

## Council Questions

Monday, July 17, 2023

### ***PRESENTATION – North McDowell Complete Streets Project Update***

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1. *Road diet causes backups at Corona. How much queuing distance is needed south of Corona (northbound direction) to reduce delay impacts? How much merging distance is needed south of Corona (southbound traffic) to create a road diet? That is, can the road diet be successful if it starts some distance south of Corona intersection?*

Answer: The backup for northbound on North McDowell extends beyond the SMART tracks both in the model and in the actual conditions observed. The challenge is not the queuing distance but the throughput of the intersection for Corona and NMD. The signal timing (around one minute) will not allow sufficient vehicles to move through the intersection without causing a backup in other locations. The merging distance is not the limiting factor, again it is the throughput at the intersection. For the road diet to be sufficient, there needs to be sufficient throughput at the intersection which is not achievable. Complicating factors are the Fire Station #2 and SMART crossing.

2. *Is the SMART crossing tied to the Station construction and is the date in the presentation the Station construction date estimate?*

Answer: The SMART crossing is not tied to the Station construction, but SMART will be bidding both the multi-use pathway project (MUP) and the Station project at the same time. Due to funding, the project will be represented with one bid and with two bid sheets to track the separate funding sources. Bids are scheduled to be awarded 10/18/2023.

3. *Can the buffered and pylon lanes still have street sweeping services? Do they get swept currently?*

Answer: Currently, street sweeping could not be performed in a protected bike lane with less than 11 feet of clear width. The City and/or Recology will explore other options, such as purchasing smaller street sweepers; in the meantime, narrower protected bike lanes would need to be manually swept.

4. *I'd like to see all bike lanes have the rumble strip/ grinding section (repetitive 6" wide/1 1/2" deep/ on 12" repeat) as a travel lane separator. Please discuss this possibility.*

Answer: There are no restrictions in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices about the use of rumble strips along bike lanes. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

does note that there are important considerations when installing rumble strips along a bike lane: they are challenging for people biking to traverse and can cause them to lose control. See:

[https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/roadway\\_dept/pavement/rumble\\_strips/bike\\_ig/](https://safety.fhwa.dot.gov/roadway_dept/pavement/rumble_strips/bike_ig/)

Staff does not recommend using rumble strips along bike lanes due to concerns around limiting maneuverability for people biking. We believe these are more appropriate on rural roads/highways with wide shoulders.

5. *Which features create “traffic calming?” Were lanes narrowed and more lights added to prevent “parkway” driving? Does adding Z crossings actually slow traffic?*

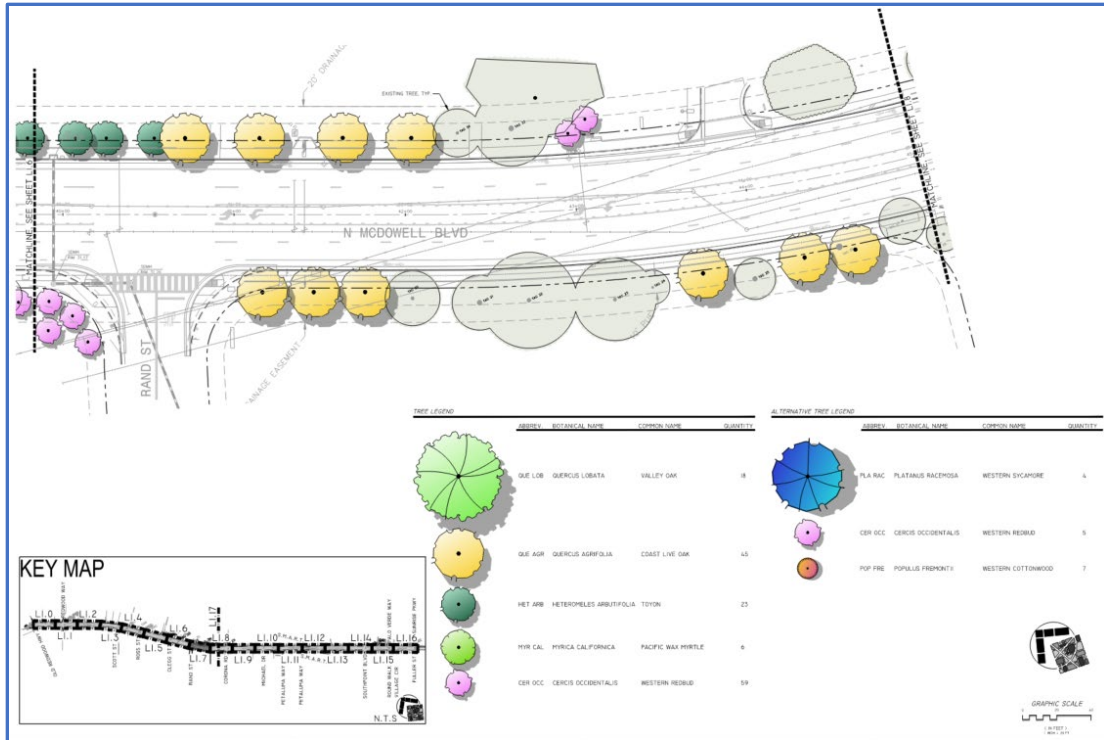
Answer: The primary purpose of Z crossings is to shorten the pedestrian crossing distance, allowing people walking to focus on one direction of traffic at a time and cross the roadway in two stages. The median refuge island forces pedestrians to turn and face the direction of oncoming traffic, encouraging them to make eye contact with drivers to confirm that they have stopped before proceeding. In addition to facilitating safer crossing conditions, the addition of crosswalks, median refuge islands, and the associated signage and roadway markings should provide some traffic calming effect, as they add context to the roadway that indicates drivers should exercise some caution while driving. Contrast this with a rural highway or freeway, where the absence of signage, markings, and other “cues” often encourages speeding and dangerous driving behavior.

6. *What are the lane dimensions compared to other roads?*

Answer: The number one lane (fast lane) is 10’ to 10.5’ and the number two lane (slow lane) is 11’ to accommodate buses and freight. The recent complete streets project on Petaluma Boulevard South resulted in 11’ lanes. B Street has 10’ lanes.

7. *In their slide #29 titled “Trees and Landscaping,” there is barely any perceptible difference between the Before image and the After image. The one added tree was not included in the visual range of the future image used due to change in angle.*

Answer: There are a complete set of treescape drawings developed for the entire corridor that show 150 trees that could be planted. That condition presents itself further south of this location. There were 15 trees identified and that are being planted closer to Rand that are not fully visible in this view. Shown is a portion of the 15 trees that will be planted:



8. *On the Presentation, I did not see an explanation/definition to “Conflict Zone Warning”. Is lights/signage or something else?*

Answer: The conflict zone warning is the green paint on the pavement. It marks a bike lane passing through an intersection, driveway, or to identify a conflict area for a bike lane. It is authorized for use by the California version of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD). See: <https://dot.ca.gov/-/media/dot-media/programs/safety-programs/documents/ctcdc/ctcdc-agenda-item-21-22-a11y.pdf>. This has been done on Petaluma Boulevard South as part of the road diet project.

9. *Also, can I have an explanation to what it means, “Canopy Trees encourage slower traffic”? How does that work? Petaluma Blvd. has canopy trees, and the traffic doesn’t seem to be affected? How is Mc Dowell Blvd. different?*

Answer: This is the difference between driving in the “open desert” and driving on a “narrow road”. One instinctively goes faster in the desert because there are fewer visual clues to indicate one’s speed. It has been proven that with edge constraints and visual clues, people (at least some) will slow down. See this link for more information: <https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/research/safety/08067/>

Trees are a way to confine the corridor, protect pedestrians and slow traffic.

Please note the City installed transverse markings and narrowed lanes on I St. recently to work towards slowing traffic down. A speed radar sign was also installed to help control vehicular speeds.

*10. How do vehicles pull over to the side of the road to let Safety Vehicles pass? Slide #37 illustration shows. Bike lane is protected?*

Answer: In the event of an emergency, vehicles are required to yield to emergency vehicles and pull over to the right and stop until the emergency vehicle can pass (CVC 21806). There would be some gaps in vertical elements to allow drivers to pull closer to the curb. Emergency vehicles may also utilize the two-way center turn lane where available.

*11. Given the recent accident on Sonoma Mtn Pkwy, that type of intersection does not work for left turning from side street onto parkway when vehicles are traveling 40+ mph on the parkway. How can we minimize this crossover and prevent similar type accidents?*

Answer: The recent crash on Sonoma Mountain Parkway (SMP) was extremely unfortunate and PW has spoken with the Police Dept. regarding it. We are looking at all elements to prevent this type of crash. The treescape plans developed for NMD have considered the needed setback for sight lines to minimize broadside crashes. ReLeaf already had awareness of this design element.

*12. There is a right turn only out of the post office. Can this be applied to other businesses?*

Answer: Right turn out restrictions could be applied at other driveways but it increases the inconvenience for local businesses. The right turn out of the USPS driveway was in response to high number of collisions related to left turn out of the post office. In the event other driveways have similar issues, right turn out could be a mitigation measure for those collisions and would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

*13. If we put up slower speed signs will people cooperate? Will we need to add speed detectors and pass out lots of tickets so people change their behavior? That means of enforcement does not go over well according to road consultants that gave us presentations.*

Answer: We have added speed radar signs on 5 city's streets and are reviewing enforcement actions on NMD once it opens in the completed phase. However, changing people's behavior is a long-term exercise requiring engineering, enforcement, and education. As the city continues to work in a collaborative manner, we can affect people's behaviors. The City will also be launching a driver-awareness "slow down" campaign this fall, ideally before school starts.

*14. How will heavy large trucks use this roadway? Will they slow down and will they take more care when turning and driving over a bike lane? Does the green paint slow traffic down in general?*

Answer: Truck traffic will continue to use roadway as it's a commerce route and a commercial area that requires truck traffic. The green paint itself does not slow traffic, but it provides more visibility and awareness of potential conflicts, so drivers exercise more caution when turning across them.

#### **ITEM 5 – Ellis Creek Tertiary Filter Expansion**

***NOTE: This item will be pulled and moved to the 8/7 meeting. Staff will be including additional analysis in an updated staff report.***

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#### **ITEM 6 – Purchase of a Sewer System Camera Van**

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*1. What is the annual use of the equipment and how does the cost of purchase and staffing compare with the cost of rental of such equipment or contract services?*

Answer: Staff uses the camera vehicle and equipment daily.

Cities should perform video inspections of each sewer line annually as a best practice in the industry. Due to resource constraints, we are only able to inspect each of our lines about once every other year. This requires a team of 6 employees: 3 to hydro flush/clean the lines; and 3 to perform video inspection work using the camera equipment.

Renting a vehicle is at least \$12,000 per month. Thus, the return on investment (ROI) is less than 3 years, at which point the van and equipment has paid for itself.

Note: Our current camera van vehicle is out of date and constantly requires repairs (parts are increasingly difficult to acquire; see below). The new van will take about a year to build, at which point we intend to auction our current van.

*2. F 450 goes for less than 100K so there must be 250K worth of equipment on that van.*

*It would be nice to get a picture of old and new vans for comparison and list and picture and actual use of the equipment.*

*Is there a website or brochure we could see or look up?*

*What is the annual use of the equipment and how does the cost of purchase and staffing compare with the cost of rental of such equipment or contract services?*

Answer: This vehicle is part of our operations and an essential element to our sewer system management plan which is a regulatory requirement from the state. The sewer inspection van is utilized as part of system management plan for inspection and condition assessment for our sewer pipelines. We also inspect storm drains or other pipelines as necessary, but at its core, it's a regulatory requirement and essential for sewer replacement operations.

Here are some key considerations that support purchase of our new van through RapidView:

- The existing camera van is more than 20 years old with aging equipment and outdated technology. The original supplier was local to Petaluma but has since gone out of business, and the new supplier is in the Midwest and Florida. This requires us to ship items and we have difficulty in getting support.
- The camera systems and software are proprietary, meaning that we cannot use the existing camera equipment and related software and system appurtenances from the old van in a new van.
- The new camera van includes a bathroom for crews, creating a more efficient environment. Previously staff would have to pause work to allow for bathroom breaks (with travel time).
- RapidView was part of Sourcewell's purchasing cooperative, meaning they won competitive bidding as part of Sourcewell's bidding process, which meets our requirements for bidding purposes. Staff had solicited other Sourcewell quotes and had RapidView provide our operations staff with a full demonstration of the equipment/van on-site at the Public Works & Utilities Water Field Office.
- RapidView is local to the East Bay for quick response to issues. It is also being utilized by local jurisdictions for their new camera vans (Santa Rosa).

Here is the website for the RapidView/IBAK systems for sewer inspection vehicles:  
<https://RapidView.com/>

A few photos from the website are included below:









**ITEM 8 – Resolution Adopting the Levying of the Annual Special Tax for The Riverfront Community Facilities District, Fiscal Year 23/24**

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1. *Since we are restricting mobile home park owners to 4% max per year, should we not also follow this ourselves since this a general tax that is not for special life need like water? Can staff also provide a map of this tax district with the buildings designated in color code by type so we see the volume and location of each parcel assessed? Can we also see the budget of what was prior money used for and what budget is needed for future?*

Answer: Both CFDs and LADs are not general taxes but a special tax based on the percentage benefit that the district provides the respective properties.

<https://cityofpetaluma.primegov.com/meeting/attachment/19441.pdf?name=4> Here is a link to the CFD that provides a map and answers your questions about the assessments of each property. Page 22 states that each year the assessment will increase by the annual CPI %. The engineer reports for each District provides justifications for why the annual increase is necessary. To create each District a majority of the property owners needed to agree to the annual costs and the CPI adjusters. Additionally, the information about the District are recorded against the property so each property owner subsequent to the adoption is on notice about the District and the annual increases. However, Council has the ability to increase up to the 2% assessment and can choose to assess at a lower % if it so desires.

2. **Assignment of Maximum Special Tax.** Each Fiscal Year, the Base Year Maximum Tax shown below shall be escalated as specified in Section C, Annual Adjustment of Maximum Special Tax, to determine the Maximum Special Tax for the upcoming Fiscal Year for each Land Use Classification.

Land Use Classification	Base Year Maximum Tax
Developed Single Family Detached	\$945 per Residential Unit
Developed Single Family Attached	\$695 per Residential Unit
Developed Multi-Family	\$472 per Residential Unit
Developed Retail / Commercial Property	\$741 per 1,000 sq. ft. of nonresidential building sq. ft. or portion thereof
Developed Office Property	\$875 per 1,000 sq. ft. of nonresidential building sq. ft. or portion thereof
Developed Hotel / Motel Property	\$741 per 1,000 sq. ft. of nonresidential building sq. ft. or portion thereof
Undeveloped Property	\$7,750 per acre or portion thereof
Tax-Exempt Property	\$0

The City is in the process of taking a holistic look at its LADs and as part of that process it will look at whether each district is getting the services that was voted on during the Districts formation and whether the current assessments are adequately covering the services or if some need to be increased or even rolled back.

#### **ITEM 11 – Weed Abatement**

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1. *I just want to ensure that the prior resolution that "weeds are noxious" is focused on this fire prevention. If we are claiming weeds are noxious on all city property in general for whatever reason, then we will need to include that in our IPM program and intensify effort to control weeds.*

Answer: The process we use to declare, and then order the abatement of weeds is done through the CA Government code. In the "Definitions" section it defines weeds as:

(b) "Weeds" means weeds which when mature bear wingy or downy seeds, which will attain such a large growth as to become a fire menace when dry, or which are otherwise noxious or dangerous.

[https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes\\_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=GOV&division=3.&title=4.&part=2.&chapter=13.&article=2.](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/codes_displayText.xhtml?lawCode=GOV&division=3.&title=4.&part=2.&chapter=13.&article=2.)

So, our weed abatement program through the Gov. Code is specifically to address fire risk.

2. *How are the consultants doing on IPM program development?*

Answer: Staff is targeting a fall presentation of the IPMP to Council. Currently staff is working with an Ad-Hoc Committee of the Recreation, Music, and Parks Commission to gather more information to address larger questions posed by the Commission and Community interest groups. Staff is targeting a later Summer/early Fall presentation of the draft IPM program to the RMPC.

3. *Is there a review of the Contracted Landscape Company hired by the City?*

Answer: Each lot that is abated by our weed abatement contractor is reviewed. When a lot is completed, the contractor attaches before and after pictures of the lot so we can confirm it was completed to our standards.

The performance of contractors for Landscape Assessment Districts are reviewed regularly with corrective actions taken. In recent years, problems center around three main issues: (1) diminishing funds/spending power to adequately provide necessary scope of services on our LADs; (2) challenges created by drought conditions and an inability to irrigate adequately to maintain plant health/growth; and (3) per the City's request as part of the Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPMP) initiative, our contractor has moved away from spraying any synthetics in LADs. This has provided for a more natural 're-wilding' look and turf/vegetation where weeds are more integrated into the landscape. As a result, the contractor has had to switch to more manual abatement methods in lieu of having an increased budget.

4. *For example, City Hall landscaping alone, is not acceptable. The Community Garden boxes are full of weeds, no vegetables are currently planted and boxes have not been maintained in past year. The landscaping around the building and trees is not being maintained. Are the LAD's reviewed after Landscaping company performs contracted duties?*

Answer: The garden boxes at City Hall have a history of challenges, including maintenance. Staff's recommendations are to transition these areas into edible demonstration gardens with the potential of expanding the partnership with Petaluma Bounty to help manage the community education and engagement components. The Community Garden Beds at City Hall were taken offline in 2019/2020. There was little use from the surrounding community because they did not receive enough sunlight to grow many fruits/vegetables. Community Garden planter boxes along Howard street were already removed.

The Daily Acts garden was installed in 2009 or 2010. This includes the garden along the building where the flagpole and lawn are (Upham-facing) – where the Kiwis and native plantings are. This is a relatively small area and still under regular maintenance by

Daily Acts. There are also citrus trees on the Bassett Street side that are available to all and need regular maintenance. Several of the signs, including the ones that refer to the garden beds, should be removed or updated if garden beds are transitioned to be for demonstration only.

The City Hall landscaping work is not part of a LAD, but as mentioned above, the performance of contractors for Landscape Assessment Districts are reviewed regularly the City made a change in service provider. During the protracted drought, City Hall landscaping required much less attention, now with a good season of rainfall and the availability of funding, we have increased the level of landscape frequency and quality.

Considerations for landscaping in both of our LADs and city-owned facilities: (1) diminishing funds in various districts—service level needs to equate to funding generated to adequately provide necessary scope of services on our LADs; (2) protracted drought conditions and an inability to irrigate adequately to maintain plant health/growth; and (3) per the City's request as part of the Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPMP) initiative, our contractor has moved away from spraying any synthetics in LADs. This has provided for a more natural 're-wilding' look and turf/vegetation where weeds are more integrated into the landscape. As a result, the contractor has had to switch to more manual abatement methods in lieu of having an increased budget.

5. *There was only one letter to a parcel owner on weed abatement, where are other residential properties that are in need of mowing?*

Answer: Yes, just one lot for this resolution. All the other lots on our weed abatement list for fire prevention have already been noticed and ordered (in April). Our contractor has finished abating the lots that were not done by the property owner. Several lots have regrowth, and the lots will be abated again either by the property owner, or our weed abatement contractor.

## **ITEM 12 – LADs**

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1. *Comments: With 4 of the 7 close to LADs, do we all recuse ourselves from entire topic? That leaves only 3 to vote and is that enough of quorum to vote?*

*I know that the 2% raise in assessment is not nearly enough to cover the costs of maintenance, esp. if manual versus chemical controls put in place. We are many years behind in setting up a better, equitable system. Will we also set up a team to work on new plan for LADs? Maybe assign to Tree Advisory? or Parks and Rec?*

Can we legally modify the system to change services and assessments on all 50 LADs so they are all self-supporting?

Answer: The Engineer's Reports, Resolutions, and staff presentation are phased such that each Council member needing to recuse will do so at a specific time announced during the presentation of the item. The item is structured such that Council members need not recuse from the entire item.

Both CFDs and LADs are not general taxes but a special tax based on the percentage benefit that the district provides the respective properties.

Here is a link to the CFD that provides a map and illustrates the assessments of each property:

<https://cityofpetaluma.primegov.com/meeting/attachment/19441.pdf?name=4>. Page 22 states that each year the assessment will increase by the annual CPI %. The engineer reports for each District provides justifications for why the annual increase is necessary. To create each District a majority of the property owners needed to agree to the annual costs and the CPI adjusters. Additionally, the information about the District is recorded against the property so each property owner subsequent to the adoption is on notice about the District and the annual increases. However, Council has the ability to increase up to the 2% assessment and can choose to assess at a lower % if it so desires.

The City has long been challenged with managing the scope and magnitude of the LAD program with the resources available. Yes, staff is in the process of analyzing the status of each LAD and the specific issues within each as part of a holistic look at all our LADs. As part of that process, staff will look at whether each district is getting the services that was voted on during each district's formation and whether the current assessments are adequately covering the services or if some need to be increased or even rolled back.

Moving forward, it will be important to: (1) modify the scope of services for LADs, particularly in light of our IPMP initiative; and (2) right-size the budget for each LAD, adjusting the corresponding assessments required to support the scope. This process is a monumental effort and will require public hearings and informational meetings for each LAD. Staff is working on this and expect that it will realistically take at least 2+ years to complete the process for all LADs.

Lastly, it is important to note that contractor performance is not the primary issue. Our contractors are performing the work they can with the limited resources they have, and their performance is reviewed regularly. As mentioned above, problems center around three main issues: (1) diminishing funds/spending power to adequately provide necessary scope of services on our LADs; (2) challenges created by drought conditions and an inability to irrigate adequately to maintain plant health/growth; and (3) per the City's request as part of the Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPMP) initiative, our contractor has moved away from spraying any synthetics in LADs. This has provided for a

more natural 're-wilding' look among turf/vegetation where weeds are more integrated into the landscape. As a result, the contractor has had to switch to more manual abatement methods, driving up costs of service without having an increased budget.