



## Legislation Text

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**File #:** 14-0138, **Version:** 1

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Recommendation to authorize City Manager to proceed with the design and bidding phase for the proposed Pedestrian Path Project Proposal, and consider Categorical Exemption 12-044. (Districts 2,3)

The proposed Project consists of constructing an eleven-foot wide pedestrian path (using a resin-based paving material) along 3.1 miles of the shoreline, constructing a new pedestrian/bicycle ramp on the east side of the Belmont Veterans Memorial Pier, and relocating the beach bicycle path inland at specific locations. On June 13, 2013, the California Coastal Commission (CCC) approved a coastal development permit for the Project authorizing the City of Long Beach to construct the Project, but required it to be located on the north side (landside) of the existing bicycle path. As depicted in Exhibit A, the location of the pathway has been revised to comply with the CCC conditions of approval. The CCC has formally approved the project plans (Exhibit B), and City staff is ready to complete the design and request construction bids.

The purpose of the Project is to:

- Increase beach access and coastal recreation by creating a separate path exclusively for pedestrians;
- Improve safety by relieving congestion and separating user groups;
- Encourage greater use of the beach;
- Support pedestrian activity by installing a more flexible and appropriate material for running/walking;
- Promote more active and healthy lifestyles; and,
- Improve mobility and travel options for all users.

The proposed Project is consistent with the City's goal of creating active and healthy communities, and would help improve safety by reducing congestion and conflicts between users (cyclists, walkers, runner, skaters, etc.), while also improving coastal access by providing no-cost recreational opportunities. As demonstrated in the City's annual bike counts, the existing bike path experiences the highest traffic volume citywide. In addition, it is identified as the 8th highest pedestrian traffic zone in the City. The Project is intended to better activate the beach area and increase the number of passive and active recreational users.

### Background and Project Approvals

The proposed Project was conceived many years ago and described in the City's Certified Local Coastal Program (LCP) adopted in 1980. The LCP, as amended, is an Element of the General Plan and acknowledges the need to balance recreational use of coastal resources with the requirements for protection and preservation. A formal policy of the LCP is to increase pedestrian and bicycle access opportunities along the coastal zone (Transportation and Access General Policies). Lack of adequate access is usually cited as a major reason for generally low utilization of the beaches in Long Beach. The LCP recommended construction of the existing bike path between Alamitos Avenue and 54th Place, and also recommended that "A pedestrian walkway should be constructed adjacent to the above mentioned bike path from Alamitos Avenue to 54th Place."

The proposed Project is also outlined in the Department of Parks, Recreation and Marine (PRM) 2003 Strategic Plan,

which called for the construction of an additional walking/jogging path on the beach. In 2008, the City's Department of Parks, Recreation, and Marine began developing a conceptual design for the proposed pedestrian path, but that effort was postponed due to a lack of funding. On August 9, 2011, the City Council held a public study session on the Fiscal Year (FY) 2012 Proposed Capital Improvement Program (CIP) Budget, and subsequently referred the FY 2012 CIP to the Planning Commission for review of its consistency with the General Plan. On August 18, 2011, the Planning Commission held a public hearing to review the FY 2012 Proposed CIP and unanimously found that the proposed projects, including the new Pedestrian Path Project, were in conformance with the General Plan. On September 6, 2011, the City Council approved the FY 2012 CIP Budget, which included \$5,000,000 for the proposed Pedestrian Path Project.

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a Categorical Exemption for the proposed project was filed with the L.A. County Clerk on July 25, 2012. The California Coastal Commission approved a coastal development permit on June 13, 2013, concluding that the proposed project, as conditioned, is the least environmentally damaging feasible alternative and can be found consistent with the requirements of the Coastal Act.

### Project Description

When first presented, the new path was to be located on the water side of the existing path. However, there were objections to this design and the Coastal Commission required the new path to be placed on the land side of the existing bike path. The new pedestrian path would be separated by a six-foot sand break, except in a few segments where the pathways would be separated by a raised curb. The construction of the proposed Project would require reconfiguration of segments of the existing concrete bike path, several storm drain crossings, and the public parking lot on the east side of the Belmont Veterans Memorial Pier. The existing storm drain crossings would be widened by about twelve feet in order to accommodate the width of both the existing and proposed paths.

Proposed re-alignments of segments of the existing bike path will increase the amount of open sandy beach area adjacent to the ocean in three main areas: a) between 8<sup>th</sup> Place and Cherry Ave; b) east of the Belmont Veterans Memorial Pier and adjacent to the Belmont Pool; and c) adjacent to the La Verne Parking Lot. Overall, this would increase the amount of sandy beach area between the ocean and bicycle path by approximately 300,000 square feet.

On the east side of the Belmont Veterans Memorial Pier, a new pedestrian/bicycle ramp would be constructed to eliminate the existing path's sharp ninety-degree angle turn coming off the pier. The reconfiguration of the pier ramp will result in the loss of approx. 20 parking spaces, which is significantly lower than the original project design, which would have resulted in the loss of 32 parking spaces.

At the Junipero Avenue public beach parking lot, the proposed Project includes the removal of 7,700 square feet of turf from the area immediately inland of the parking lot in order to accommodate the proposed alignment of the new path. This turf area is popular for gatherings and recreation. The Project would mitigate the impact to this turf area by planting 23,000 square feet of turf between the parking lot and the Bixby Park bluff, just east of the parking lot entrance/exit. This part of the Project would require 20 palm trees to be relocated in the immediate area.

### Public Outreach

Significant public outreach has been conducted as part of the proposed Pedestrian Path Project, including presentations at the following public meetings or organizations:

1. March 8, 2012 - Belmont Shore Residents Association
2. April 18, 2012 - Peninsula Residents Association
3. June 13, 2012 - Meridian Condominium Owners Association
4. June 14, 2012 - Belmont Shore Residents Association
5. July 12, 2012 - Parks and Recreation Commission
6. August 9, 2012 - Belmont Shore Residents Association
7. September 27, 2012 - Sustainable City Commission
8. October 1, 2012 - Surfrider Foundation
9. October 5-6, 2012 - Long Beach Marathon Expo
10. October 11, 2012 - Alamitos Beach Neighborhood Association
11. October 18, 2012 - Peninsula Beach Preservation Group

12. November 14, 2012 - Marine Advisory Commission
13. November 14, 2012 - Belmont Heights Community Association
14. February 13, 2013 - City Council Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

Significant design changes to the proposed project have been made as a result of extensive public input. For example, in response to significant concerns by the Surfrider Foundation, the concrete connections from all of the beach stairs to the bike path were removed from the proposed Project in order to minimize impacts to sandy beach area. Major crossings between the two paths were also removed to optimize safety. Finally, the proposed Project alignment was also revised at specific locations in order to address concerns with sea level rise and further minimize impacts to available sandy beach area located south of the existing bike path. The Coastal Commission approved plans are a reflection of community input that has served as a major contributor in the evolution of the Pedestrian Path Project in its current approved form.

City staff is ready to proceed with the design and bidding phase for the proposed Project. After bids are received and contractor is selected, City staff would return to the City Council to approve the final project specifications and construction contract.

#### Public Art and Beach Master Planning Efforts

During the summer of 2002, local artists Terry Braunstein and Craig Stone were hired by the Public Corporation for the Arts (PCA) to develop an integrated artwork program primarily for the Bluff Erosion and Enhancement Project. The art concepts that were developed were subsequently presented to the Parks and Recreation Commission and Marine Advisory Commission, and PRM staff recommended that the concepts created by Terry Braunstein and Craig Stone be incorporated into ongoing designs for some of the Bluff Erosion Control projects and in preparation of a beach master plan. A request was made by PRM staff on July 14, 2003 to contract directly with Terry Braunstein and Craig Stone for design services without a competitive bidding process. The City denied the request on August 4, 2003, and determined that a competitive bidding process would be required to further design any artwork concepts developed by Terry Braunstein and Craig Stone. A designer who ultimately prepares construction drawings would not, under any circumstances, be allowed to implement the art concepts in any way.

In 2008, PRM staff hired Hirsch & Associates, Inc, a professional Landscape Architecture and Planning Firm, to assist with the development of a formal Beach Master Plan. Terri Braunstein and Craig Stone were not hired as part of this effort nor were their concepts used. This beach master planning effort was ultimately halted because of funding constraints.

The concepts developed by Terry Braunstein and Craig Stone, which is presented in their "Coastal Allusions" Artists' Conceptual Design for the Beach and Bluff Areas are problematic from a planning, regulatory and professional design standpoint. They would be costly to implement, difficult to maintain, and face difficulty obtaining Coastal Commission approval. They are merely artistic concepts that have never been vetted by engineering or landscape architecture professionals, who are required to carry professional licenses and liability insurance.

This matter was reviewed by Assistant City Attorney Michael Mais and by Budget Management Officer Victoria Bell on February 7, 2014.

City Council approval of this item is requested on February 18, 2014 in order to proceed with the Project's design and bidding phase.

The FY 12 CIP Budget adopted by City Council on September 6, 2011 included \$5,000,000 for the proposed Pedestrian Path Project, and was budgeted in the Tidelands Operations Fund (TF 401) in the City Manager Department (CM). The \$5,000,000 budget was a preliminary estimate, and an updated Project cost including the CCC conditions of approval will be determined when the Project specifications and construction contract are submitted to City Council for approval. There is no local job impact associated with this request.

Approve recommendation.

PATRICK H. WEST  
CITY MANAGER

GEORGE CHAPJIAN  
DIRECTOR OF PARKS, RECREATION AND MARINE

APPROVED:

PATRICK H. WEST  
CITY MANAGER