



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

Report to City Council

DATE ISSUED: November 29, 2016 REPORT NO: 16-109
ATTENTION: Honorable Council President Sherri Lightner and City Councilmembers,
Agenda of December 5, 2016
SUBJECT: University Community Plan Amendment

SUMMARY

Issue:

Should the City Council approve the University Community Plan (UCP) Transportation Element Amendment and certify the Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR), which evaluated the impacts and identified mitigation measures associated with the removal of Genesee Avenue Widening and Regents Road Bridge projects from the community plan?

Objective:

City Council initiated an amendment to the UCP on September 29, 2014, and directed the Planning Department to address the issues and impacts relating to right-of-way acquisition and construction of improvements in Rose Canyon associated with the proposed Genesee Avenue Widening and Regent Road projects (CIP projects S-00852 and S-00729). These include a variety of technical, environmental, and community concerns, as well as further regulatory permitting by resource and wildlife agencies from impacts to sensitive biological resources.

Staff Recommendation:

1. **CERTIFY** Final Program Environmental Impact Report (PEIR) SCH No. 2015121011, and **ADOPT** Findings, a Statement of Overriding Considerations, and a Mitigation Monitoring and Reporting Program; and
2. **APPROVE** a resolution amending University Community Plan and amending the General Plan implementing the Project (No Construction of the Regents Road Bridge and No Construction of Genesee Avenue Widening) as described in the PEIR.

Smart Growth and Land Use Committee Action:

On November 16, 2016, the Smart Growth and Land Use Committee forwarded the item to the City Council without a recommendation.

Planning Commission Action:

On October 27, 2016, the Planning Commission voted 6-0-1 to recommend the following:

- Approval of the UCP amendment with the Construction of Regents Road Bridge and No Widening of Genesee Avenue alternative described in the PEIR Errata provided as Attachment 3.
- Design the Regents Road Bridge consistent with Section 1.4.2 of the City of San Diego MSCP Subarea Plan.

Community Planning Group Recommendation:

On July 12, 2016, the University Community Planning Group (UCPG) voted 11-1-3 to recommend approval of the UCP amendment which removes the Genesee Widening and Regents Road Bridge; 11-1-3 to recommend approval of a letter in response to the Draft PEIR; and 10-1-4 to add language to the response letter which states opposition to proposed mitigation measures TRA-1.6 and TRA-2.3, and support for proposed mitigation measures TRA-1.8, TRA-1.9, TRA-1.10, TRA-2.6, and TRA-2.5. The minutes of the July 12, 2016 UCPG meeting are included as Attachment 4.

On November 9, 2016, the UCPG voted to reaffirm its support for removing the widening and bridge from the community plan, support for the five mitigation measures cited above, and oppose one additional measure (TRA-2.13) in addition to the two opposed previously.

Environmental Review:

A Program Environmental Impact Report (SCH No. 2015121011) has been prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for the above referenced project (Attachment 2). A Notice of Preparation (NOP) soliciting input on the scope of the PEIR was issued on December 2, 2015. The Draft PEIR was made available for a 45-day public review beginning June 17, 2016. The Final PEIR, which includes the NOP, Draft PEIR, and public comments along with City staff responses, are attached to this report.

Housing Impact Statement:

The proposed community plan amendment does not alter land use and would have no impact on the total number of units identified in the adopted community plan.

BACKGROUND

Community Overview:

The University Community Planning Area encompasses approximately 8,500 acres. The community is bound by Los Peñasquitos Lagoon and the east-facing slopes of Sorrento Valley on the north, MCAS Miramar and Interstate 805 (I-805) on the east, State Route 52 (SR-52) on the south and Interstate 5 (I-5), Gilman Drive, and the Pacific Ocean on the west.

Community Participation and Public Outreach:

Public outreach for the plan amendment provided stakeholders with regular updates to the project website and notices for opportunities to become involved throughout the plan amendment process. Planning Department staff provided updates at regularly scheduled UCPG meetings regarding project status, key dates and milestones. Planning Department staff also presented the UCPG with a comprehensive overview of the Existing Conditions Mobility Report and scope of the Traffic Impact Study on February 9, 2016, and the proposed amendment to the University Community Plan on June 14, 2016.

DISCUSSION

Why is this amendment being considered?

Since its adoption in July 1987, the UCP identified the widening of Genesee Avenue from four to six lanes (includes right-of-way acquisition and road improvements) and the construction of the Regents Road Bridge and other associated road improvements.

Since the adoption of the UCP, development patterns, traffic conditions, and mobility priorities in the community are different from those previously anticipated and modeled. Furthermore, mobility improvements including the Caltrans North Coast Corridor Project, the Mid-Coast Corridor Project, the Super Loop Bus Rapid Transit service, and certain UC San Diego circulation improvements within North UC were not known or evaluated in the traffic analysis or EIR prepared for the 1987 UCP.

The Genesee Avenue Widening and Regents Road projects have been on hold due to a variety of technical, environmental, and community concerns relating to issues such as right-of-way acquisition, changed circumstances, permitting challenges and adverse environmental impacts associated with improvements in Rose Canyon.

In light of these issues, on September 29, 2014, the City Council approved a resolution directing staff to evaluate the following issues relative to an amendment to the UCP that removes the Genesee Avenue Widening and Regents Road projects from the plan.

- Implementation of General Plan Goals in the UCP, especially as they relate to the vision, values and City of Villages strategy and provision of public facilities
- Consideration that UCP amendments could provide additional community benefit and public facilities toward achieving long term community goals
- Consideration of the impacts of removal of the Genesee Avenue Widening and Regents Road Bridge projects from the UCP
- Consideration of any additional issues identified through the amendment process.

This report responds to this direction.

What does the University Community Plan amendment accomplish?

The UCP Amendment would result in the removal of both the proposed Genesee Avenue road widening (road segment will remain four lanes) and the connection of Regents Road over Rose Canyon from the UCP (Attachment 1). The amendment would eliminate construction of infrastructure associated with those projects in the canyon and the present infrastructure would remain. This is referred to as the Proposed Project

What alternatives were considered in the PEIR?

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the City must analyze impacts associated not only with the Proposed Project, but alternative projects as well. Alternative projects must be selected and analyzed for their ability to meet the project objectives and

address potential environmental impacts. For this PEIR, five alternatives were analyzed in addition to the Proposed Project.

- No Project – Construction of the Regents Road Bridge and widening of Genesee Avenue
- Construction of Regents Road Bridge and no widening of Genesee Avenue
- No Construction of Regents Road Bridge and reconfiguration of Genesee Avenue
- Pedestrian/Bike/Emergency Access Bridge and widening of Genesee Avenue
- Pedestrian/Bike Emergency Access Bridge and no widening of Genesee Avenue

Generally, what were the PEIR findings?

1. Traffic Impacts

With respect to the circulation network analysis for all scenarios, it was demonstrated that with or without construction of the bridge and widening Genesee Avenue, vehicular circulation within the University Community Plan area in the future would result in failing levels of service. While all alternative network scenarios result in failing level of service, the level of congestion varies from one network scenario to the other because of its associated unique travel patterns. All alternative network scenarios may result in impacts that overlap at intersections and street segments. Nevertheless, the extent of the impacts may vary.

2. Emergency Response

Working in close coordination with the Fire Department, an analysis of future emergency response times was completed for all scenarios. The results of the analysis demonstrated that under all scenarios target average response times for fire service would not be met. Rather, improvements to average fire response times would be achieved through the addition of fire stations in the community, consistent with the Citygate Working Group recommendations adopted by City Council.

Fast Response Squad 56 (FRS 56) is located at Governor Drive and Stresemann Street in South University. FRS 56 is staged at an under-deployed area where it can respond more quickly than the nearest fire engine and begin patient treatment or fire suppression. Fire Station 50 and is currently in the planning process and would be located at Nobel Drive and Shoreline Drive. Data related to Fast Response Squad 56 was not yet available at the time that the analysis was conducted, and Fire Station 50 has not been constructed; therefore, analysis of these two facilities were not included in the PEIR.

What is the rationale for staff's recommendation?

Review of the project and alternative scenarios highlighted two scenarios that met the primary objectives per the City Council resolution: Proposed Project; and No Construction of Regents Road Bridge and Reconfiguration of Genesee Avenue. The environmental analysis within the PEIR concluded that considering all issues analyzed within the PEIR, overall impacts would be less for both of these scenarios in light of the project objectives than any of the alternatives involving construction of a bridge structure.

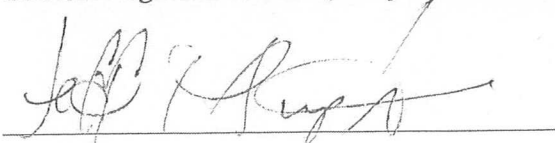
Based upon verbal and written public testimony provided at the October 27, 2016 Planning Commission hearing and the November 16, 2016 Smart Growth and Land Use Committee hearing, the Planning Department has revised its position to recommend that the City Council approve the Proposed Project.

The No Construction of Regents Road Bridge and Reconfiguration of Genesee Avenue would consist of restriping the existing four-lane roadway within the existing Right of Way to accommodate six lanes of travel. This would require the reduction in median widths along Genesee Avenue to accommodate the additional travel lanes. Portions of the existing medians contain mature Torrey Pines which have been in place for several decades. A reduction in the median width to accommodate the additional travel lanes would have the potential to require removal of approximately 40 mature Torrey Pine Trees. The mature trees are not only an important component of the community's character, but removal of the trees would be in conflict with the City's Climate Action Plan, Strategy 5 related to the City's role to increase urban tree canopy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Additionally, the Reconfiguration of Genesee Avenue would have included the construction of a grade separated intersection at Genesee Avenue and Governor Drive. This component would require a significant amount of construction at the intersection of two major roadways and along an approximately 2,400-foot-long segment of Genesee Avenue for trenching the proposed through-lanes. The trenching would result in approximately 1,400 feet of retaining walls and could result in vertical slopes of greater than 10 feet in height. These impacts would change the character of the area for the long term by increasing the negative impacts of concrete and reducing landscaping areas which soften the appearance of travel lanes. Furthermore, construction of a grade separated intersection could last 18 months or more as indicated in the prior University City North/South Transportation Corridor Study EIR (SCH No. 2004031011). While impacts would be short-term, construction air quality, noise and transportation/circulation effects would be greatly experienced by not only the University community, but also commuters of all modes that utilize these roadway corridors.

CONCLUSION

Planning Department staff recommends the proposed project (No Construction of Regents Road Bridge and No Widening of Genesee Avenue). The proposed project would meet all of the project objectives of addressing the technical, environmental and community issues associated with construction of infrastructure in Rose Canyon. It would maintain the quality and character of the University community by eliminating the construction of infrastructure in Rose Canyon and along the Genesee Avenue corridor. Furthermore, the proposed project would not involve construction of infrastructure in canyon and permits from United States Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), and the Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) would not be required.



JEFF MURPHY, Director
Planning Department



DAVID GRAHAM
Deputy Chief Operating Officer

- Attachment(s):
1. Draft University Community Plan (UCP) Transportation Element Amendment
 2. Final Program Environmental Impact Report
 3. Final Program Environmental Impact Report Errata (11/04/2016)
 4. University Community Planning Group Minutes of July 12, 2016