



CITY OF LONG BEACH

DEPARTMENT OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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Long Beach, CA 90802

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April 7, 2016

CHAIR AND PLANNING COMMISSIONERS
City of Long Beach
California

RECOMMENDATION:

Recommend that the City Council adopt a Resolution approving the draft Downtown and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Pedestrian Master Plan as a technical appendix to the Mobility Element of the Long Beach General Plan and adopt Negative Declaration Number 1-16. (Districts 1, 2, 6, and 7)

APPLICANT: City of Long Beach
Department of Development Services
333 West Ocean Boulevard
Long Beach, CA 90802

DISCUSSION

The goal of the draft Downtown and Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Pedestrian Master Plan (Plan) is to reduce barriers and increase access to and around the eight Metro Blue Line stations in Long Beach. The plan area includes half-mile radii around each of the Metro Blue Line stations, generally along Long Beach Boulevard between Interstate 405 and the downtown shoreline. Downtown, with the largest concentration of Metro Blue Line stations, is entirely contained within the half-mile radii of the Metro Blue Line stations. The Plan was prepared to implement the Mobility Element of the Long Beach General Plan. As such, once adopted, the Plan will serve as a technical appendix to the Mobility Element and changes to the projects and programs in the Plan will not require amending the General Plan.

The Plan was funded by a grant from the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) through the TOD Planning Grant Program. The goal of the grant program is to create a framework to achieve new public and private investment around Metro light rail stations; support increased walking and transit use as an appealing alternative to automobile travel; and improve economic conditions for residents of the community by enhancing access to jobs and services.

Long Beach is a mostly built-out city with a well-developed street network with a grid pattern in most neighborhoods with limited opportunities to acquire additional rights-of-way to widen streets or build new streets to accommodate additional vehicular traffic. As a result, the City is focusing future improvements at making the existing mobility

network more efficient by facilitating the use of other modes of transportation – primarily walking, bicycling, and public transit. The Mobility Element establishes this citywide vision and the policies necessary to achieve this balanced mobility system by implementing improvements that provide multi-modal access to all users of the public rights-of-way.

One of the objectives of this policy is the increased use of transit and walking as a viable option for both work and non-work trips. Long Beach is a young city with nearly a quarter of the City's residents under the age of 18, many of which are transit-dependent. Moreover, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, a full 16 percent of the City's households (25,000) do not own or have access to a vehicle. As such, a "walkable" public realm is a public good. The Mobility Element identifies "pedestrian priority areas", increased amenities, and safety treatments for pedestrians. The Plan is consistent with and provides additional policies and programs to implement the Mobility Element.

The Plan area has a number of positive characteristics, including a relatively well-connected grid, access to the Metro Blue Line and connecting local bus routes, and important shopping and recreational amenities. However, many of these amenities are not evenly distributed throughout the Plan area. The Plan provides a blueprint for the Department of Public Works to develop a multi-modal system that provides safe and direct connections to the Metro Blue Line as a means to enhance community life, recreational opportunities, and ecological benefits. The Plan will also provide guidance to the Department of Development Services to encourage improvement to the public realm as new development occurs.

As such, the Plan is an implementation-oriented document. The Plan contains a menu of pedestrian treatments and a prioritized list of 33 pedestrian improvement projects. The menu of pedestrian treatments includes a variety of "quick, fast, and cheap" pedestrian infrastructure treatments, best practices from other cities, cost estimates, and design guidelines that can be used by City staff.

The top 14 high-priority pedestrian improvement projects represent \$71 million in pedestrian improvement projects to be implemented over the next 15 years. These projects will provide safer, more accessible, and attractive connections to Metro Blue Line stations, ultimately boosting ridership and leveraging economic development opportunities in the plan area. The priority projects include a range of improvements, from a greenbelt connecting two Metro stations to the first shared street in Southern California.

The 33 priority projects developed for the Plan represent seven types of improvements:

- Stitch Streets are the backbone of the Downtown Long Beach pedestrian network, connecting residents to the Anaheim Avenue, 5th Street, Pacific Avenue, 1st Street and Downtown Long Beach stations.
- Neighborhood Greenways are secondary, lower-volume collector streets that link

residential areas to the main arterials of the plan area.

- Green alleys serve as an urban trail that can provide an important alternate and accessible route for pedestrians.
- Shared street, as exemplified in the Pedestrian Gallery, will serve as a flexible space that can accommodate events and traffic, all in a protected, shared environment.
- Streetlets, typically occurring at mid-block crossings or at T-intersections, improve pedestrian connections to major transit corridors and provide shade and resting places for pedestrians.
- The Greenbelt will serve to provide neighborhoods near the Wardlow and Willow Stations with a safe, direct pedestrian connection.
- Transit Access Projects are smaller, more strategic projects that will make a significant impact on the safety and livability of neighborhoods near the Metro Blue Line.

Public Participation

The Plan was developed through a comprehensive and collaborative process that included community outreach, an analysis of existing conditions, City departmental coordination meetings and stakeholder interviews.

Public outreach was organized around fun, innovative, and meaningful community events to solicit input from Long Beach residents, visitors, and business owners. During the “WalkForth” event, the Project Team (Team) invited residents to explore temporary demonstration projects along 4th Street, complete with food trucks, retail installations, pedestrian improvement demonstrations and local businesses. Participants also used a large map to indicate areas that are problematic for pedestrians in the study area. A second community event, held at a gallery in the East Village Arts District and an adjacent pedestrianized alley, encouraged residents to provide feedback on initial concepts. Participants shared their “Sidewalk Stories” and experiences walking in Long Beach, using an interactive format that encouraged speakers to describe an image in no more than seven seconds. The event led to fruitful conversations about the opportunities and issues for the Team to consider. A third community workshop was held on February 17, 2016, at the Senior Arts Colony on Long Beach Boulevard. A study session with the Planning Commission was held on January 21, 2016. The Team also engaged the community through a series of stakeholder interviews. Ongoing Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meetings where Public Works and Development Services Department staff drew on an extensive and diverse array of expertise developed the prioritized project list.

The Plan has been made publicly available for comment since January 28, 2016, and

staff has received no written comments as of the preparation of this staff report.

PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE

In accordance with the provisions of the City's Municipal Code and Office of Planning and Research (OPR) for General Plan amendment items, a 1/8-page public notice was published in the Press Telegram on Wednesday, March 23, 2016. This notice included the date, time and location for this meeting. Notice was also provided via eNotify announcements on the City's web page.

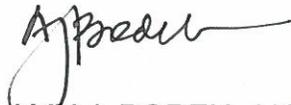
ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act, a Negative Declaration was posted on the City's website and has been circulated for comment. Adoption of the Negative Declaration will be considered at this Planning Commission public hearing.

Respectfully submitted,



LINDA F. TATUM, AICP
PLANNING BUREAU MANAGER



AMY J. BODEK, AICP
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

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Attachment: Exhibit A – Downtown and TOD Pedestrian Master Plan
Exhibit B – Negative Declaration 1-16