SUMMARY

The City Council reviewed the current draft version of the Solano Avenue Complete Streets Study at the May 20, 2019 and requested that the matter be agendized for future discussion to provide document refinement.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Council accept the draft study with City Council directed refinements and direct staff to prepare a final study.

BACKGROUND

The City received a grant from Caltrans for the preparation of the Solano Avenue Complete Streets Study. The complete streets study area includes Solano Avenue from the Masonic Avenue intersection to the City limit line beyond Ventura Avenue.

The Solano Avenue Complete Streets Study is intended to serve as an urban design document that provides guidance for future improvements and infrastructure upgrades in the study area from Masonic Avenue to Tulare. The portion of Solano Avenue from San Pablo Avenue to Masonic Avenue was previously upgraded in 1998 and included utility undergrounding, sidewalk widening, bulb outs, consistent street signage, public furniture and consistent street lighting. The current effort is intended to assess existing conditions and include recommendations for physical changes to the street, safety improvements and placemaking.

The draft Study includes detailed recommendations for physical changes to the street, sidewalks, and intersections that support all users. The draft Study as it is currently written includes consideration and refinement to street lighting, intersection alignments, signal modernization, sidewalk improvements, streetscape landscaping, street parking, bus stops, storm water systems, and underground utilities. The incorporation of public art, directional
signage, and gateway improvements are included the draft Study. The Study includes improvements to intersections where north-south bicycle routes cross through the study area.

The Study is conceptual and if accepted, would be implemented as part of the Capital Improvements Program (CIP). Once in the CIP, the recommendations would become projects and more detailed engineering designs would be prepared.

**DISCUSSION**

The goals of the Study include:

- Improve safety for all users;
- Enhance access;
- Promote a cohesive streetscape; and
- Support local economic activity.

The preliminary recommendations in the draft study as well as advisory body recommendations are listed below. Each recommendation includes pros and cons for the Council to consider in their evaluation. Staff recommends that the Council review each of the elements and provide specific feedback to either keep, omit or refine the proposed corridor recommendations.

**A. SAFETY & ACCESSIBILITY**

1. **Expanded Bulb Outs at Intersections**

   **PROS:** Already exists on lower Solano Avenue, slows vehicle traffic by narrowing traffic lanes, slows down vehicles turning on Solano Avenue from side streets, improves pedestrian safety by shortening pedestrian crossings, can be programmed with placemaking elements including benches, landscaping, parklets, and public art.

   **CONS:** Creates a narrow point for cyclists riding on Solano Avenue. Can be difficult for large trucks to make right turns.

2. **High Visibility Crosswalks at Intersections**

   **PROS:** Improves pedestrian safety by making pedestrian crossings more visible.

   **CONS:** None.
3. **Bus Stop Consolidation**

   **PROS:** Preferred by AC Transit. Fewer stops creates greater efficiency in the route and improved service. Reclaimed curb space can be used for parking, green infrastructure, streetscape improvements.

   **CONS:** Longer walk for small number of transit users.

4. **Pedestrian Refuge Islands**

   **PROS:** Slows vehicle traffic, creates safer pedestrian conditions.

   **CONS:** Permanent physical installation in the road, may be problematic for the Solano Stroll parade. May impact large truck maneuvering.

5. **New Streetlights**

   **PROS:** Improves bicycle and pedestrian safety crossing Solano Avenue. Improves visibility of businesses along Solano Avenue.

   **CONS:** None.

6. **Bicycle and Pedestrian Activated Flashing Beacons RRFB at the Solano & Curtis Street and Solano & Peralta Avenue intersections**

   **PROS:** Improves bicycle and pedestrian safety crossing Solano Avenue. Implements current bicycle network.

   **CONS:** None.

7. **One-way eastbound bicycle facility on Solano Avenue (as recommend by Traffic & Safety Commission)**

   **PROS:** Safety improvement for eastbound bicyclists.

   **CONS:** Westbound bicycle facility remains a high stress bike route. Does not integrate into current and planned bicycle facility network.

8. **Two-way bicycle facility on Solano Avenue**

   **PROS:** Safety improvement for both eastbound and westbound bicyclists.

   **CONS:** Reduction in street parking. Does not integrate into current and planned bicycle facility network.
B. STREETSCAPE AMENITIES

9. Public Art Including Murals and Green Walls

**PROS:** Creates placemaking in the corridor, makes art accessible to the public at large.

**CONS:** None.

10. Upgraded Street Furniture

**PROS:** Creates placemaking in the corridor, makes art accessible to the public at large.

**CONS:** None.

11. Design Palette for Streetscape Improvements

**PROS:** Provides recommendations for corridor enhancement, beautification, and improved user experience.

**CONS:** None.

C. CURBSIDE USES

12. Back-In Angle Parking Demonstration Project

**PROS:** Provides motorists with an unobstructed view when pulling out. Demonstration project will allow data to be collected on effectiveness and popularity of back-in parking.

**CONS:** Some motorists are uncomfortable with back-in parking maneuver.

13. Proposed Flex Parking Space

**PROS:** Location for bike parking, micro-mobility devices, parklets, etc.

**CONS:** Space not available for regular motor vehicle parking or green infrastructure.
14. Proposed Loading and Unloading Zones

**PROS:** Safer alternative to using red zones, bus stop zones, or blocking travel lane.

**CONS:** Space not available for regular motor vehicle parking or green infrastructure.

15. Key Route and Solano Intersection Realignment

**PROS:** Creates a new public space in a central location. Improves pedestrian safety along Solano Avenue. The concept has widespread preliminary support.

**CONS:** None.

16. Tacoma and Solano Intersection Realignment

**PROS:** Simplifies intersection configuration. Reduced length of pedestrian crossing. Improves sightlines for motor vehicle drivers. Received preliminary support from the City of Berkeley Transportation Division staff.

**CONS:** None.

D. **STORMWATER MANAGEMENT**

17. Proposed Rain Garden Opportunities

**PROS:** Improves creek and San Francisco Bay water quality.

**CONS:** Reduces area for pedestrian, streetscape elements, or bicycle parking.

18. Valley Gutters Between Travel Lane and Parking Area

**PROS:** Improves storm water flows. Promotes green infrastructure, helps divert stormwater runoff, critical for pavement delineation.

**CONS:** Can create hazards for cyclists. Can result in surface flow of storm water that may affect people entering or exiting parked vehicles.
19. **Paving Materials/Parking Area Pavers**

**PROS:** Demarcates pedestrian areas and vehicle zones, visually narrows the street, slip resistant, permeable pavers allow water percolation promoting green infrastructure.

**CONS:** Long term maintenance is unknown, pavers can shift, may have an effect on wheel accessibility.

**Other Corridor Improvement Recommendations**

Though not discussed in specific detail in this staff report, there are other recommendations within the draft Study that are intended to enhance safety within the Study Area.

- Lighting
- Truncated Domes
- Plazas
- Bus Stop Enhancements
- Bike Racks
- Rain Gardens
- Site Furnishings
- Trash Cans/Compost Bins
- Street Trees & Plantings
- Water Bottle Filling Stations
- Buslet & Parklet
- Outdoor Dining

**BICYCLE FACILITIES**

Throughout the Study preparation and Council review, bicycle facilities have been discussed and different ideas proposed for the study area. Solano Avenue is a truck and bus route. The Study currently includes a recommendation for a rectangular rapid flashing beacon (RRFB) at Curtis & Solano Avenue as well as Peralta & Solano Avenue and also provides for flex space for bike corrals.

Back-in angle parking was discussed by the full City Council on November 19, 2018. At that time, the Council directed that the Study proceed on schedule and that a long-term demonstration of back-in angle parking be pursued at a future date.

The Traffic & Safety Commission as part of their review recommended inclusion of an alternative design that includes a one-way east bound (uphill) cycle track on the south side of Solano Avenue and downhill sharrows with parallel parking on the north side the street.

The Council discussed bicycle facilities as part of the most recent review on May 20, 2019. The Council was divided on the Traffic & Safety Commission recommendation, with some
Councilmembers expressing an interest in deferring the matter to the Active Transportation Plan update. At the conclusion of the meeting, the Council deferred the issue of bicycle facilities in the Solano Avenue Complete Streets Study to a future discussion.

**SUSTAINABILITY**

The draft study is consistent with the following Climate Action Plan policies:

- Measure TL 1.3 “Evaluate the community’s walking infrastructure, identify potential barriers, and implement improvements.”
- Measure Tl 3.2 “Update Planning documents to promote high quality, mixed-use, pedestrian and transit-oriented development in the San Pablo/Solano Commercial District.”

**FINANCIAL IMPACT**

The Caltrans grant award is $178,199. This amount covers the costs incurred for LGC and Toole Design Group services. A local match was also a requirement of the grant in the amount of $23,088. City costs for staff time on the project have served as the local match for this grant. To date, consultant costs for the study preparation, engagement, workshop, pop up event and supplemental memo have cost $184,953.04 through March 2019. Caltrans has reimbursed the City for $164,291. The final study is a deliverable for reimbursement by Caltrans of the final invoice from the City. Additional work since surpassing the grant amount in March 2019 and any future consultant work will not be reimbursed and will be at the City’s expense. If the study were to be accepted as presented, there would be no additional immediate costs incurred and would allow the City to close out the grant with Caltrans. Per the grant agreement, the grant expires on February 28, 2020.

**Attachments**
1. Flowerland Shopper Data Letter
2. Sunset Magazine August 2018 Albany profile