



## **STAFF REPORT TO THE CITY COUNCIL**

**DATE:** Regular Meeting of February 13, 2018

**TO:** Members of the City Council

**SUBMITTED BY:** Holly Smyth, AICP Planning Director  
Victor Carniglia, Municipal Resources Group

**SUBJECT:** Citywide Comprehensive Update to the Circulation Element of the City's General Plan

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff Recommends that the City Council:

- a. Request that staff make an opening presentation of the updated Circulation Element;
- b. Staff entertains questions from Council;
- c. Open the public hearing;
- d. Receive comments from the public;
- e. Close the public hearing;
- f. Discuss the updated Circulation Element;
- g. Make a decision whether to either 1) Approve the attached resolution (Attachment 1) adopting the January 2018 Comprehensive Update to the City's Circulation Element (with any further changes to be captured in an Exhibit D), or 2) Provide direction to staff on specific changes to be made to the updated Circulation Element, and continue the public hearing to a future City Council meeting to allow sufficient time for staff to incorporate the requested changes into the document, and determine that the attached Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration is adequate to address the environmental impacts of the Circulation Element update.

### **PROJECT BACKGROUND/ PLANNING COMMISSION ACTION:**

The State of California requires that cities and counties adopt a comprehensive, long-term General Plan for the physical development of their jurisdictions. A General Plan must include eight different "elements" defined by the state as: land use, housing, circulation, conservation, noise, safety, open space, and the environment. The Circulations Element provides the basis for decision-making regarding the continued development and enhancement of the City's transportation system to meet the needs of the City's residents, employees, and visitors, as well as prepare for the community's future residential and commercial needs. State law requires periodic review of and updates to the

Circulation Element. The Hercules Circulation Element was last updated in 1998. Having an updated Circulation Element will put the City in a better position to qualify for and receive additional transportation related grant funding.

As such, on October 25, 2016, the City Council approved a contract to retain the transportation consulting firm “DKS” to assist City staff in comprehensively updating the City’s Circulation Element, with Victor Carniglia of Municipal Resources Group to take the main Project Manager role. Work on the project commenced immediately thereafter.

On December 7, 2016 the City held an initial community workshop on the Circulation Element update. In the months following this community workshop, City staff worked closely with the consultant DKS, with the initial focus on preparing the land use projections for the 2040 horizon year to use in the traffic analysis. By May of 2017, DKS had prepared the traffic model and completed the initial runs of the traffic analysis. An initial draft of the goals and policies was also prepared.

A second workshop was held on May 30, 2017, with the primary focus being on public transit, train, and ferry related issues involving the west side of the City. A first draft of the Circulation Element was prepared by DKS in July 2017 and circulated for review to other agencies. On August 1, 2017 a third workshop was held, with the focus of the workshop being on this initial draft of the Circulation Element. Summaries of all three Workshops were captured and provided to the Planning Commission and public through the website and subsequent meetings. Taking the comments from the August 1, 2017 meeting and previous workshops, as well as comments from other agencies, DKS prepared a second draft of the Circulation Element. This document was then formatted utilizing a desktop publishing program that allowed the various maps and graphics to be seamlessly incorporated into the document. This complete draft of the Circulation Element was then posted on the City’s web site in late October 2017, and broadly distributed for review.

The Planning Commission on December 18, 2017 held its initial public hearing on the Circulation Element update, including the associated Initial Study and Negative Declaration. At this initial public hearing a number of comments and questions were raised by Commissioners, as well as by members of the public. A video of this Commission hearing is available for viewing on the City’s web site. “Additional Questions and Answers Relevant to the Circulation Element” tabular attachment was provided to focus on items received prior to the meeting highlighting staff’s recommended changes in red. At the conclusion of the hearing, the Commission directed staff to make staff’s recommended changes as well as a number of changes to the Circulation Element listed below, and subsequently passed a motion to continue the item to the January 16, 2018 Planning Commission meeting.

Planning Commission’s Additional Direction beyond the table from December 18, 2017 Meeting:

- Add Refugio Valley Road as Scenic Route in the Conservation Element of the General Plan.
- Include a new policy directing that entryway signage be installed at key points of entry to the City.
- Add the existing emergency access route that currently connects Refugio Valley Road to Alhambra Valley Road to the graphic that depicts emergency access routes (Figure 3-15) through Goat Road
- Modify Policy 3.A.3 regarding traffic calming to add “within funding constraints”
- Add wording to address the need to increase the physical separation of bicyclists and pedestrians from vehicular travel lanes on roads that are designated truck routes.

At the January 16, 2018 Planning Commission meeting the Commission considered the revised draft Circulation Element, dated January 2018, which incorporated the changes from the December 18, 2017 meeting. The Commission at this meeting by a 5-0 vote passed a resolution recommending that the City Council adopt the updated January 2018 version of the Circulation Element that incorporated one further recommendation to designate segments of Fawcett and Santa Fe Avenue as collectors to create a looped circulation route with Hercules Avenue and Railroad Avenue (see Attachment 2 PC Resolution). This was based upon the existing residential feeder streets, destinations such as the restaurant Leila by the Bay, future restored historic buildings, and anticipated future Bayfront Development.

From a technical perspective, Planning and Engineering staff does not believe designating Fawcett and Santa Fe Avenue as collectors as the Planning Commission has recommended would result in a tangible impact. The roadway geometrics for collectors included in the Circulation Element such as lane width and parking are not applicable since both streets have already been constructed. Street usage parameters such as speed limits and traffic calming are also not affected by the designation and are at the discretion of the City Council. Based upon staff's observation and feedback from the community, Santa Fe Avenue is currently being used as a connector between Railroad Avenue and Hercules Avenue, since it is the most direct route to San Pablo Avenue and less circuitous than utilizing Fawcett. For these reasons, should Council wish to adopt the Planning Commission's policy recommendation, staff recommends designating Santa Fe Avenue as the sole connecting collector and not Fawcett. Because only one modification was recommended to be changed in the January 2018 Circulation Element, a new draft document was not prepared so that any remaining changes directed by Council could be incorporated into the document once.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT OF RECOMMENDATION:**

The Circulation Element update has had no direct fiscal impact on the City, other than the staff and consultant time/cost to prepare the update. The cost of preparing the document has been fully funded by the General Plan Update Impact Fee that the City levies on all building permits. Monies collected from this fee cannot be utilized for any purpose other than updating the City's General Plan. No General Fund revenues have been used in updating the Circulation Element.

While the Circulation Element update has no direct fiscal impact on the City, the update will create indirect fiscal benefits, some of which have the potential to be substantial. For example, by virtue of having an up to date Circulation Element, the City will be in a better position to both qualify for and potentially receive additional transportation related grant funding. Many grant programs involving transportation dollars award extra "points" and ultimately funds to an applicant that has a current Circulation Element that is consistent with Federal, State, and regional requirements. Another indirect fiscal benefit of having a current Circulation Element involves the requirement that a City must be able to demonstrate General Plan consistency in regards to its Capital Improvement Program (CIP). This consistency finding can be difficult to achieve if a Circulation Element is out of date.

One of the requirements of CCTA funding agencies, has been to have a Complete Streets policy via passed Resolution of the voting body. More recently MTC has been pushing to require Complete Streets policies to be contained within the Circulation Element of the General Plan. Because it is anticipated that the incorporation of Complete Streets policy will become a pre-requisite to transportation funding in the future, the Complete Streets policies have been rolled into the Comprehensive Update to the Circulation Element.

A final fiscal benefit to note is that an update to a City's Circulation Element puts the City in an excellent position to be able update its Transportation Impact Fees (TIF). The process of updating a Circulation Element requires the preparation of an up to date traffic model with updated development projections. This information can then be used to determine what specific improvements need to be made to the circulation network to accommodate future traffic flows. Combining this information with estimates of the cost of the needed improvements form the "nexus" for updating the City's Traffic Impact Fee. As Council members will recall, the original contract to hire DKS to update the Circulation Element in October 2016 included an update to the City's TIF. This TIF update process is scheduled to commence immediately after the updated Circulation Element is adopted.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The process to prepare the updated Circulation Element has been both thorough and comprehensive, extending over an eighteen month time frame and involving numerous meetings with stakeholders and interested parties, three separate community workshops, as well as public hearings at the Planning Commission, who have recommended adoption of the new Circulation Element on a unanimous vote. The end product of this process is the Comprehensively Updated General Plan Circulation Element that is currently before City Council, a copy of which is attached to the Resolution (Exhibit 1 of Attachment 1).

The updated Circulation Element comprehensively revises and replaces the existing 1998 Element. The 1998 Element has a 2010 "horizon year", which all the 1998 Element's planning and projections were based on. That once future horizon year now lies years in the past. In contrast, the horizon year for the updated Circulation Element is 2040, eighteen years from now. Any goals and policies carried forward from the 1998 Element have been revised as needed to reflect both current and projected conditions. New goals and policies have been added as necessary to provide a more balanced approach, as the 1998 Element focuses almost entirely on the automobile to the exclusion of other modes of transportation. A comprehensive overview of the key differences between the current 1998 Circulation Element and the proposed updated Element was contained in the staff report prepared for the December 18, 2017 Planning Commission meeting (See Link in Attachment 2).

As noted previously in the "Background" section of this staff report, the Planning Commission requested a number of changes at the December 18, 2017 meeting that were incorporated into the January 2018 version of the Circulation Element currently before you (which was reflected in the January 16, 2018 Planning Commission PowerPoint). Additionally, City staff is recommending that a single modification be made to the January 2018 version of the Circulation Element currently before you that involves designating an additional street as a collector (discussed further below).

In terms of CEQA compliance, a determination of "Mitigated Negative Declaration " has been made by staff, and recommended by the Planning Commission. Attached is a copy of the Initial Study that documents the rationale behind this determination (Exhibit C to the Council Resolution). The Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration was circulated for a 30 day public review period from October 23, 2017 to November 22, 2017. Comments were received from BCDC, Contra Costa County and CALTRANS which did not request any changes be made to the environmental document and therefore no responses were necessary and no changes were made to the document as originally released.

## CONCLUSION:

A number of questions and comments have been received from Councilmembers, the public, and staff that are relevant to the Circulation Element since the final Planning Commission review and recommendations and are included in Attachment 2 in a tabular format. Based on this additional input, staff recommends that the answers listed in **Red Bold** should be integrated into the Final Circulation Element for City Council consideration. Should the Council or the public provide additional input not captured in this Attachment 2 or believe further recommended changes should be made to the January 2018 Element, those should be discussed and consensus gathered prior to taking any action on the Draft Council Resolution, and all changes placed in Exhibit D to the Resolution.

## ATTACHMENTS:

1. Draft Resolution adopting Circulation Element and Environmental
  - Exhibit A - 2018 Circulation Element
  - Exhibit B - Traffic-Related Appendices (Inc. new 2-page CCTA Travel Model Maps)
  - Exhibit C - Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration
  - Exhibit D - Revisions to be further incorporated into the Adopted Circulation Element
2. Additional Questions and Answers Relevant to Circulation Element
  1. Planning Commission Recommending Resolution 18-02
  2. Link to January 16, 2018 Planning Commission Agenda for Circulation Element
  3. Link to December 18, 2017 Planning Commission Agenda for Circulation Element