gisler bridge, widen Talbert/MacArthur bridge, implement smart street improvements on Brookhurst Street, Adams Avenue, Harbor Boulevard and Fairview Road, and construct a new slip onramp from eastbound Ellis Avenue to southbound I-405 Freeway.

The Smart Street Strategies “A” and “B” include smart street improvements on several corridors. These improvements generally consist of traffic signal synchronization, construction of bus bays and removal of on-street parking.

Following the completion of the study, OCTA and the Cities of Costa Mesa, Fountain Valley and Huntington Beach entered into a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) whereby all agreed that the Garfield Avenue/Gisler Avenue bridge and corridors would be placed in a “Right-of-way Reserve” category, and required that all jurisdictions implement mitigation measures identified in the Smart Street Strategy “A” Alternative. The MOU is included as Attachment 4.

This reclassification obligates the City of Costa Mesa to comply with the following requirements:

- All Cities are required to implement specific improvements referred to as “Smart Street and Bridge Widening Strategy A.”
- The Cities shall not assume the buildout of the Gisler Bridge for any future land use planning or traffic studies.

The purpose of the “right-of-way reserve” classification is to allow OCTA and the affected cities to complete any necessary studies prior to any action to delete the bridge from the MPAH. During the “right-of-way reserve” period, the right-of-way shall be preserved for a secondary arterial highway within the Garfield-Gisler corridor. However, the Gisler Bridge shall not be considered as mitigation for development planning purposes. At the end of the

designated “reserve” period, a final decision shall be made by OCTA to reinstate or delete the Gisler Bridge from the MPAH.

General Plan Amendment GP-07-01

The proposed General Plan Amendment involves the following:

- Text amendment. A description of “right-of-way reserve” will be included in the Circulation Element, as follows:

“The Right-of-Way Reserve classification allows local jurisdictions considering deletion of a planned MPAH facility to request OCTA to re-designate the adopted facility as a “Right-of-Way Reserve” corridor for a specified length of time in order to assess the actual need for it. If OCTA agrees to re-designate the subject facility as a “Right-of-Way Reserve” corridor on the MPAH, then all appropriate City General Circulation Elements shall be revised to reflect such re-designation. During the “reserve” period, the right-of-way shall be preserved, however, the planned street shall not be considered as mitigation for development planning purposes. At the end of the designated period, a final decision shall be made regarding reinstatement or deletion of the street on the MPAH.”
- Map Exhibit amendment. The Master Plan of Highways exhibit in the General Plan will be modified to reflect the redesignation of Gisler Avenue and the Gisler Bridge as right-of-way reserve.

Environmental Determination

The proposed amendment was processed in accordance with the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the City of Costa Mesa Environmental Guidelines. The City Council certified Final Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) No. 1049 for the 2000 General Plan on January 22, 2002. As a programmatic environmental document, staff believes that the 2000 General Plan Final Program Environmental Impact Report (EIR) suffices as environmental documentation since the proposed project is considered a minor revision to the Circulation Element and does not involve any new significant impacts.

The initial study checklist is on file at the Transportation Division. In summary, the proposed project is considered a minor amendment to the General Plan that would not require additional environmental review because of the following:

- No new significant impacts are identified nor mitigation measures are required. The proposed project is self-mitigating as circulation improvements are already incorporated into the project to minimize impacts to below a level of significance. Since these circulation improvements are included as part of the proposed project, the environmental conclusions of the General Plan EIR remain unchanged.
- Circulation improvements eliminate adverse traffic impacts by maintaining Level Of Service D (LOS) at all affected intersections. As part of the proposed action for the redesignation to right-of-way reserve, the City is required to implement circulation improvements for the following intersections to offset the traffic impacts of Smart Street A. These circulation improvements will result in maintenance of LOS D conditions and therefore eliminate any adverse traffic impacts at the following affected intersections:

- Harbor Boulevard/Gisler Avenue
 - Harbor Boulevard/Adams Avenue
 - Fairview Street/Adams Avenue
 - Fairview Street/Baker Street
- Project-specific environmental review will be required. The General Plan EIR is a program-level environmental document. Therefore, subsequent, project-specific environmental review may be required, as applicable. This review for Smart Street and Bridge Widening Strategy A may be required at the time the improvements are proposed for construction.

Planning Commission Action

The subject resolution was presented to Planning Commission during their regular meeting of March 26, 2007. The Planning Commission unanimously recommended that the City Council approve the resolution for General Plan Amendment GP-07-01. An excerpt from the Planning Commission meeting on the subject item is included in Attachment 5.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED:

The City Council may select to not approve the resolution for the proposed redesignation of Gisler Avenue and the Gisler Bridge to right-of-way reserve. However, this action will have the following major consequence:

- Denial of the GPA is inconsistent with the MOU. This action will result in the City of Costa Mesa not being in compliance with the terms of the agreed-upon MOU with OCTA and other jurisdictions to downgrade Garfield Avenue/Gisler Avenue bridge over Santa Ana River. The Garfield Avenue/Gisler Avenue bridge as well as Gisler Avenue will remain at their current classification.

FISCAL REVIEW:

There is no fiscal impact to the City with this item.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The City Attorney's office has reviewed and approved the attached resolution as to form and content.

CONCLUSION:

The City Council approved the MOU calling for the redesignation of Gisler Avenue and the Gisler Bridge to right-of-way reserve on the Master Plan of Highways. As required by the MOU, the circulation improvements assigned to the City of Costa Mesa and based on the

Circulation Feasibility Study, are acceptable to staff. These improvements not only generally reflect those in the City's General Plan, but will also maintain Level of Service D at affected intersections. Pursuant to the terms of the MOU, staff requests the City Council approval of General Plan Amendment GP-07-01 by adoption of the attached resolution.

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ATTACHMENTS: 1 [Resolution for General Plan Amendment GP-07-01](#)
2 [Location of the Proposed Santa Ana River Crossing Bridges](#)
3 Circulation Feasibility Study Alternatives
4 [Memorandum of Understanding](#)
5 [Excerpt from March 26, 2007 Planning Commission Meeting](#)