

REPORT

To the Honorable Mayor and City Council From Council Member Barbara Pierce and the City Manager

January 12, 2009

SUBJECT

Formation of a Complete Streets Advisory Committee to address mobility issues, with an emphasis on traditionally under-represented users

RECOMMENDATION

Approve by motion the formation of a Redwood City Complete Streets Advisory Committee (Advisory Committee) to increase safe mobility for the Redwood City community with an emphasis on traditionally under-represented users such as bicyclists and pedestrians, choose one of the two proposed levels of scope and duties, and provide direction for next steps.

1. Level 1: basic scope
2. Level 2: broader scope

BACKGROUND

In 2006 Redwood City formed a pilot *Community Working Group on Bicycle and Pedestrian Issues* (Working Group) to help meet community bicycle and pedestrian needs by:

- bringing a renewed focus to issues involving local bicycle and pedestrian interests
- reviewing and working on a variety of bicycle- and pedestrian-related topics
- bringing a new base of knowledge, background, experience, and passion to the City's work on bicycle and pedestrian issues

As the Working Group neared the end of its 18–24 month pilot program in April 2008, Council appointed a three-person study team (Council Member Barbara Pierce, Working Group Member Billy James, and staff member Susan Wheeler) to research best management practices of successful bike/ped committees and programs, and to recommend the format, scope, and responsibilities of a formal committee, including tasks that would fall outside the committee's scope. Council also asked for additional information about what other cities are doing, and for information relating to the costs and benefits of a Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee (BPAC).

The study team researched information on cities within San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties, as well as other cities throughout the United States known for their excellent bicycle and pedestrian programs. At least 85% of the cities in Santa Clara County have a committee related to bicycle and/or pedestrian issues. In San Mateo County, 65% of towns and cities have bicycle and/or pedestrian committees or utilize a Transportation or Traffic Committee to address bicycle and pedestrian issues. Cities and towns with more rural demographics, such as Los Altos Hills, Morgan Hill, and Saratoga also address equestrian and trails issues. Some towns and cities in San Mateo County rely on support of the City/County Association of Governments' Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee or other organizations for endorsement of proposed grant projects, and they utilize the services of contract grant writers to assist with grant preparation.

Membership in the cities' committees varies greatly, with most consisting entirely or predominantly of community members, and some including City staff or Council members. Some committees meet monthly, others 6-10 times per year, some quarterly, and some as needed.

Redwood City is already implementing and enhancing alternative means of transportation, reducing traffic congestion, and ensuring safe and equal access and mobility for everyone, both drivers and non-drivers alike. The City is in the midst of updating its blueprint for the future, the *New General Plan*, including the Circulation Element that addresses issues of mobility with a focus on balancing the needs of pedestrians, recreational and commute bicyclists, mass transit users, and automobile drivers. Redwood City is planning for additional pedestrian and bicycle access, and has already implemented enhanced mobility in some areas. This aligns well with new California legislation requiring cities and counties to include Complete Streets policies as part of their general plans. Complete Streets are roadways designed and operated to enable safe, attractive, and comfortable access and travel for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit users of all ages and abilities.

The City is actively expanding its network of bicycle paths and lanes, with recent bike lane striping projects completed in Redwood Shores, the Centennial Neighborhood, and Middlefield Road. With considerable input from the Working Group and the community, Redwood City is creating a map of proposed bike lanes and paths as part of its *New General Plan* process. Redwood City is also pursuing more grant funding to support pedestrian and bicycle projects, and an advisory committee could assist with this work.

The study team evaluated and discussed several options for committee scope, duties, and format, and ultimately determined that the appropriate focus for a new committee is a broader "Complete Streets" perspective rather than limiting the scope to bicycle and pedestrian issues. Any discussion pertaining to bike or pedestrian improvements leads naturally to a consideration of the needs of all users of the roadways, including motorists and transit users. The two options, "Bike and Ped" and "Complete Streets", were discussed with both City staff and with members of the Working Group. The consensus is that a "Complete Streets" Advisory Committee is needed. To ensure that a Complete Streets Advisory Committee remains focused on the needs of bicyclists and pedestrians, and that it does not shift toward an emphasis on automobiles and motorists, the description of the committee's scope includes the words "with an emphasis on traditionally under-represented users." There is a future critical need to create less auto-dependent transportation options.

Intent:

An advisory committee can assist the City in meeting its ongoing mobility goals and objectives, since such projects will require several years and continued focus. Committee members who are the daily users of the City's streets and sidewalks provide the additional perspective of what works well and what is needed, and can offer pertinent information such as preferred connections to existing or planned routes, to assist staff in identifying strategic opportunities. In this way an advisory committee can provide added value.

Some cities expressed the concern that their bicycle and pedestrian committees tend to focus primarily or exclusively on bicycle issues, with minimal time spent discussing pedestrian issues. As a result, Redwood City's Advisory Committee will be required to balance the needs of all users, including pedestrians of all abilities and motorists.

The Advisory Committee will focus primarily on policy, to create roadways in Redwood City that enable safe, attractive, and comfortable access and travel for pedestrians, bicyclists, and all users. A secondary focus is to provide staff with recommendations for pragmatic and specific user solutions. A third focus area is to serve as a conduit for community input, such as a request for bicycle detectors at a specific intersection, and to consider these requests and provide recommendations to staff.

Similar to other City boards, committees, and commissions, the Advisory Committee is advisory to City staff. It is intended to be comprised of team players who will respect, consider, and seek to balance the mobility needs of all community members, including motorists. In doing so, the committee will help move Redwood City toward more bike- and ped-friendly choices.

It is intended that the Advisory Committee will provide added value and be a proactive resource for staff, therefore staff may bring significant projects to the group to get its input early in the planning process in order to prevent project delays. A recent example of this is when engineering staff members requested input from the Working Group regarding proposed roadway restriping.

A committee will strengthen the City's position when applying for bike/ped project grants, leading to potential financial savings and enabling bike/ped project opportunities and enhancements that would not otherwise be financially feasible. A notable local example is the recent \$440,000 grant award for design and construction of improvements to Laurel School as part of the Federal Safe Routes to School program. Menlo Park was the lead agency in this multi-jurisdictional project that included the City of Menlo Park, County of San Mateo, Town of Atherton, and the Menlo Park City School District.

A five-member committee structure is recommended, including members with an expressed expertise or interest in recreational bicycling, commute bicycling, pedestrian issues, and issues related to under-represented groups such as school children, seniors, and individuals with mobility constraints.

Meeting structure and selection of members would follow the format of existing Redwood City boards, committees, and commissions. Committee members will be residents of Redwood City, electors, and will be appointed by Council. It is proposed that committee meetings be scheduled on a monthly basis, although meetings may be held less frequently when appropriate as determined by the Committee Chair and City staff.

The proposed scope and duties of the Advisory Committee include the following (for both scopes, the committee is advisory in nature):

Level 1: basic scope:

- Provide general input and assistance related to projects, programs, and surveys, generating ideas and recommending solutions as appropriate
- Serve as a resource to improve pedestrian and bicycle safety throughout Redwood City and provide the pedestrian and bicyclist perspective for staff
- Assist staff in identifying and prioritizing grant projects, and research data and background information for grant applications
- Assist with public education
- Assist with public outreach in support of community workshops and communication, utilizing the committee members' networking connections and contacts

Level 2: broader scope:

- Fulfill all duties and scope outlined in Level 1
- Review bike/ped plans of other jurisdictions, identify and recommend concepts and components most suited to Redwood City, distill the information for staff, and serve as a staff resource for developing a citywide Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and other mobility plans
- Identify opportunities for increasing bike/ped use and mobility, and provide recommendations for consideration by staff, Planning Commission, and City Council
- Review projects for "Complete Streets" criteria as needed. In some cases City staff will bring projects to the Advisory Committee for its review. In other cases the Advisory Committee may ask to review specific projects.
- Serve as a liaison between City staff and relevant pedestrian and bicycle organizations to keep staff advised of current bike/ped issues and opportunities
- Identify and develop possible citywide goals, such as reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled, including methods for measuring and tracking performance to goal

The perspective of bicyclists and pedestrians is extremely important for achieving Redwood City's mobility objectives. The City wants to connect with the users of its sidewalks and streets, in the same way that pedestrians and cyclists want to work with the City to improve mobility. An Advisory Committee will offer an appropriate and structured venue for community members to provide their recommendations in a coordinated and cooperative spirit.

ALTERNATIVES

- Modify the existing Working Group without forming an Advisory Committee
- Discontinue the existing Working Group without forming an Advisory Committee

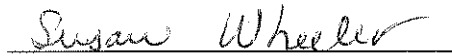
FISCAL IMPACT

Ongoing staff time will be required to support monthly Advisory Committee meetings, at a projected cost of between \$9,000 and \$24,000 per year depending on level of support. It is not anticipated that this will result in new staff or additional time, but rather will be a reallocation of current staff activities. The potential benefit is a more efficient

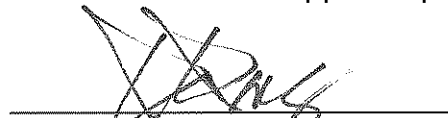
integration of community input, thereby streamlining staff's work with the community as the City becomes more bike- and ped-friendly. Page 5

For both Level 1 and Level 2, support will include a staff member who attends meetings and interfaces with the Committee Chair, and a staff member who attends meetings and prepares meeting packets, agendas, and minutes. The cost of these two staff members is projected to be \$9,000 per year (10 staff hours per month). From time to time additional staff members from Planning or Engineering may attend Level 1 meetings (additional cost) to provide specific technical information. For Level 2, support from technical staff members will likely be required on a regular basis. It is anticipated that a total of four staff members will support the majority of Level 2 committee meetings, at a total projected cost of \$24,000 per year (20 staff hours per month).

These projected cost allocations reflect meeting support only; any project-specific time and expense would be in addition to committee maintenance and support expenses.



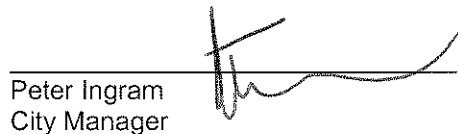
Susan Wheeler
Management Analyst



Chu Chang
Acting Community Development Director



Barbara Pierce
City Council Member



Peter Ingram
City Manager

ATTACHMENTS

None

RELATED DOCUMENTS IN CITY CLERK'S OFFICE

April 14, 2008 staff report and meeting minutes