



Council Agenda Report

Department Name: Public Works
Cost Center: 5006
For Agenda of: May 4, 2021
Placement: Consent
Estimated Time: N/A

FROM: Matt Horn, Public Works Director
Prepared By: Brian Rodriguez, Engineer II

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION TO ADVERTISE 2021 DOWNTOWN PAVEMENT IMPROVEMENTS PROJECT, SPECIFICATION NO. 1000167

RECOMMENDATION

1. Approve the project plans (Attachment A) and specifications (Attachment B) for the 2021 Downtown Pavement Improvements Project, Specification No. 1000167 (Project); and
2. Authorize staff to advertise for bids; and
3. Authorize the City Manager to award the construction contract including the Base Bid and any Additive Alternates if the lowest responsible bid is within the Publicly Disclosed Funding Amount of \$3,400,000 and the funding amount is consistent with the adopted 2021-22 budget appropriation for this project; and
4. Authorize the City Engineer to approve Contract Change Orders up to available project budget of \$4,233,095

REPORT-IN-BRIEF

Following the City of San Luis Obispo's (City) Pavement Maintenance Plan (Pavement Plan), staff is requesting authorization to advertise a pavement improvement project for construction. The project will provide pavement maintenance and striping improvements to the streets shown in Figure 1 on the following page and the attached vicinity map (Attachment C).

Pavement maintenance projects often involve complete removal and replacement of roadway striping and pavement markings, which provides excellent opportunities to incorporate planned safety and complete street¹ improvements as part of these larger roadway maintenance efforts. The 2021 Project will implement several complete street modifications envisioned for Marsh and Higuera Streets in the City's Downtown Concept Plan and the recently adopted Active Transportation Plan to improve downtown safety and mobility for all road users.

¹ A complete street is a transportation facility that is planned, designed, operated, and maintained to provide safe mobility for all users, including bicyclists, pedestrians, transit vehicles, truckers, and motorists, appropriate to the function and context of the facility.

These strategies include design elements intended to improve pedestrian crossing safety, increase separation between bicyclists and motor vehicle traffic, and calm traffic and reduce speeds through the downtown. Staff is requesting that funding be appropriated in the upcoming 2021-23 Financial Plan to complete this project.

Background

On April 14, 1998, the City Council adopted the City's Pavement Plan. In 2009, the Pavement Plan was updated to provide additional emphasis on arterial streets. A key element of the Pavement Plan is a rotating and methodical approach to ensuring all areas of the City receive regular preventative and/or corrective paving maintenance. The City implements this rotation by performing maintenance in two neighborhood Pavement Areas in one year, and then focusing on arterial street work in the second year, thereby alternating between neighborhood areas and arterials biennially. Last summer, streets maintenance funding was used for local neighborhood streets in Pavement Areas 4 and 5 (Attachment D), which included roadway sealing and striping enhancements. Improvements to both pedestrian and bicycle access in the form of curb ramps, buffered bike lanes, and addition of two new neighborhood greenways were also completed.

2021 Downtown Pavement Improvements Project

This year, the pavement maintenance work is planned for the following streets, as shown visually in Figure 1 below:

- a. Higuera Street (Marsh to Nipomo and Santa Rosa to Pepper)
- b. Marsh Street (Higuera to Nipomo and Santa Rosa to California)
- c. Nipomo Street (Buchon to Leff)
- d. Johnson Street (Mill to Phillips)
- e. Phillips Lane (Johnson to Pepper)
- f. Pepper Street (Phillips to Mill)



Figure 1: Project Vicinity Map

It is important to note that while work on segments of Higuera and Marsh outside of the downtown core is planned to proceed this upcoming summer and fall (2021), segments within the downtown core (between Nipomo and Santa Rosa) are planned to be deferred until summer/fall of 2022. This schedule is proposed to avoid the deconstruction of many recently installed parklets within the downtown core and to reduce potential disruption to activities within the core of the downtown where auto traffic, pedestrian activity, and on-street parking demand are highest. This will also provide time for planning and engagement with businesses and the community to determine viability and methods for implementation of a long term parklet program and not interrupt economic recovery following the pandemic.

Pavement Reconstruction and Maintenance

A pavement investigation was completed (November 2020), which confirmed that Nipomo Street and Johnson/Philips/Pepper were in a failing condition and structurally deficient to carry current traffic loading, including frequent heavy transit bus traffic on Johnson/Philips/Pepper for which the original pavement was not designed. These pavement areas have moderate to severe cracking, rutting in wheel-paths, potholes, and have reached the end of their useful life. Full depth replacement is necessary to bring the pavement to new condition and eliminate the need for more frequent smaller maintenance repairs that would be ineffective in the long term.

This selected method of reconstruction is the most cost effective, with an expected service life of 15-20 years. The old pavement removed from the roadway will be recycled by the receiving aggregate plants for future recycled asphalt pavement (RAP) in other pavement projects.

The majority of Marsh and Higuera asphalt pavement is underlaid by concrete, creating a solid foundation. This pavement structure is acceptable, however, the pavement on Marsh and Higuera from Nipomo to the intersection of Marsh and Higuera is deteriorated and failing due to age and wear. This pavement will be removed and replaced to create a new smooth driving surface. On Marsh and Higuera East of Santa Rosa, pavement maintenance will include installation of a slurry seal coat. Slurry seal is a cost-effective treatment that extends pavement life up to 8 years and prevents more expensive maintenance work in the future. Applied as a thin pavement sealant, it shields the pavement beneath from ultraviolet damage, minimizes water intrusion, and provides a new wearing surface for vehicles. This preventative maintenance treatment is less costly than asphalt replacement. In advance of this year's paving project, the City's Street Maintenance team has completed crack sealing treatment and spot repairs on Higuera Street (Pepper to Santa Rosa) and Marsh Street (California to Santa Rosa). This preparatory work increases the long-term effectiveness of the planned roadway slurry seal coat installation and reduces overall construction costs.

In addition to roadway maintenance, this project will upgrade curb ramps to current ADA and City standards, as well as replace roadway striping and pavement markings, which provides an excellent opportunity to implement several complete street improvements as identified in the City's Traffic Safety Report, Active Transportation Plan and Downtown Concept Plan. These complete street improvements, which are described in more detail in the section below, will support the City's 2021-23 Major City Goal of Climate Action, Open Space and Sustainable Transportation, as well as the City's mode shift targets and Vision Zero goal to eliminate traffic-related fatalities and severe injuries citywide.

Complete Street Design Elements

The Project includes the following complete streets elements along Marsh and Higuera Streets, which are intended to improve mobility and safety for all road users. Note that the summary below describes the design elements proposed for the full extent of Marsh and Higuera Streets, including the segments between Santa Rosa and Nipomo Streets within the downtown core, which are not planned for implementation until 2022. Staff will be conducting additional community outreach for the segments within the downtown core and the Council will have the opportunity to review and approve those designs when staff returns with a request to advertise the 2022 Paving Improvements Project for construction next spring.

- a. **Auto Lane Reductions** – Reduce the number of auto lanes on Marsh and Higuera Streets from three to two, as envisioned in the Downtown Concept Plan and Active Transportation Plan, and as currently exists on Higuera Street between Santa Rosa and Nipomo as an Open SLO pilot installation. Current plans also propose reducing the segment of Higuera from Johnson to Toro Street from two to one lane to provide width for dedicated bike lanes, similar to recent modifications to Pismo Street south of the downtown. (See Figure 2 below for lane reduction locations). Lane reductions, also referred to as “road diets” provide an opportunity to “right-size” oversized roadways to accommodate the actual auto traffic demand required, which provides the benefit of reducing illegal speeding and freeing up additional road space for other features, such as bike lanes, future sidewalk widening, or parking/parklets. Lane reductions also shorten pedestrian crossing distances and the number of conflict points at crosswalks, which improves the pedestrian crossing experience and safety.

A Transportation Impact Study was prepared to evaluate potential traffic impacts associated with these lane reductions. The traffic study concluded that these modifications would retain sufficient traffic capacity to accommodate existing and future auto traffic volumes, while preserving width for existing on-street parking and flexibility to retain parklets if the Council decides to extend the City’s pilot parklet installations beyond the current pilot program. Attachment E provides a visual summary of the existing and future roadway capacity and auto traffic demand on Marsh and Higuera Streets with and without the proposed lane reductions. Attachment F includes the comprehensive Transportation Impact Study prepared for the project.

- b. **Curb Ramps** – Upgrade pedestrian curb ramps to current ADA standards at several locations. (see Figure 2 below).
- c. **Accessible On-Street Parking** – Provide additional ADA on-street parking at multiple locations. Six new ADA on-street parking stalls will be added as part of the 2021 plans and approximately 5 will be added in 2022.
- d. **Pedestrian Crossing Upgrades** – Installation of high-visibility “ladder-style” marked crosswalks at several intersections, and addition of push-button flashing beacon systems (RRFBs) at several pedestrian crossings, such as Higuera/Beach (new crossing), Marsh/Toro (existing crossing) and Higuera/Johnson (new crossing). A new crossing at Marsh/Beach was evaluated extensively, but ultimately is not feasible at this time due to significant constraints. While this crossing is still desired in the future and will be considered as part of subsequent planning efforts, it will not be installed as part of this project.

Upon request from the Active Transportation Committee, staff will also be investigating the feasibility of adding a pedestrian crossing to the north leg of the Santa Rosa/Marsh intersection. This evaluation will be done during the design phase for the 2022 paving project plans and will be incorporated into the 2022 paving project, if feasible.

- e. **Protected Bike Lanes** – Install protected bike lanes (“cycle tracks”) along most of Higuera and Marsh Streets within the project limits, as identified in the Downtown Concept Plan and Active Transportation Plan. Current plans for physical bikeway separation include installation of concrete medians and landscaped planter boxes. Note that the planter boxes will be installed via a separate landscaping contract following the completion of the Downtown Paving Project.
- f. **Buffered Bike Lanes** – Provide striped bike lane buffers (no physical barriers) where protected bike lanes are infeasible without significant parking removal, or due to and conflicts with bus stops, downtown delivery staging, Farmer’s Market operations and/or fire access.
- g. **Green Bike Lane Markings** – Install green bike lane markings at higher-volume driveways and through intersection crossings to increase visibility of bicycle-vehicle conflict areas. Application of green bike lane coloring throughout the length of the buffered bike lane on Higuera between Santa Rosa and Nipomo is being considered as part of the 2022 pavement project to add additional awareness of the bike lane and to help address concerns with vehicles illegally blocking the bike lane for commercial and/or passenger loading.

Figure 2 on the next page illustrates the locations of complete street improvements within the project extent, including both the 2021 and 2022 paving areas. A larger copy of this map is provided in Attachment G. Typical street cross section illustrations of each segment are provided in Attachment H.

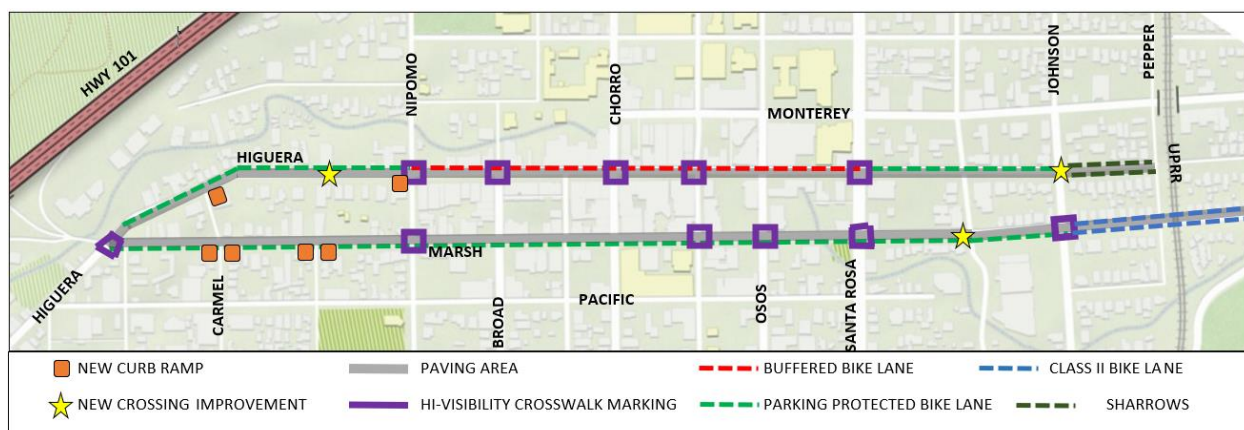


Figure 2: Downtown Complete Street Elements Considered

On-Street Parking and Parklets

The design approach for the Downtown Paving Project intentionally focuses on minimizing loss of on-street parking, opting to reduce auto lanes to accomplish multimodal goals in lieu of wholesale street parking removal. Currently, many of the on-street parking spaces do not meet current City Standards for on-street parking or sight visibility at intersections. Therefore, there are locations throughout the corridor where on-street parking spaces will be removed. These reductions in parking are necessary regardless of changes to the street configuration. While approximately 93% of existing parking is to remain, approximately 35 spaces are proposed to be removed. Attachment I shows the approximate location and number of spaces to be removed.

The current design does not preclude retaining the vast majority of existing parklets if Council decides to retain parklets beyond the temporary Open SLO pilot program. The only exception is the temporary parklet on Higuera near the Creamery, which was installed for Mistura and conflicts with the proposed project designs. Mistura has used this parklet sparingly and have additional outdoor dining space on-site within their patio. This parklet is planned for removal towards the end of summer prior to the paving work.

It should be noted, the project concept is not proposing protected bike lanes at this time, as called for per the Active Transportation Plan, on Higuera between Santa Rosa and Nipomo and on Marsh east of Johnson Street. The widths of these segments do not accommodate protected bike lanes without the elimination of on-street parking (approximately 75 spaces). Staff proposes to revisit these segments at a future time—most likely after completion of the Palm/Nipomo Parking Structure and/or following a more focused Safe Routes to School Plan for San Luis High School.

Equity Considerations

As currently proposed, this project supports the equity goals and policies of the Active Transportation Plan as follows:

- a. The project is located within the area of the city officially designated by the state as a “Low-Income Community” per State Assembly Bill (AB) 1550, which reflects proximity to the neighborhoods in the northern half of San Luis Obispo, which statistically includes higher concentrations of lower-income, and often student-occupied, households.
- b. The proposed improvements directly improve access to lower-cost transportation options, such as walking and bicycling, and indirectly improves first/last mile connectivity to the Downtown Transit Center. This is particularly important within the downtown, where many lower-income service workers would benefit from improved transportation options that do not require owning or using an automobile.
- c. The proposed improvements include several specific strategies to improve access for those with mobility challenges, including ADA curb ramp upgrades, some sidewalk repairs, and the addition of several new on-street parking stalls reserved for disabled persons.

Benefits to Downtown Vitality & Streetscape Aesthetics

Where feasible, staff endeavors to incorporate design elements that not only serve a functional purpose but add to the vibrant downtown environment. For example, staff is pursuing aesthetically appealing options for the physical buffer separating the protected bike lanes from vehicular traffic in lieu of plastic flex posts or other less visually appealing features. The current design approach includes use of concrete medians with “Mission Style” concrete color/finish, and addition of planter boxes within these medians where feasible, similar to those installed in cities like Vancouver and Seattle (see photo below for example). Where on-street parking exists adjacent to protected bike lanes, planter boxes would be located to retain access for passengers accessing their vehicles. Installation and maintenance of the planter boxes will be secured under a separate contract immediately following the complete installation of the medians.



Example of Protected Bike Lanes with Landscaped Planter Boxes (Vancouver, BC)

In addition, providing a fresh and smooth surface creates the perfect canvas for future street art installations, which can be explored following the roadway sealing project as part of the City's Public Art Program.

Economic Recovery and Downtown Business Considerations

As the designs have developed, and through the public engagement activities described further in this report, staff has received initial feedback from residents, visitors, and businesses in the downtown.

One of the questions/concerns raised during the project planning process relates to the timing of this project and the effects it can have on downtown businesses as they hope to continue recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on discussions with the downtown community, strategies proposed by staff to minimize potential disruption to downtown road users and businesses during construction activities for both 2021 and 2022 paving efforts include:

- a. Deferring start of any disruptive construction activities along Marsh or Higuera Streets until September 1st, avoiding the peak of the summer tourist season.
- b. Where feasible, scheduling working hours outside of peak weekday business hours, including a goal to maintain two lanes of traffic on Marsh and Higuera between 10 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. as much as possible.
- c. Advance noticing to adjacent businesses and residents prior to start of construction to provide project details, schedule and contact information for questions and project updates.
- d. Regular (weekly or bi-weekly) construction updates to notify the community of upcoming project activities and schedules.

Previous Council or Advisory Body Action

Council Adopted the Active Transportation Plan on February 2, 2021.

Policy Context

The project directly supports several key City plans, policies and goals. The complete street components of the project support the recommendations of the Downtown Concept Plan and Active Transportation Plan—with installation of protected bike lanes and priority pedestrian/bicycle crossings along Marsh and Higuera Streets identified as Tier 1 (highest-priority) projects in the Active Transportation Plan. The improvements also indirectly support the General Plan mode share targets and recommendations of the City's Climate Action Plan for Community Recovery to improve active transportation and reduce reliance on single-occupant vehicles. The project also supports the current Sustainable Transportation and Climate Action Major City Goals, as well as the current Meta Goal for Economic Stability, Recovery and Resiliency, which includes a strategy to continue implementation of shovel-ready capital projects (particularly infrastructure maintenance).

Consistent with the October 2018 Purchasing Policy Update to the July 2015 Financial Management Manual, Council must approve the request to proceed with this project, as approval is required for Public Projects that cost over \$175,000.

Public Engagement

1. The public outreach process conducted for the City's recently adopted Active Transportation Plan took place over more than two years from 2018-2021 and guided complete street recommendations proposed within the 2021 paving project.
2. On January 11, 2021 a virtual meeting was held with the Downtown SLO Response and Recovery Board Meeting.
3. On February 4, 2021, Transportation staff had a virtual meeting with SLO Transit and the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) to review the project components and timeline.
4. On February 25, 2021 a community-wide virtual workshop was held to inform the public of the project and its scope and to request input on proposed designs, focusing largely on the Higuera and Marsh Street elements proposed within the downtown area. Notification of the event consisted of an advertisement in The New Times, social media posts, sandwich boards posted and rotated throughout the downtown and e-notification distribution including Downtown SLO and Bike SLO County's memberships. Approximately 15-20 people attended and actively participated using this virtual style of public meeting.
5. On Saturday, March 6, 2021 a "Pop-Up" Style Virtual Presentation was held to provide an option for community members to attend outside of a typical weekday evening meeting format. Unfortunately, there was no community participation in this event.
6. An informational web page (<http://www.slocity.org/downtownpavingproject>) was created to provide background and updates on the different project elements. The webpage also provides opportunities for the public to leave direct feedback on the project via comment boxes. The intent is that the webpage can continue to be used as a tool to provide information for the public throughout the construction of the project.
7. An interactive web-based map was also created allowing the public to leave comments directly on a map of the downtown project and proposed design elements.



Example of Remix Mapping/Comment Tool

CONCURRENCE

This project has been reviewed and has concurrence from the Utilities, Fire, and Community Development Departments. The Active Transportation Committee has reviewed the proposed pedestrian and cyclist improvements and provided its recommendation to Council to proceed with implementation of the project.

It should be noted that the Active Transportation Committee recommended retaining the existing striped bike lanes on both sides of the street along Marsh Street east of Johnson Avenue in lieu of staff's initial proposal to provide a protected bike lane in the eastbound direction and shared lane in the westbound direction. Considering the traffic volumes and speeds along this segment of Marsh Street, the Committee preferred retaining a dedicated bike lane in each direction, even if that left insufficient street width to install physical bike lane separation in either direction. This recommendation is reflected in the final plans proposed for implementation.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This project is categorically exempt from environmental review pursuant to section 15301 of the CEQA Guidelines (Existing Facilities) since it is a maintenance and replacement project. A Notice of Exemption will be filed through the Community Development Department.

The complete street elements are consistent with the Land Use and Circulation Element as well as the Active Transportation Plan, therefore consistent with the environmental review of those documents. In addition, the types of complete street improvements proposed as part of this Project would all be considered categorically exempt from CEQA in the category of Existing Facilities, maintenance activities. Therefore, no additional environmental review is triggered.

FISCAL IMPACT

Budgeted: Proposed in FY21/23 Financial Plan
Funding Identified: Yes

Budget Year: 2021-22

Fiscal Analysis:

Approval to Bid with Final Project Funding Dependent on Budget Adoption for 2021-22.

In order to allow for project implementation during the summer months, and to lessen impacts to the traveling public, staff is requesting permission to advertise the project for construction prior to the new fiscal year. However, the construction contract will not be awarded until after the 2021-23 Financial Plan has been adopted by the Council and work will not begin until the budget appropriation is made available.

The project is structured with a Base Bid and two Additive Alternatives to maximize the scope of the pavement replacement project within the available funding. The strategy is to award the contract with the Base Bid and as many of the Additive Alternatives as funding will allow, up to the Publicly Disclosed Funding amount of \$3,400,000 in compliance with Public Contract Code Section 20103.8C. The Base Bid portion includes Higuera and Marsh from Nipomo to where they intersect, Higuera and Marsh from Santa Rosa to the eastern limits, and Nipomo from Buchon to Leff. The additive alternatives include additional asphalt removal and replacement along Johnson from Mill to Phillips, Phillips from Johnson to Pepper, and Pepper from Phillips to Mill.

There is currently a remaining balance of \$216,781 in the 2020 Roadway Sealing (1000114) account, \$46,565 in Water funds, \$41,550 in Sewer funds, and \$80,000 in the Bicycle/Pedestrian Quick Build Project (1000162) account, which are proposed to be used to support the 2021 Downtown Pavement Improvements Project. This brings the current available balance to \$384,896. Additional funding of \$3,848,109 is proposed in the 2021-23 Financial Plan to provide adequate funding for this project. The new funding is proposed via a combination of two capital project, Water, and Sewer funds request in the 2021-23 Financial Plan: \$3,513,199 for the Street Reconstruction and Resurfacing project, \$200,000 for the Active Transportation Plan Implementation project, \$50,000 for Water funds, and \$85,000 for Sewer funds. If the 2021-22 budget is adopted as proposed, the additional funding will be available July 1, 2021, bringing the total available project funding balance to \$4,233,095.

ALTERNATIVES

1. ***Deny Authorization to advertise.*** The City Council may choose not to authorize project advertisement prior to consideration of the 2021-21 budget review and approval. Staff does not recommend this alternative because this is the ideal time to advertise paving projects for summer construction.
2. ***Continue with the 2021 Downtown Paving Project but defer 2022 downtown core paving to 2023.*** The City Council may choose to continue with the paving work planned for 2021, but direct staff to defer paving work within the downtown core (Higuera and Marsh Streets between Nipomo and Santa Rosa) from 2022 to 2023. This would provide additional time for the City Council to weigh in on long-term plans for downtown parklets and provide additional opportunities for downtown circulation and commerce activity to normalize following disruptions in recent years related to construction of two large hotels, the Marsh Street Bridge Replacement Project and ongoing impacts associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Attachments:

- a - COUNCIL READING FILE - Spec No. 1000167 Project Plans
- b - COUNCIL READING FILE - Spec No. 1000167 Specifications
- c - Spec No. 1000167 Vicinity Map
- d - Pavement Areas
- e - Volume Capacity Charts
- f - COUNCIL READING FILE - Traffic Analysis Report
- g - Downtown Complete Street Elements Considered
- h - Typical Street Cross Section Illustrations
- i - Estimated Changes in On-Street Parking Spaces