



Active Transportation Committee

AGENDA REPORT ITEM 4A

DATE: March 20, 2025

FROM: Luke Schwartz, Transportation Manager
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SUBJECT: Grand Ave Pilot Project Update

Recommendation:

1. Receive an update on the Grand Avenue Pilot Project

Background

As part of the 2024 Roadway Sealing Project, the City advanced a pilot project on Grand Avenue with the purpose of including roadway improvements as a response to a history of injury collisions and to advance improvements from the Active Transportation Plan. The project plan was brought to the Active Transportation Committee (ATC) on February 29, 2024, where the ATC provided comments and recommendations to guide the project. Informed by the ATC and staff's recommendation, the project was approved by the City Council on May 24, 2024.

Project Update

The 2024 Roadway Sealing Project is currently wrapping up the final few weeks of construction and nearly all improvements have been installed—all using temporary materials with the intent to monitor and refine as needed before the roadway is resurfaced and restriped with permanent materials (mostly likely as part of the 2026 or 2027 Paving Project). See **Attachment A** for the originally proposed striping plans. As the pilot improvements have been installed, staff has been actively monitoring traffic conditions using in-person observations and by collecting video over longer durations, including during evening and weekend special events at Cal Poly. Staff has also been actively coordinating with Cal Poly representatives to understand their observations of the street changes and how traffic operations are affected by Cal Poly's ongoing construction for their Vista Meadows housing development.

Based on observations conducted over the last few months, staff has identified several areas that we believe warrant making changes to the pilot project striping plans in the near future rather than waiting several more months for additional monitoring. See **Attachment B** for the modified striping plans. These issues and staff's corresponding recommendations for refinements are summarized as follows:

1. AM Northbound Vehicle Queues – Staff has observed regular occurrences of traffic queues spilling back from the Cal Poly entrance back past Loomis Street near the US 101 ramps in the northbound direction on Grand Avenue during the heaviest 10-15 minutes of the morning commute into Cal Poly. This appears to be more frequent on Monday and

Wednesdays and during rainy weather. This queueing typically dissipates quickly within by 8:20 a.m. This was also observed for a short duration during weekday evenings when multiple special events were scheduled simultaneously at Cal Poly, while queues during more typical special events, including sold-out weekend events at the Performing Arts Center (PAC), did not present these queueing concerns. Staff believes some of this queueing may be at least partially exacerbated by Cal Poly's Vista Meadows construction activities—for example, the sidewalk on the east side of Grand is currently closed, which funnels more pedestrians to cross Grand Avenue at Slack Street that in turn impedes vehicle flow into the campus. However, in staff's opinion, this queueing is not solely related to Cal Poly's construction project, and queues that spill back near or onto the US 101 freeway are a legitimate concern that cannot be accepted on a regular basis. For this reason, striping modifications are recommended to be implemented sooner rather than later to minimize this concern.

- Recommended Adjustment: Staff recommends modifications to the current striping configuration to transition from one to two northbound traffic lanes further south of Slack Street to provide additional capacity for vehicle queueing during the AM commute and evening special events. Staff plans to advance striping modifications to move this transition from one to two lanes to just north of McCollum Street. This modification will retain the majority of the benefits of the current design with a buffered bicycle lane in the northbound direction north of McCollum and the current road diet as exists now in the southbound direction, which is the direction of travel with greater collision history and speeding concerns. This modification also retains one lane of vehicle traffic at the new marked pedestrian crossing at Grand/McCollum, which reduces conflicts for pedestrians.
2. Improper Right-Turn Movements on SB Grand at the US 101 SB On-Ramp – The current pilot project design provides a dedicated right-turn lane on southbound Grand onto the US 101 SB On-Ramp, with the southbound bike lane channelized to the left of the vehicle right turn lane. While the intent of this design was to provide a dedicated turn lane for right-turning vehicles to decelerate out of the path of through traffic with cyclists positioned to the left to minimize potential for right hook collisions, based on in-person observations, most drivers are choosing to make a wide right turn at high speeds from the through lane instead of maneuvering into the dedicated right turn lane. This has also created confusion for drivers exiting the daycare located on Grand Ave just north of the on-ramp, as it is unclear if southbound vehicles on Grand are turning right or continuing straight.
- Recommended Adjustment: Staff recommends modifications to the current striping configuration to eliminate the dedicated right-turn lane at this intersection, instead providing a wide dashed bike green bike lane through the intersection. This allows for increased width of the striped corner bulbout, a tighter corner to better control turning speeds onto the on-ramp, and a more intuitive configuration for drivers in staff's opinion. An attachment is provided for reference to convey these intended striping modifications at this intersection. Staff plans to continue coordination with Caltrans to pursue more effective long-term designs for this intersection to better control turning speeds onto the on-ramp and improve safety for all road users. Further coordination with Caltrans and evaluation of more permanent design

options at this on-ramp are recommended to explore further potential to reduce turning speeds and improve safety for peds, bikes, and autos at this conflict point.

3. Queueing at SLO Classical Academy Entry – Prior to the pilot project, the City would receive regular complaints about vehicles blocking the southbound bike lane and outside traffic lane on Grand Avenue when queued to enter the SLO Classical Academy parking lot driveway during the afternoon school pick-up time. The pilot project added flex posts to separate the bike lane from vehicle traffic and discourage parents from parking/queueing in the bike lane, providing a wide striped buffer area for drivers to queue while waiting to turn right into the school driveway. While this has been partially effective, some drivers are not pulling far enough into the striped buffer area to avoid blocking through traffic on southbound Grand or choosing to illegally pull into the bike lane between the flex posts and curb, which is also a safety concern. SLO Classical Academy staff has been helpful in communicating their concerns and strategizing on reasonable solutions to address these issues.
 - Recommended Adjustment: Staff will be temporarily removing the flex posts located in front of the SLO Classical Academy and will reinstall the posts approximately 2'-3' closer to the curb. This will preserve the existing 8' wide bike lane width, while providing more space for vehicles to pull away from the through traffic lane when queueing to enter the school. This will also discourage drivers from driving into the bike lane itself.

In addition to the planned modifications mentioned above, staff has also approved several minor modifications to placement of flex posts to address observed concerns impacting access for trash collection, bus access, U-turn at some intersections, and cyclist maneuverability where the bike lanes shift horizontally.

While any final design decisions will ultimately be made with safety as a top priority and at the discretion of the Transportation Manager and City Engineer, staff wants to share these project updates with the ATC and welcome any comments to guide these refinements.

Next Steps

Following these planned short-term modifications, staff will continue to monitor performance of the Grand Avenue pilot project over the next year, studying changes to vehicle speeds, emergency response, collision frequency/severity, mode use, observations of road user behavior and community feedback. Following this monitoring period, staff will return with opportunities for feedback from the ATC, community and City Council to guide recommendations for final improvements.

Attachments:

A – Originally Proposed Striping Plans

B—Modified Striping Plans