



SUMMARY REPORT

Agenda Date: 3/12/2024

To: Board of Supervisors of Sonoma County

Department or Agency Name(s): County Administrator's Office, Sonoma Public Infrastructure, Sonoma County Regional Parks, Permit Sonoma

Staff Name and Phone Number: Jennifer Larocque (707) 565-2431; Johannes Hovertsz (707) 565-2550; Bert Whitaker (707) 565-2041; Tennis Wick (707) 565-1900

Vote Requirement: Informational Only

Supervisorial District(s): Countywide

Title:

Bike and Pedestrian Infrastructure Workshop

Recommended Action:

Receive an update on and consider augmenting bicycle and pedestrian (Active Transportation) infrastructure.

Executive Summary:

In alignment with the County's [Strategic Plan Resilient Infrastructure <https://socostrategicplan.org/resilient-infrastructure/>](https://socostrategicplan.org/resilient-infrastructure/) pillar's goal 3:

"Continue to invest in critical road, bridge, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure; objective 3: Invest \$5 million by 2024 on new pedestrian and bicycle facilities and adopt maintenance guidelines on roads to consider bicyclists and pedestrians", this item examines Sonoma County's active transportation projects, funding and process, and other counties' practices.

The workshop provides an opportunity to discuss concepts to improve planning, increase competitiveness for outside funding, and maximize existing investments in the unincorporated county. Based on Board input, staff may return to the Board during budget hearings with specific requests.

Discussion:

The Board of Supervisors has prioritized investment in roads and bridge infrastructure with ongoing funding of over \$120 million across the County's 1,368-mile road network, through activities such as pavement preservation and rehabilitation (large-scale paving projects), corrective road maintenance (pothole repair, brush cutting, etc.), bridge retrofits/replacements, and various other road safety and improvement projects.

The county's road and parks unincorporated system includes infrastructure serving bicycle and pedestrian transportation options. Bike and pedestrian projects fall within the concept of active transportation, which encompasses human powered transportation such as walking, rolling, and running. It is estimated that road users are more likely to select active transportation modes when they feel comfortable walking, running, and biking on roads or paths. Additionally, a variety of tactics, such as slowing down vehicles and facilities dedicated to active transportation may be used to encourage people to reduce vehicle usage.

As referenced, the County's 2021-2026 Strategic Plan includes the objective to invest \$5 million by 2024 on new pedestrian and bicycle facilities and adopt maintenance guidelines on roads to consider bicyclists and pedestrians.

The following active projects are expected to meet this objective:

- Arnold Drive Bike Lanes, C18121 - The project involves shoulder widening to add bike lanes on Arnold Drive between Country Club Lane and Madrone Road. This project will provide just under 2 miles of new bike lanes in the Sonoma area.
- Mark West Springs Sidewalk C21303 - The Mark West Springs Sidewalk project has advanced to construction, just underway in October 2022. The project involves new sidewalk on both sides of Mark West Springs Road between Old Redwood Highway and Ursuline Drive. This provides one-half mile of new sidewalk serving the Larkfield /Wikiup community in northeast Santa Rosa area.
- Crocker Road Bridge Sidewalk Addition C21903 - The project includes the addition of a wide sidewalk on the north side of the bridge, providing a much-needed pedestrian path for the Cloverdale area community.

Sonoma County unincorporated area bike and pedestrian projects fall within the active transportation infrastructure. Generally, substantial on-road infrastructure such as bike lanes and sidewalks are most common in the “downtown” core of unincorporated communities. As road users travel out of densely populated areas and onto sparsely populated rural roads the need for infrastructure shifts. On roads with fewer cars, active transportation users benefit from traffic calming techniques that utilize the existing roadway to slow traffic, which creates a more comfortable environment for active transportation users. Regional Parks’ trails connect with on-road facilities to create a cohesive network.

Today’s presentation and discussion is supported by the following attachments:

- Attachment A: What is active transportation, and why does infrastructure matter
- Attachment B: Road and trail project location, cost, and timeline
- Attachment C: Road and trail funding
- Attachment D: Sonoma County Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee FY 2023/24 through FY 2025/26 Funding Plan
- Attachment E: Planning active transportation infrastructure
- Attachment F: Themes from other counties

CONSIDERATIONS

To improve the County’s delivery of active transportation infrastructure additional capacity is needed in Sonoma Public Infrastructure (SPI) to run a special projects unit, facilitate a task force, described further below, prepare projects for grant applications, and work with existing staff to maximize traffic calming on pavement projects. SPI plans to return to the Board during budget hearings to request a position that would create the needed capacity. The annual estimated net increased operational cost for the position is \$258,114, which SPI anticipates funding with a mix of project-specific funding sources and road funds. No additional costs are anticipated at SPI, Regional Parks or Permit Sonoma if departments undertake the activities outlined below.

A) Special Projects Unit and Bikeways Unit.

- a. Sonoma Public Infrastructure (SPI) is responsible for implementing many of the County’s significant infrastructure priorities, including pavement preservation and storm damage repairs. The current workload does not allow staff to apply continued attention to active transportation projects. A new special projects unit in SPI would provide dedicated staffing to execute active transportation projects along with other department priorities as the number and complexity

of projects increases.

- b. A new Bikeways unit within Regional Parks would allow continued attention to active transportation projects. Filling vacant positions and shifting assignment to the Bikeways Unit will increase staff capacity, support combining multi-use trails with adjoining road improvement projects, and facilitate Task Force collaboration without an increased cost to the department.

- B) Task Force. Currently, County departments coordinate on active transportation with each other and outside agencies on an as-needed basis. While this process has proved sufficient to deliver projects at their current pace, staff acknowledges that proactive coordination with an interdisciplinary team could result in improved planning and faster project delivery. The Task Force would consist of representatives from the following groups: Sonoma Public Infrastructure, Permit Sonoma, Regional Parks and Sonoma County Transportation Authority. As needed, other participants could include the Health Services Department, Sonoma County Bicycle Coalition, Safe Routes to School, Ag + Open Space, and the County Administrator's Climate Action and Resiliency Division.
- C) Grants. Active Transportation infrastructure grants are complex, time consuming and extremely competitive. They require coordination from the grant writer, engineers, planners, and other collaborators. Developing the Task Force and creating a Special Projects unit will create the structure and capacity necessary to support Sonoma Public Infrastructure's Grant Manager to select competitive projects and develop thorough applications.
- D) Maximize Traffic Calming. Sonoma Public Infrastructure cross references active transportation plans while designing pavement preservation projects to determine which active transportation features to add when road conditions allow. The outcome is shared with the unincorporated county Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee for feedback. This process could be adjusted by having the Special Projects Unit evaluate pavement preservation projects to determine opportunities for active transportation improvements. If the existing road width does not support the improvements identified in active transportation plans the Special Projects Unit could recommend traffic calming measures to slow traffic, creating a safer environment for all road users. The cost of restriping roads is already considered as a component of pavement preservation work.

Strategic Plan:

The County is on track to meet Resilient Infrastructure goal 3 objective 3.

Pillar: Resilient Infrastructure

Goal 3: Continue to invest in critical road, bridge, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure.

Objective 3: Invest \$5 million by 2024 on new pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and adopt maintenance guidelines on roads to consider bicyclists and pedestrians.

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SPI has three active or recently completed projects which meet the objective of investing \$5 million by 2024 for new pedestrian and bicycle facilities: Arnold Drive Bike Lanes: secured \$2,850,000, looking for the remaining \$1,150,000; Mark West Springs Sidewalk secured \$3,400,000; Crocker Road Bridge Sidewalk Addition: secured \$4,000,000, including \$458,800 local match.

SPI's Road Assessment Guidelines, created in 2019, ensure that staff include pedestrian and bicyclist facilities in our inspection, assessment and repair of our County roadways. Road Maintenance staff maintains and improves pedestrian and bicycle facilities when performing road maintenance activities.

Racial Equity:

Was this item identified as an opportunity to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit?

No

Prior Board Actions:

None

FISCAL SUMMARY

Narrative Explanation of Fiscal Impacts:

This item does not include a financial request. SPI plans to return to the Board during budget hearings to request a position that would create the needed capacity. The annual estimated net increased operational cost for the position is \$258,114, which SPI anticipates funding with a mix of project specific funding sources and road funds.

Narrative Explanation of Staffing Impacts (If Required):

Public Infrastructure will return to the Board during budget hearings to request a position that would lead the Special Projects Unit. Regional Parks is considering filling vacant positions and shifting their assignment to the Bikeways Unit will increase staff capacity.

Attachments:

Attachment A: What is active transportation, and why does infrastructure matter?

Attachment B: Road and trail project location, cost, and timeline

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Attachment F: Themes from other counties

Attachment G: Presentation

Related Items "On File" with the Clerk of the Board:

N/A