



DATE: October 10, 2022

TO: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council through City Manager

FROM: Christopher J. Bolt, Director of Public Works & Utilities
Heather Hines, Interim Community Development Director
Eric Danly, City Attorney

SUBJECT: Crosstown Connector Workshop: Exploring Petaluma’s Options for Enhancing Community Mobility, Safety, and Connectedness

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council receive a presentation on existing and planned crosstown connectors, receive public comment, and provide staff direction and feedback on prioritization and next steps.

BACKGROUND

The City of Petaluma is bisected by three physical barriers that run generally north–south through city limits, including the Petaluma River, the Sonoma-Marin Area Rail Transit (SMART) railroad tracks, and U.S. Highway 101 (see Figure 1). Currently there are limited physical crossings of these barriers to facilitate a crosstown connection between the east and west sides of the community. The Guiding Principles of the General Plan 2025 acknowledge the challenges that these physical barriers create and the importance of integrating and connecting the east and west sides of the City.

In an effort to improve and create crosstown connections, the City’s General Plan called for improvements to existing connections such as Lynch Creek Trail (LCT), Old Redwood Highway, and Caulfield Lane, and the addition of two new crosstown connectors including

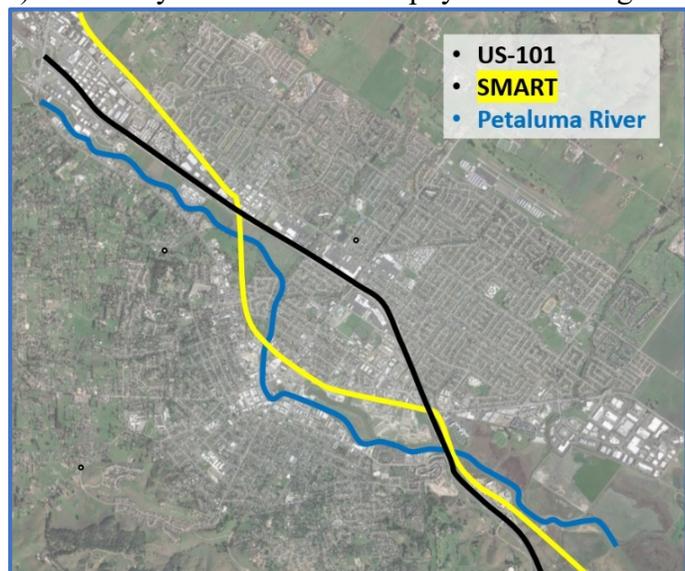


Figure 1. Petaluma's three bisecting features.

Rainier Avenue and the Caulfield Bridge/Southern Crossing. The General Plan and General Plan Environmental Impact Report (EIR) that were adopted by City Council in 2008 include a projected build-out of the City that assumes construction of the two new crosstown connectors to mitigate increased traffic anticipated from the build-out population and associated traffic estimates. The new crosstown connectors were planned to maintain levels of service (LOS) on key traffic intersections at acceptable levels.

As referenced above, the General Plan 2025 also recognizes the LCT as an integral east-west connector for bicycles and pedestrians. Improvements to the LCT along with other existing crossings were included in the General Plan 2025 and continue to be studied in an effort to enhance the overall connectivity and safety for pedestrians and bicyclists throughout the city. This focus on active transportation crosstown connection is consistent with goals identified in the City’s adopted Climate Emergency Framework including improving Petaluma’s existing transportation system, including walking, biking, and other forms of active transportation, to promote a low carbon, safe, convenient, and integrated network with reasonable access to all essential goods and services; and reducing of Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) through active transportation. Further development of the City’s active transportation crosstown connection options will be informed by the citywide Active Transportation Plan, which is currently under development in coordination with the General Plan Update.

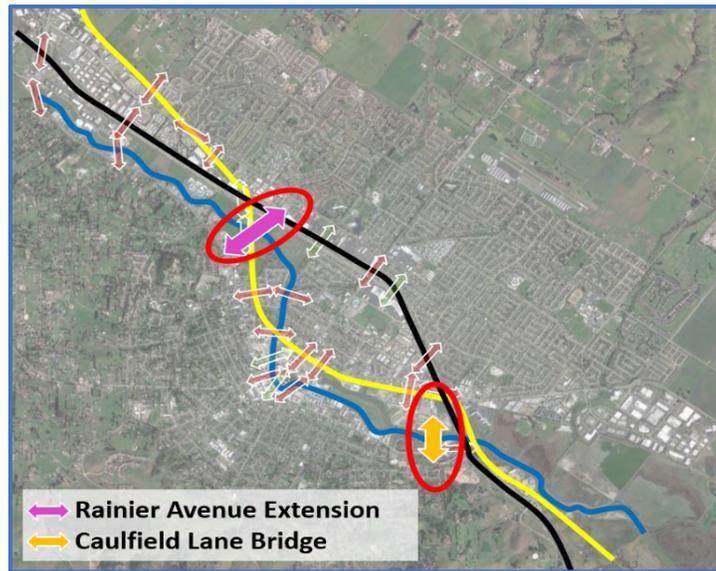


Figure 2. Proposed crosstown connectors relative to other crossings.

DISCUSSION

Previous crosstown connector workshops and discussions have focused on specific connectors. The most recent workshop, entitled “Joining East and West Petaluma – A Workshop about Petaluma’s Crosstown Connectors,” was held with the City Council on September 23, 2019. The workshop only discussed Rainier, Caulfield Bridge/Southern Crossing, and LCT as crosstown connectors.

It has been a stated goal of the City Council to have an additional discussion about opportunities for crosstown connectors that provides a holistic overview and analysis of *all* connectors—vehicular *and* pedestrian/bicycle, existing and planned—along with current updates on the Rainier and Caulfield Bridge/Southern Crosstown Connectors. The purpose of this workshop is to provide updates and information about existing and planned crosstown connectors and to receive direction from the City Council on priorities moving forward.

The workshop will cover the following areas:

1. Workshop Objectives
2. Crosstown Connector Background
3. Existing Connectors
4. Potential Connectors
5. Crosstown Connector Mobility Analysis
6. Financial Considerations
7. Next Steps
8. Discussion and Prioritization

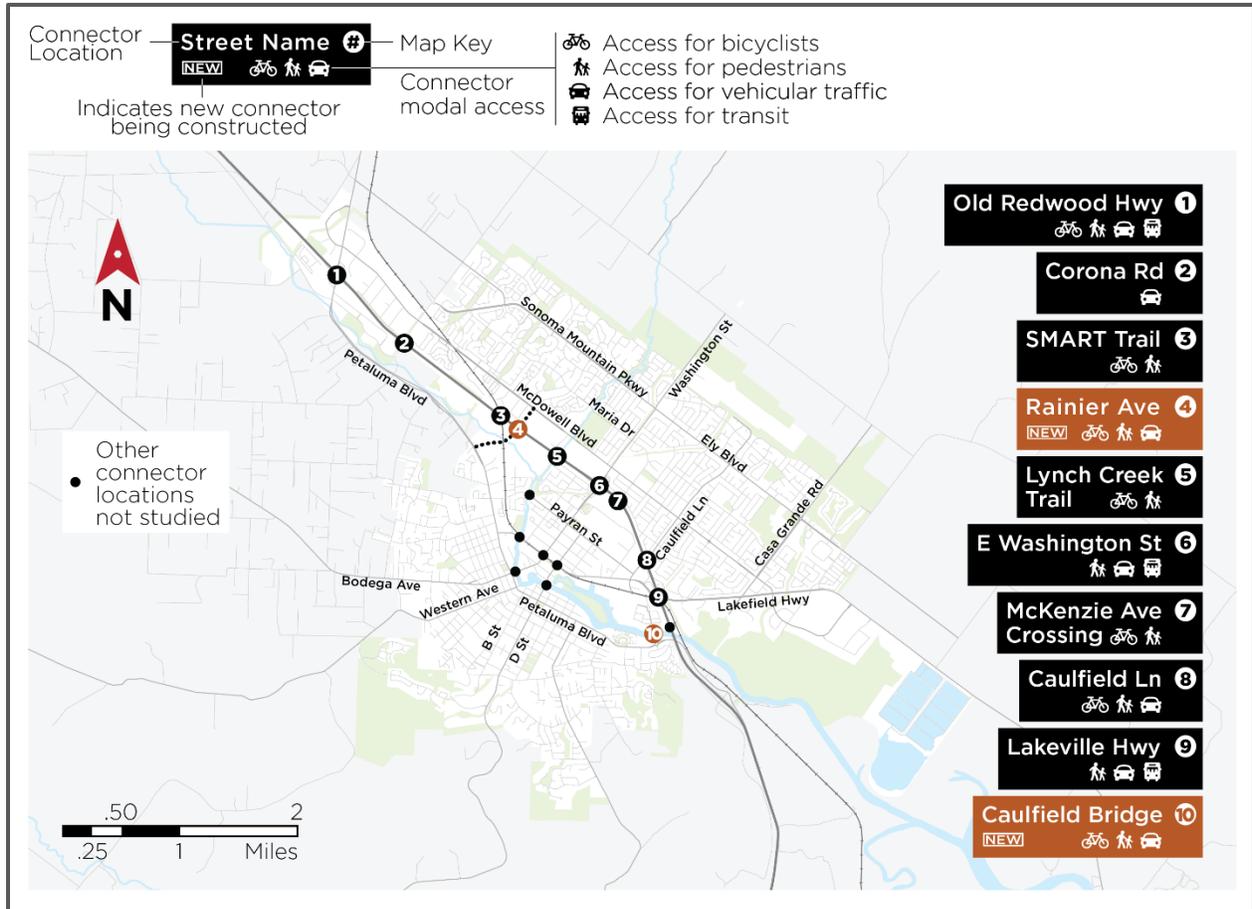


Figure 3. Map of crossing locations (existing and potential).

Figure 3 above illustrates the 10 crossings in Petaluma as included in this workshop, both the eight existing and two future connectors that cross one or more of the physical barriers (Highway 101, the Petaluma River, and/or the SMART rail). Among these, there are three dedicated pedestrian/bicycle facilities (numbers 3, 5, 7, above), and six vehicular crossings with varying degrees of active transportation accommodations. Corona Road stands alone as the only crossing focused predominantly on vehicles (bike lanes are striped).

Figure 4 lists the existing crosstown connectors and shows the transportation modes they each currently accommodate, whether they are subject to an approved capital improvement project, current funding available, and the improvement work planned for each. Enhancing active

transportation infrastructure is a high priority for the public safety, climate change, and quality of life benefits that result. The above graphic also illustrates connectivity gaps that exist for bicyclists and pedestrians seeking to safely cross Highway 101. Currently, active transportation is not accommodated or not accommodated optimally on Corona, and East Washington, for example.

Crossing	Owner*	Existing Access	CIP Project	Local Funding \$M	Grant Request \$M	Total \$M	Current Status/ Next Steps
Old Redwood Hwy.	Caltrans/ City			-	-	-	Maintenance – striping
Corona Rd.	Caltrans		X	\$0.025	\$0.125 (awarded)	\$0.15	Planning/Study
SMART Trail	SMART		X	\$0.05	-	\$0.05	Wayfinding
Lynch Creek Trail	City		X	\$0.27	\$1.60M	\$1.95	Construction
E. Washington St.	Caltrans/ City			-	-	-	Planning/Study
McKenzie Ave.	Caltrans/ City		X	\$0.025	\$0.125 (awarded)	\$0.15	Planning/Study
Caulfield Ln. Paving (Ely to Payran - Paving)	Caltrans/ City		(FY23/24)	\$0.455	\$3.35	\$3.85	Construction (Move to CIP)
Rivertrail - 101 Undercrossing (@ Lakeville Hwy.)	City (Caltrans/SMART Easements)		X	\$1.30	\$3.20	\$4.50	Construction
TOTAL				\$2.125M	\$8.40M	\$10.525M	

Figure 4. List of existing crossings at Highway 101.

There are four types of bicycle facilities identified in the California Highway Design Manual:

- Bike Paths, or Class I - Off-street pathways that may be shared by cyclists and pedestrians
- Bike Lanes, or Class II - On-street bikeways that are generally delineated with lane striping, stenciling, and signage
- Bike Routes, or Class III - On-street facilities that are generally delineated only by signs and sometimes stenciled sharrows
- Cycle Tracks, or Class IV - Separated bikeways for the exclusive use of bicycles that include a physical separation/barrier between the bikeway and the vehicle traffic lanes

Two of the existing crossings, the SMART multi-use pathway (MUP) between Payran and Southpoint and the LCT, are Class I facilities that are fully separated from the vehicular roadway. The other crossings range from a combination of Class II bike lanes with sidewalks on one or both sides to no sidewalk and bicycle facilities.

Current/Existing Crosstown Connector Projects

While much of the discussion is based on proposed future crosstown connectors or needed enhancements to existing connectors, work has been completed on several crosstown connectors since the adoption of the General Plan and as outlined in the City’s transportation nexus study. These improvements have included the following:

- Old Redwood Highway
- Lynch Creek Trail
- East Washington Interchange

Caulfield/Payran Intersection
Corona

Corona & McKenzie Feasibility Study & Alternatives Concept Plan

The Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget for FY 22/23 includes a project to explore safe active transportation connectivity across Highway 101. The City is leveraging \$50,000 of local dollars with a \$250,000 grant secured from the Sonoma County Transportation Authority (SCTA), which Council recently approved for this study.

This Feasibility Study and Alternatives Concept Plan will evaluate options for safer Petaluma east-west bicycle and pedestrian crossings over Highway 101 at Corona Road and McKenzie Avenue:

Corona Road

Connectivity east of the Corona Road bridge will soon be enhanced with the planned SMART Station MUP and improvements to N. McDowell Blvd. The proposed study of this bridge will focus on further enhancing Active Transportation connectivity in this area and improving safety. This is timely given that the new Petaluma SMART station will be constructed at the southeast corner of Corona and North McDowell Blvd. Construction is expected to begin in 2023/2024 with completion anticipated in 2024/25.

McKenzie Avenue Overpass

The second crossing to be studied is the McKenzie Avenue pedestrian bridge south of the East Washington interchange (behind the East Washington Place shopping center). This pedestrian bridge study will focus on accessibility and safe access at the McKenzie Avenue (east) terminus as well as accessible connectivity to transit. Safety improvements to the overall span will also be considered in this assessment.

Staff is also aware of the need for a similar study of the E. Washington crossing to provide for improved active transportation accommodations there. We anticipate that this will require a separate project for scope, schedule, and funding reasons. This study is not yet programmed or budgeted.

Both Existing and Proposed Crosstown Connectors will Incorporate Complete Streets to the Maximum Feasible Extent

“Complete Streets” is a transportation policy and design approach that requires streets to be planned, designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe, convenient, and comfortable travel and access for users of all ages and abilities regardless of their mode of transportation.

The National Complete Streets Coalition provides the following guidance:

“Streets are a vital part of livable, attractive communities. All people ought to have safe, comfortable, and convenient access to community destinations and public places—whether walking, driving, bicycling, moving actively with assistive devices, or taking public transportation. This is especially true for people who have experienced systemic

underinvestment, or whose needs have not been met through a traditional transportation approach, including older adults, people living with disabilities, people who cannot afford or do not have access to a car, and Black, Native, and Hispanic or Latin-a/o/x communities. Unfortunately, too many of our streets prioritize moving cars at dangerously high speeds without delay over safety for all people who use the street.

A Complete Streets approach integrates people and place in the planning, design, construction, operation, and maintenance of our transportation networks. This helps to ensure streets put safety over speed, balance the needs of different modes, and support local land uses, economies, cultures, and natural environments.”

Potential Connector Projects

Rainier Crosstown Connector

The Rainier Crosstown Connector is one of the planned long-term transportation improvements called for in the adopted General Plan 2025. Historically the crosstown connector was coupled with a freeway interchange, both of which are part of the current General Plan’s planned transportation network to accommodate anticipated build-out. Both components were included at the policy level in the General Plan EIR. The two components of the project were subsequently separated to allow the City to complete the mandated project-level environmental analysis of the crosstown connector portion so that design and construction of the undercrossing structure could occur as part of the Highway 101 widening project.

The preliminary design for the Rainier CTC was analyzed in a project level EIR (SCH #2011082032) that was ultimately certified by the City Council in 2015 including a statement of Overriding Considerations for significant and unavoidable impacts due to significantly cumulative impacts of global climate change from greenhouse gas emissions, noise from traffic volumes, and transportation from level of service delays. The City Council certified the EIR with overriding considerations finding that there are specific economic, social, environmental, land use and other considerations that support approval of the project despite the significant environmental impacts, including that the project will enhance east-west connectivity, alleviate congestion at several deficient intersections, and provide for multi-modal connectivity by introducing pedestrian and bicycle facilities.

As illustrated in Figure 5 below, the preliminary design that was analyzed in the EIR was a four-lane roadway with Class II bike lanes and sidewalk on each side. The preliminary design did not include any vehicular access points other than connections to the existing Rainier Avenue on the east side and Petaluma Boulevard North on the west side. However, as illustrated in orange in Figure 5, the preliminary design did include the appropriate structural components to allow for future connections to provide access to land locked parcels in the vicinity with existing land use designation and zoning for residential and commercial development.

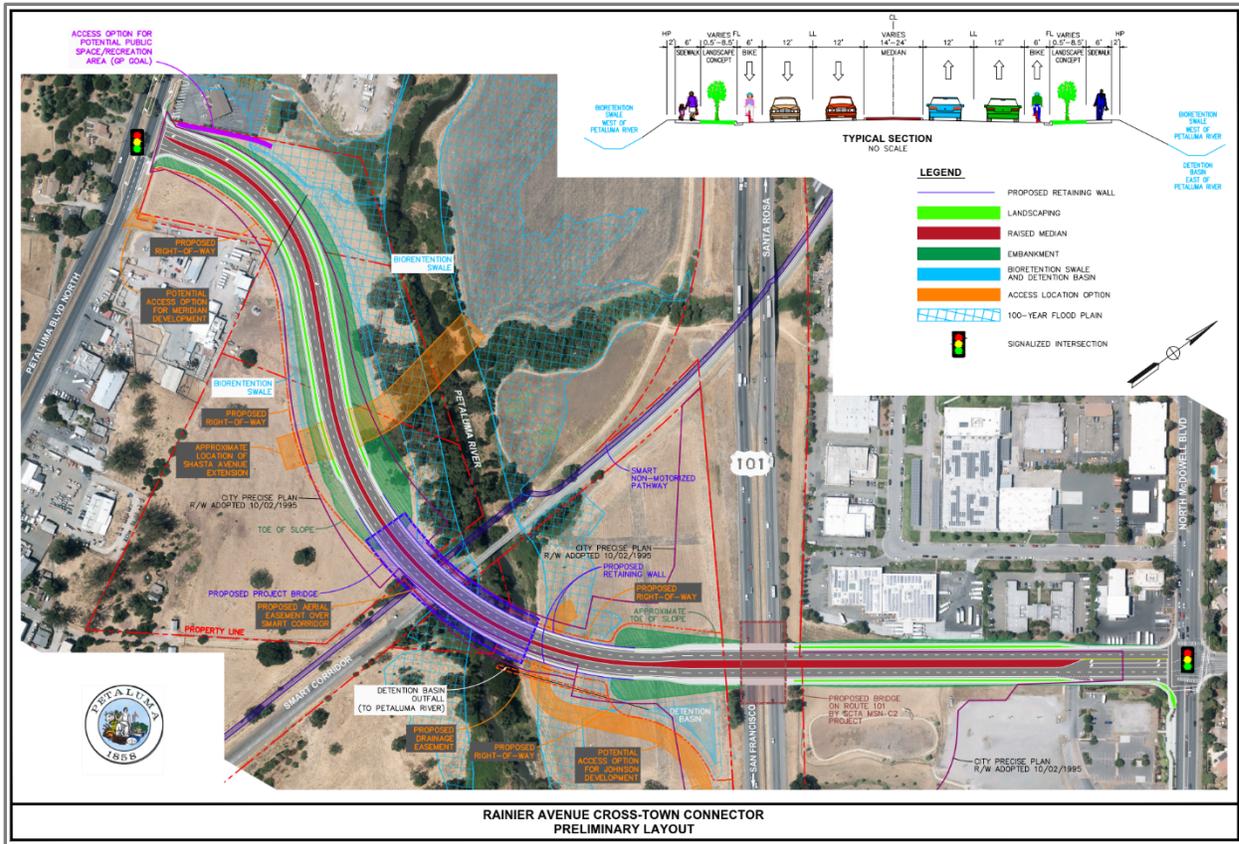


Figure 5. Proposed design for Rainier (as approved in the EIR).

The City has received dedication of the needed right of way on the east side of Highway 101. None of the necessary right of way has been dedicated or acquired on the west side of Highway 101.

The project was one of the identified transportation facilities in the nexus study from which the City adopted its current traffic impact fee (TIF) in 2008 following the General Plan 2025 adoption. The TIF is assessed on all development within the City and the City has been collecting traffic impact fees that include funding for Rainier and the other projects identified in the traffic fee study since 2008. It is anticipated that 100% of needed funding for the Rainier Crosstown Connector would come from the City's TIF. The most recent estimated remaining cost associated with the project as a four-lane roadway is \$92.3 million (preferred alternative in the EIR). An additional \$10 million has already been invested to date (which includes the City's contribution to the new Highway 101 underpass).

There has not been any work on the design for the Rainer Crosstown Connector since the 2019 City Council workshop. Caltrans' work on Highway 101, including the lifting of Highway 101 at Rainier and the creation of a new highway overcrossing, has been completed. Undercrossing roadway work is not funded nor prioritized as part of the CIP.

Staff also explored potential cost reductions associated with reducing the roadway width from four-lanes down to two-lanes. Early indications are that traffic demands do not support the need for four lanes. This may require additional traffic modeling and analysis to review and verify.

Caulfield Lane Bridge/Southern Crossing

The Caulfield Bridge/Southern Crossing is a proposed new structure over the Petaluma River that would make a connection between the Crystal Lane / Petaluma Boulevard South roundabout and the newly constructed section of Caulfield Lane at the Riverfront Subdivision, near the Highway 101 bridge at the southern end of the City. The Southern Crossing is the other new crosstown connector planned for in the General Plan 2025 to accommodate anticipated build out. The Caulfield crossing was included in the 2025 General Plan and was also included in the programmatic EIR for the General Plan as a long-term infrastructure improvement and identified as a transportation facility in the nexus study upon which the City's Traffic Impact Fee was based. Funds collected for traffic improvements since adoption of the traffic impact fees in 2008 are available for the Caulfield crossing as they are for the Rainier crosstown connector.

When discussed at the last crosstown connector workshop in 2019 preliminary design for the bridge was shown as a single bascule bridge. However, in consultation with engineering consultant, AECOM, the design has been modified to a double-bascule bridge in order to have no material impact on water surface elevations and to meet US Coast Guard requirements for clearance.

In addition to the revised design, the City, in consultation with technical consultants, have completed initial traffic analysis, a floodplain analysis, environmental scoping, and geotechnical analysis.



Figure 6. Example of a double-bascule bridge.

While there has been some initial environmental feasibility analysis conducted on the Southern Crossing, the City has not prepared or certified an environmental document analyzing the full environmental impacts in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act. As the Southern Crossing crosses jurisdiction of the US Coast Guard, the project will require environmental analysis under both the state CEQA statute and under the federal National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). The US Coast Guard is anticipated to be the lead federal agency, while the City would be the lead agency for the CEQA review.

Current plans for the Caulfield Bridge/Southern Crossing are at an approximately 10% design level. Two alternatives have been explored for the double-bascule bridge, including a preferred alternative with a Class I separated bike/ped path on either side of the two vehicular lanes.

The City has the necessary right of way dedicated on both sides of the Petaluma River to facilitate the proposed alignment of the Southern Crossing. No additional right of way dedication is needed.

The Southern Crossing is anticipated to be funded via the collected TIF funds. The most recent cost estimate for the project is \$47 million (preferred alternative with Class I bike/ped accommodation).

Crosstown Mobility Analysis

Staff worked in consultation with Fehr & Peers to evaluate both existing and proposed crosstown connectors through the lens of performance criteria related to Climate, Accessibility, and Health and Safety, as discussed in greater detail below.

Climate

The City of Petaluma adopted a *Climate Emergency Framework* and *SB 743 Vehicle Miles Traveled Implementation Guidelines* in 2021. The former identifies several goals related to reducing VMT while the latter identified that a transportation project would have a significant impact on the environment if it induced travel and an increase in citywide VMT.

The Sonoma County Transportation Authority travel model (SCTA model) was used to evaluate the effect that crosstown connectors would have on VMT, and vehicle traffic patterns related to the construction of either/both Rainier and Caulfield.

The SCTA model VMT results were then compared to the latest guidance provided by Caltrans and the State of California about the effect of new roadway capacity on induced demand for different roadway types.

Accessibility

Accessibility generally measures the length of trips for people to reach destinations and the overall connectivity of the transportation network. This analysis evaluated the effect of the different crosstown connectors on accessibility for people walking, bicycling, and driving as follows:

Walk and Bike – Accessibility maps were prepared for each of the crosstown connectors to illustrate the number of households and employees within a 10-minute (½ mile) and 20-minute (1 mile) walk from the connector. These accessibility maps account for the connectivity of the roadway network and land uses adjacent to the crosstown connectors. Comparing the number of people who live and work adjacent to these connectors illustrates the potential demand if they are connected to a safe and comfortable network on either side.

Automobiles – The latest SCTA model was used to estimate changes to roadway volumes on crosstown connectors, comparing them to previous analyses of travel delay experienced by drivers in an effort to understand the relative effect of the crosstown connectors on people driving.

Transit and Emergency Services – City representatives of transit and emergency services provided input on how future crosstown connectors would affect their services.

Safety and Comfort

Some of the City’s existing connector corridors are identified in the Sonoma County Vision Zero Action Plan (Appendix C) as part of the county’s High Injury Network (HIN). A HIN identifies where collisions (along entire corridors) occur more frequently and are more likely to result in severe injuries or fatalities. Old Redwood Hwy, E Washington, Caulfield, and Lakeville were identified in the Vision Zero Action Plan HIN.

While there are several different methodologies used to identify high-risk locations, the “moving windows” analysis used here is often favored because it allows us to generalize the locations of crashes, while still respecting the fact that locations along corridors tend to share characteristics. Many public agencies use this approach to identify areas to prioritize safety investments.

Level of Traffic Stress maps have been prepared for the City’s Active Transportation Plan update to illustrate barriers to walking and bicycling on or adjacent to the crosstown connectors.

Financial Analysis

The City collects TIF funds based on the scope and type of development. While the fees include an automatic inflationary annual increase, the current fees by land use are as follows:

TRAFFIC DEVELOPMENT IMPACT FEE		
Land Use Type	Fee	Unit of Measurement
Single Family Residential	\$18,656	Unit
Multifamily Residential	\$11,453	Unit
Accessory Dwelling*	\$5,172	Unit
Senior Housing	\$4,986	Unit
Office	\$24,643	1,000 sq ft of building space
Hotel/Motel	\$7,349	Room
Commercial/Shopping	\$36,049	1,000 sq ft of building space
Industrial/Warehouse	\$14,592	1,000 sq ft of building space
Education	\$1,837	Student
Institution	\$7,560	1,000 sq ft of building space
Gas/Service Station	\$60,348	Fuel Position

*Accessory dwelling units less than 750 square feet are exempt from the Traffic Development Impact Fee. For accessory dwelling units exceeding 34% of the square footage of a primary single-family dwelling or 51% of a primary multi-family dwelling, the ADU fees listed here shall apply. Accessory dwelling units not exceeding these thresholds, but over 750 square feet shall be prorated based on the proportion of the ADU size as it relates to the primary dwelling.

TIF fees collected by the City are based on the nexus study that was completed following adoption of the General Plan 2025. These fees are required to be spent on the facilities identified in the nexus study and consistent with the percentages and dollar amounts as outlined below.

Improvement	Net City Cost	New Development Share	Potential Fee Contribution
Rainier Avenue Extension and Interchange – locally preferred alternative	\$89,725,097	100.00%	\$89,725,097
Caulfield Lane Extension	\$54,561,194	100.00%	\$54,561,194
Old Redwood Highway Interchange Improvements	\$2,879,990	100.00%	\$2,879,990
Caulfield Lane/Payran Street Intersection Improvements	\$500,000	100.00%	\$500,000
Petaluma Boulevard/Magnolia Avenue – Payran Street Intersection	\$500,000	100.00%	\$500,000
Construction of New Intersections Throughout the City ¹	\$2,250,000	74.14%	\$1,668,224
Traffic Signal Upgrades Throughout the City ²	\$1,885,000	22.43%	\$422,803
Pedestrian/Bicycle Improvements Throughout the City ³	\$27,389,000	32.78%	\$8,978,853
Transit Improvements Throughout the City ²	\$2,500,000	22.43%	\$560,746
Redevelopment Supplement	\$9,972,739	100.00%	\$9,972,739
SMART Station (350 Parking Spaces) ²	\$10,500,000	22.43%	\$2,355,134
Administration Costs ⁴	--	--	\$1,278,262
Total	\$202,663,020	--	\$173,403,042

There is a current balance of \$32.7 million in the City’s TIF fund. Historically, this fund has increased by approximately \$2 million per year from new development. However, there is a high variable in this annual influx based on new development and overall market conditions.

The TIF program provides funding to achieve the City’s goal of maintaining existing traffic service levels and providing traffic facilities to mitigate the traffic impacts of new development within the City. This is consistent with the land use and transportation policies of the General Plan, by developing an overall transportation system that will accommodate the City’s expected future traffic demand and accommodate the needs generated by future development.

Eligible costs include design, engineering, studies, right-of-way & land acquisition, and construction of the “Facilities,” as well as reimbursements and administration of the program.

The Southern Crossing and the Rainier Crosstown Connector represent the two largest projects within the TIF program based upon preliminary estimates. The Southern Crossing is estimated at \$43.1 million with a construction start in 2025/2026. The preferred alternative that includes separated Class I bike lanes would increase the project budget by approximately 7% for a total of \$47 million.

The estimated project cost for Rainier Crosstown connector is approximately \$92.3 million based on a projected construction start in 2028. This is an increased estimate from the previous project budget of \$79.4 million.

Note that 100% of the TIF can be used on both or either the Southern Crossing and the Rainier Crosstown. Based upon Council direction, staff would explore the possibility of securing additional funding sources to leverage the TIF funds.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

Several workshops and public meetings have been held over the years to discuss crosstown connectors. The connectors have been discussed and approved as part of the General Plan 2025, Council Goals & Priorities, the Traffic Mitigation Fee Program (Fehr & Peers, August 2012; and Addendum 1, May 2016), and other related documents.

Most recently, a workshop was held with Council on September 23, 2019, to discuss updates on the crosstown connectors. This workshop was entitled, “Joining East and West Petaluma – A Workshop About Petaluma’s Crosstown Connectors.” The presentation is available at this link: https://petaluma.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=39&clip_id=2777&meta_id=433703

Project-specific webpages are included on the City’s website, providing project information and updates:

- Caulfield Bridge & Extension: <https://cityofpetaluma.org/caulfield-bridge-and-extension/>
- Rainier Crosstown Connector: <https://cityofpetaluma.org/rainier-crosstown-connector/>
- Rivertrail – 101 Crossing: <https://cityofpetaluma.org/rivertrail-101-crossing/>

An announcement of tonight’s workshop was included in the weekly community update, and this agenda item appeared on the City’s tentative agenda document on October 3, 2022, which was a publicly noticed meeting in compliance with the California Brown Act.

Comprehensive outreach efforts will continue for all crosstown connector projects in an effort to provide our community with opportunities to learn about the projects, share concerns, and ask questions.

Ongoing discussion about crosstown connectors, citywide infrastructure improvements, active transportation, and overall connectivity are all anticipated discussion as part of the General Plan Update process. There has already been considerable community conversation as part of that process about ensuring connectivity for all modes of transportation and a commitment to the City’s goal of carbon neutrality by 2030. Additionally, the development of the Climate Action and Adaptation Plan will focus on aggressive measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, of which transportation is identified as a key contributor.

COUNCIL GOAL ALIGNMENT

Both vehicular and active transportation crosstown connectors relate to several council goals, objectives, and workplan items.

A CITY THAT WORKS FOR EVERYONE

Workplan Item #14: Identify funding options to complete Petaluma’s planned crosstown connectors.

Workplan Item #15: Identify funds and develop a plan to improve Petaluma’s streets and roads.

Workplan Item #18: Establish and improve paths, as useful transportation options, and make walking and biking easy, fun, and safe.

Workplan Item #20: Better integrate multi-modal transportation with street designs.

Workplan Item #26: Update the City’s Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and realize opportunities for crosstown connections for all modes of transportation.

A SAFE COMMUNITY THAT THRIVES

Workplan Item #93: Create and promote multi-cultural and multi-generational recreation and wellness programs that support community connection, physical well-being, and opportunities for play. Focus on public health in planning processes—including air quality, walkability, and childcare incorporated into larger developments, including revisiting zoning around sensitive receptors (e.g., schools, health care facilities).

With regard to the active transportation components of each and every crosstown connector facility, safety is paramount. Staff is working to develop a strategy for “Safe Mobility and Community Connectivity,” further demonstrating Council’s commitment to safe streets in the City’s CIP as it relates to Vision Zero and implementation of myriad active transportation elements, traffic calming, ADA accessibility, trails, sidewalks, etc.

CLIMATE ACTION/SUSTAINABILITY EFFORTS

In 2019, the City Council adopted a climate crisis resolution (Resolution No. 2019-055) acknowledging issues of climate change and placing sustainable practices as a primary City goal. On January 11, 2021, at a joint meeting of the City Council and the Climate Action Commission, the City Council adopted the Climate Emergency Framework. The Framework guides the City’s ongoing response to and discussion about the climate crisis and establishes 2030 as the City’s goal for achieving carbon neutrality. Along with the Climate Emergency Framework, the Climate Action Commission identified 15 potential priority climate actions for the City Council’s future consideration. Priority Action No. 5 states:

“Adopt a VMT policy that is consistent with the 2030 carbon neutrality goal. In order to meet these targets, prepare policy recommendations for rapidly implementing alternative clean, safe, accessible, and affordable and active and public transportation modes to meet the rising community need for climate-friendly transportation.”

Steps were subsequently taken to transition to a VMT metric as directed by SB 743, which aligns with the City’s climate action goals. Managing our community’s transportation system to minimize VMT contributes directly and indirectly to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The legislative intent of SB 743 is to “more appropriately balance the needs of congestion management with statewide goals related to infill development, promotion of public health through active transportation, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions.”

Analysis has been underway to identify how and to what extent the two proposed crosstown connectors impact VMT. Results of this analysis indicate that building either or both Caulfield and Rainier will have negligible impacts in reducing VMT.

As such, it is clear that a primary strategy for mitigating climate impacts involves a heavy focus on enhancing the City’s existing crosstown connector facilities and ensuring that new facilities are designed to encourage walking and biking throughout our community. This helps reduce vehicle trips and associated greenhouse gas emissions. All proposed improvements discussed in this workshop further our goals of enhancing safety, improving pedestrian crossings, and installing bicycle facilities, sidewalks, and ADA-compliant curb ramps. Additionally, improving transit services and supporting facilities would be an important component of any and all crosstown connector projects.

In conclusion, a significant financial investment is needed to build out the City’s bicycle and pedestrian network and to improve its crosstown connectors. But these efforts are critically important to realizing a meaningful citywide shift to alternative travel modes, which in turn helps to lower VMT.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The item before the City Council is for presentation and discussion only and no action is to be taken. Therefore, the item as scheduled for October 10, 2022, is not a "project" pursuant to Section 15378 of the CEQA Guidelines.

Further CEQA analysis will occur for any future discretionary projects arising from the workshop.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

There will be no financial impacts in conjunction with this workshop discussion. The financial impacts resulting from any guidance or recommended actions will be brought to Council in the future for consideration and authorization.

ALTERNATIVES

This workshop presents information in an effort to seek guidance and direction on the next steps for staff. Council could choose to accept the information and not provide direction to staff, in which case efforts to explore new connector options would be paused. Improvements to existing crosstown connectors would continue only to the extent outlined in the FY22/23 budget, and/or as otherwise approved by the Council.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Presentation slideshow, entitled “Crosstown Connectors: Exploring Options for Enhancing Community Mobility, Safety, and Connectedness.” (To be uploaded on Friday, October 7, 2022)