



Transportation Committee

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEMBERS DATE: APRIL 11, 2019

FROM: PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT WARDS: 3 AND 4

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF TRAFFIC CONTROL ENHANCEMENTS AT VICTORIA AVENUE AND WASHINGTON STREET

ISSUE:

Review and consideration of the recommended traffic control enhancements at the intersection of Victoria Avenue at Washington Street, along with recommendations regarding long-term traffic pattern and land use within the intersection's vicinity.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Transportation Committee:

1. Receive and file information regarding traffic control at the intersection of Victoria Avenue and Washington Street.
2. Direct staff to plan for the construction of traffic control improvements at Victoria Avenue & Washington Street; and
3. Direct staff to further assess traffic patterns and land uses within the Greenbelt as part of the upcoming General Plan Update.

BACKGROUND:

On February 8, 2018, a resident shared a conceptual roundabout layout for the intersection of Victoria Avenue at Washington Street with the Transportation Committee (Committee) during oral communications. On May 10, 2018, the Committee requested that staff analyze the roundabout and traffic signal concepts for Victoria Avenue at Washington Street focusing on traffic operations, safety improvements, and impacts to the footprint of the intersection.

On November 8, 2018, staff presented the requested report to the Committee. The public hearing was well attended by residents who expressed a strong desire to minimize physical changes at the intersection of Victoria Avenue and Washington Street to preserve the historic character of Victoria Avenue. The Committee requested that staff conduct additional neighborhood outreach, and return to the Committee with smaller-scale improvements to alleviate some of the congestion and improve traffic operations without having to install a roundabout or traffic signal.

DISCUSSION:

Historic Victoria Avenue

Victoria Avenue between La Sierra Avenue and Ivy Street is a tree-lined roadway listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is a prominent City Landmark. Its travel lanes are flanked by Mexican Fan Palms, and thousands of 'Ragged Robin' roses. Victoria Avenue was commissioned by Matthew Gage in 1892 to serve as a centerpiece of Riverside's Citrus Belt. The current landscape owes much to the master planning efforts of Riverside landscape Designer Franz Hosp, who oversaw the initial planting and design of Victoria Avenue in the late 1800s. Victoria Avenue is used to this day as a major roadway, with additional amenities for biking and walking, and functions as a linear arboretum- a roadway where residents and visitors alike come to enjoy the colored foliage and flowering of over 20 varieties of median trees. Victoria Avenue benefits from the preservation and beautification efforts of Victoria Avenue Forever (VAF), a nonprofit organization whose members contribute time and finances to ensure the ongoing well-being of Victoria Avenue in partnership with the City of Riverside. VAF has established an endowment fund as part of their preservation efforts, dedicated the Rosanna Scott Memorial Bike Trail, and has planted over 1400 trees and thousands of roses.



Figure 1: Ragged Robin Rose, Image Courtesy of VAF

Neighborhood Outreach & Alternative Development

On December 6, 2018, the Traffic Engineering Division hosted a meeting with community leaders, including representatives from Victoria Avenue Forever to discuss potential small scale improvements within the intersection. Residents and City staff discussed opportunities to improve traffic operations and safety at Victoria Avenue & Washington Street.

Through a collaborative design and discussion process, the team arrived at an acceptable preliminary design solution and identified a set of priorities for the intersection. Priorities for Victoria Avenue and Washington Street include:

- Easing congestion for local traffic while discouraging cut-through traffic
- Expanding pedestrian and bicycle safety
- Preserving dedicated trees and vegetation where possible
- Highlighting Victoria Avenue's historic nature

Residents expressed additional concerns with general traffic patterns throughout the Greenbelt – citing an increase in cut-through and heavy vehicle traffic along collector and local roadways. Residents expressed the desire to have a broader discussion regarding land use in the Greenbelt, a lack of transit amenities for students, and the status of Overlook Parkway. Staff recommended that far-reaching transportation and land use concerns should be examined and addressed as part of the upcoming General Plan Update, and committed to memorializing the residents' requests through this Committee report.

Specific enhancements for the Victoria Avenue at Washington Street identified at the December 6, 2018 meeting include:

- High visibility crosswalk across the north leg of the intersection
- High visibility green bicycle 'conflict zone' striping at the eastbound approach
- Provide signage advising motorists they are approaching historic Victoria Avenue
- Construct a dedicated right hand turn and merging lane, primarily widening southbound Washington Street within the public right of way, to reduce delays for motorists on Victoria Avenue

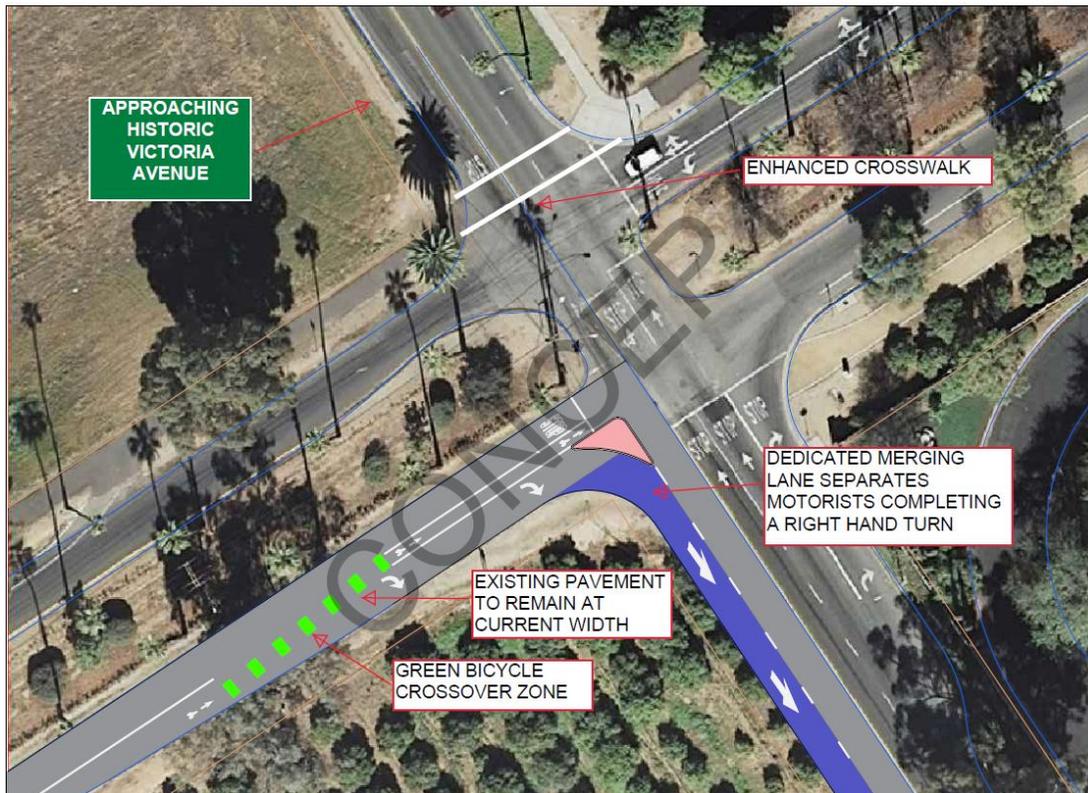
An image of the shared visioning whiteboard is shown below and included in the attached meeting minutes (Attachment 1). Staff committed to further assess the operational characteristics of the proposed design, furnishing the residents with a more refined concept illustration, and a field meeting to review design challenges and opportunities.



Figure 2: Shared concept development for Victoria Ave at Washington St

Concept Design and Field Meeting

On January 25, 2019, the team met at the Ysmael Villegas Community Center to review the refined concept illustration that had been developed and assessed by staff (Figure 3). Residents shared reservations regarding the raised pork-chop median separating the proposed dedicated right-turn and thru travel lanes. Due to resident concerns, staff committed to implementing the improvements as a striped median and omitting the physical raised curb. The final length of the turning / merging lane will be dependent on measured departure speeds at the Victoria Avenue at Washington Street intersection, but will not exceed several hundred feet.



POTENTIAL WIDENING OF WASHINGTON TO ACCOMMODATE MERGING LANE
Figure 3: Refined Concept Illustration for Victoria Ave at Washington St, new pavement shown in blue.

Following review at the Community Center, the team headed into the field to review the presence of potential vegetation and impediments to the design proposal. Per the recommendations, Victoria Avenue would not need to be widened to accommodate the proposed design, although the southwest corner would have to be reconfigured. The team identified several small citrus trees requiring removal along Washington Street, but representatives from Victoria Avenue Forever indicated that the trees are in poor health and supported their removal. Several utility poles may require relocation as part of the final design and the work will be consulted with Riverside Public Utilities and completed by the contractor. Washington Street south of Victoria Avenue is identified as a 4 lane arterial in the General Plan Circulation Element; the proposed widening to a 4 lane cross section to accommodate a merging lane would not exceed that designation.



Figure 4: Team members commemorate the field visit with a photos (Shown right to left: Sally Mazzetti, Bill Wilkman, Darleen DeMason, Staff representative Nathan Mustafa)

Conclusions

The construction of an eastbound dedicated right-turn, southbound merging lane, and minor street widening on the westerly side of Washington Street is anticipated to cost between \$40,000 - \$50,000. The project would reduce intersection delay, improve traffic operations, reduce vehicle conflicts, reduce emissions, and improve level of service for motorists especially during peak travel times. If said improvements are supported by the Committee and the community, the Public Works Department would recommend programming them in an upcoming capital improvement program (CIP) budget.

Additional minor improvements including the green bicycle conflict zone striping, high visibility crosswalk, and warning & regulatory signage are anticipated to cost \$5,000. The Public Works Department recommends that these improvements be installed in the near future, as they can be readily completed by City forces.

Additional traffic control measures, such as the previously considered roundabout and traffic signal are not recommended as they may encourage cut-through traffic, increase impacts to the intersection, and would disrupt the historic nature of Victoria Avenue. Staff will monitor increases to intersection delay, accidents, and traffic volumes, as a traffic signal system or other improvements may warrant future consideration. Staff additionally recommends that a broad assessment of traffic and development patterns occurs as part of the General Plan Update and that residents are engaged throughout the process.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The cost to complete the recommended 'green conflict zone', high visibility crosswalk, and necessary signage is estimated at \$5,000. Sufficient funds are available in the Public Works account 4110100-424142.

The minor roadway widening project is anticipated to cost \$40,000 - \$50,000 and staff recommends that this be considered in the next CIP budget process.

Prepared by: Kris Martinez, Public Works Director
Certified as to
Availability of funds: Edward Enriquez, Chief Financial Officer/Treasurer
Approved by: Rafael Guzman, Assistant City Manager
Approved as to form: Gary G. Geuss, City Attorney

Attachments:

1. Victoria & Washington Resident Meeting Minutes
2. Victoria & Washington Traffic Control Concepts
3. Victoria Avenue Forever Newsletter
4. Presentation