

DATE ISSUED: December 5, 2001

REPORT NO. 01-272

ATTENTION: Committee on Land Use and Housing
Agenda of December 12, 2001

SUBJECT: Carmel Valley Road Enhancement Project Scope of Work
(CIP No. 52-517.0)

SUMMARY

Issues - Should the Committee on Land Use and Housing (LU&H) recommend to the City Council to approve the following action required to proceed with the Carmel Valley Road Enhancement: Selection of the "Modified Project Alternative B-2," described below, as the scope of work for the project?

Manager's Recommendation - That the Committee recommend City Council approval of the Modified Alternative B-2 as the scope of work for the Carmel Valley Road Enhancement Project (CIP No. 52-517.0)

Environmental Impact - The City of San Diego as Lead Agency under CEQA has prepared and completed the Final Environmental Impact Report (LDR No. 98-0718, dated March 27, 2001) covering this action.

Fiscal Impact - Funds necessary for final design and permit applications are available in the CIP budget for Carmel Valley Road - Del Mar City Limits to 300 feet east of Portofino Drive. (CIP No. 52-517.0)

BACKGROUND

The Carmel Valley Road Enhancement Project is a capital improvement project identified in the Torrey Pines Community Plan. A task force of stakeholders was set up in June of 1997 to determine the scope of improvements needed for the enhancement of Carmel Valley Road. The Carmel Valley Road Task Force, convened through the invitation of the Council office, was comprised of representatives from the community, State and Federal regulatory agencies and special interest groups. The task force met ten times and came to consensus on a set of recommendations, which are discussed further below. The improvements recommended by the Engineering and Capital Projects Department incorporate all of the task force's recommendations, except for their recommendation on complete avoidance of wetlands. The project proposed by E&CP would allow for a continuous Class II bicycle lane from the Del Mar City Limit to Sorrento Valley Road, which impacts approximately 0.07 acres of wetlands. Subsequent to the public review of the draft Environmental Impact Report, the Engineering and Capital Projects Department assembled a preferred project composed of a combination of components analyzed in the EIR. The revised project included subsurface sedimentation tanks

and the reduction of the pedestrian pathway from nine feet to four feet, at the recommendation of the task force. Thus the revised project has been identified as "Modified Alternative B-2" in the Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

DISCUSSION

As indicated above, the Carmel Valley Road Task Force came to consensus on their recommendations for the enhancement of Carmel Valley Road (see Attachment 1). The range of improvements include a continuous curb, gutter and sidewalk on both sides of the road; road repair and resurfacing; non-continuous parallel parking on the south side of the road and continuous parallel parking on the north side of the road; a continuous Class II bicycle lane on the north side of the road and a non-continuous Class II bicycle lane on the south side of the road (unless there could be a way to accommodate a continuous Class II bicycle lane without any wetland impacts), relocations of utilities underground, drainage and sediment control improvements; decorative pavement at intersections; new signage and lighting; a four-foot unpaved graded shoulder for pedestrian access; and native revegetation of selected areas.

The provision of a continuous Class II bicycle lane (which provides a 4'-6' striped lane for bicyclists) on the south side of Carmel Valley Road has become increasingly important in facilitating recreational cycling, as well as the safety of cyclists seeking alternative modes of access to the coast. The Engineering and Capital Projects Department does not recommend the transition of a Class II bicycle lane to a Class III bicycle route (which requires bicyclists to share the standard vehicular travel lane with automobiles) on this busy stretch of roadway where cyclists would be forced to merge mid-route with automobiles. As a result, the Manager's recommendation is the modified alternative B-2 option which extends the Class II bicycle lane the continuous length of the road, even though it will result in 0.07 acres of wetland impacts. The direct impacts will be fully mitigated on site but the cumulative impacts are considered significant and not mitigable (given the environmental value of undisturbed wetland resources), so approval of this project will require findings and a statement of overriding considerations which are included as part of the EIR. Approval of the Manager's Recommendation will provide a continuous lane in each direction as a means of bicycle access for commuting and recreational cyclists, from Sorrento Valley Road to Torrey Pines Beach, with only minimal wetland impacts.

Trans-County Trail

During the public review period of the EIR, the City received correspondence from the Trans-County Trail Planning Committee, the Torrey Pines Association and the Trans-County Trail Foundation, all asking that the project include the necessary right-of-way for development of the trail be included as a component of the project. The Trans-County trail would extend from the Anza-Borrego desert to Torrey Pines Beach. Given this request, the Engineering and Capital Projects Department has analyzed options for the inclusion of a cantilevered platform which would facilitate extension of the trail in a manner that would attempt to avoid or minimize further wetland impacts.

A four foot wide cantilevered platform from Via Grimaldi to Sorrento Valley Road would impact an additional 0.02 acre of wetlands in addition to the average given in the EIR. The cantilevered path would also create a shade area that would impact wetland vegetation. The four foot wide pathway is estimated to cost an additional \$527,780 in construction costs.

A six foot wide cantilevered platform similar to the one mentioned above would impact an approximate additional 0.03 acres of wetlands 46% more wetland habitat loss than that mentioned in the EIR. The increase would result in a total of over 0.1 acres of direct wetland impacts, which is considered significant per the significance Determination Guidelines under CEQA. Shade would again impact the native plant species. The six foot wide platform is estimated to cost an additional \$369,308 in construction costs. These costs do not include environmental mitigation or design costs.

The project proposed by the Engineering and Capital Projects Department does not specifically provide for the right-of-way for the Trans-Country trail, and the associated EIR does not address the impacts identified above. The EIR analyzed an alternative (c) which would have included a 5-foot improved pathway to accommodate such a trail, but it was not proposed as a cantilevered platform. Future right-of-way acquisition, development and environmental analysis needed for the trail are not, however, precluded by the proposed Carmel Valley Road project.

The proposed project scope includes nine of the twelve task force recommendations. The three exceptions are as follows:

The task force recommendation number three replaces Class II bikes lanes with Class III bike access where encroachment to the wet lands would occur. The "Modified Alternative B-2" incorporates retaining walls in order to provide a through Class II bike lane for improved safety.

The task force recommendation number five states "no retaining walls." The "Modified Alternative B-2" includes three (3), two- to three-foot high retaining walls, which would be required to accommodate a continuous Class II bike lane. One wall will be sixty feet long, the other two will be approximately one hundred feet long each. These walls, if built, would be painted and landscaped with native vegetation to reduce their visibility.

The task force recommendation number twelve, which proposes the determination of the feasibility of a peak time shuttle service, was not specifically implemented as part of this capital improvement project scope.

CONCLUSION

Staff recommends that the Committee on Land use and Housing accept the recommendation of the Engineering & Capital Projects Department to proceed with the "Modified Alternative B-2" as the proposed scope of work for Carmel Valley Road and forward the recommendation to the City Council for approval. City Council will be asked to certify the Environmental Impact report and approve a third amendment to the consultant agreement in order to continue with implementation of the project.

ALTERNATIVES

(1) Accept the Task Force recommendation as the preferred scope of work, eliminating the continuous Class II (separated and striped) bicycle lane on the south side of Carmel Valley Road, providing instead Class III (shared with vehicles) bicycle route between Portofino Drive and Sorrento Valley Road. This alternative is not recommended because it does not recognize the importance and safety aspects of providing a separated continuous bike lane for commuter and recreational cyclists in this area.

(2) Modify the scope of a work for Carmel Valley Road CIP project to include the necessary right-of-way needed to accommodate the trans-county trail, as requested by Trans-Country proponents, and direct staff to conduct the environmental analysis needed to address the change in scope. This alternative is not recommended because of the additional encroachment and impact that would likely occur to the wetlands.

Respectfully submitted,

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Director
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Approved: George Loveland
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MCKEE/RIR

Revised 12/05/01