

SANTA BARBARA COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION

Staff Report for the Los Alamos Pedestrian Circulation and Parking Plan

Hearing Date: November 12, 2014

Staff Report Date: October 23, 2014

Case No.: Not applicable

Deputy Director: Matt Schneider

Division: Long Range Planning

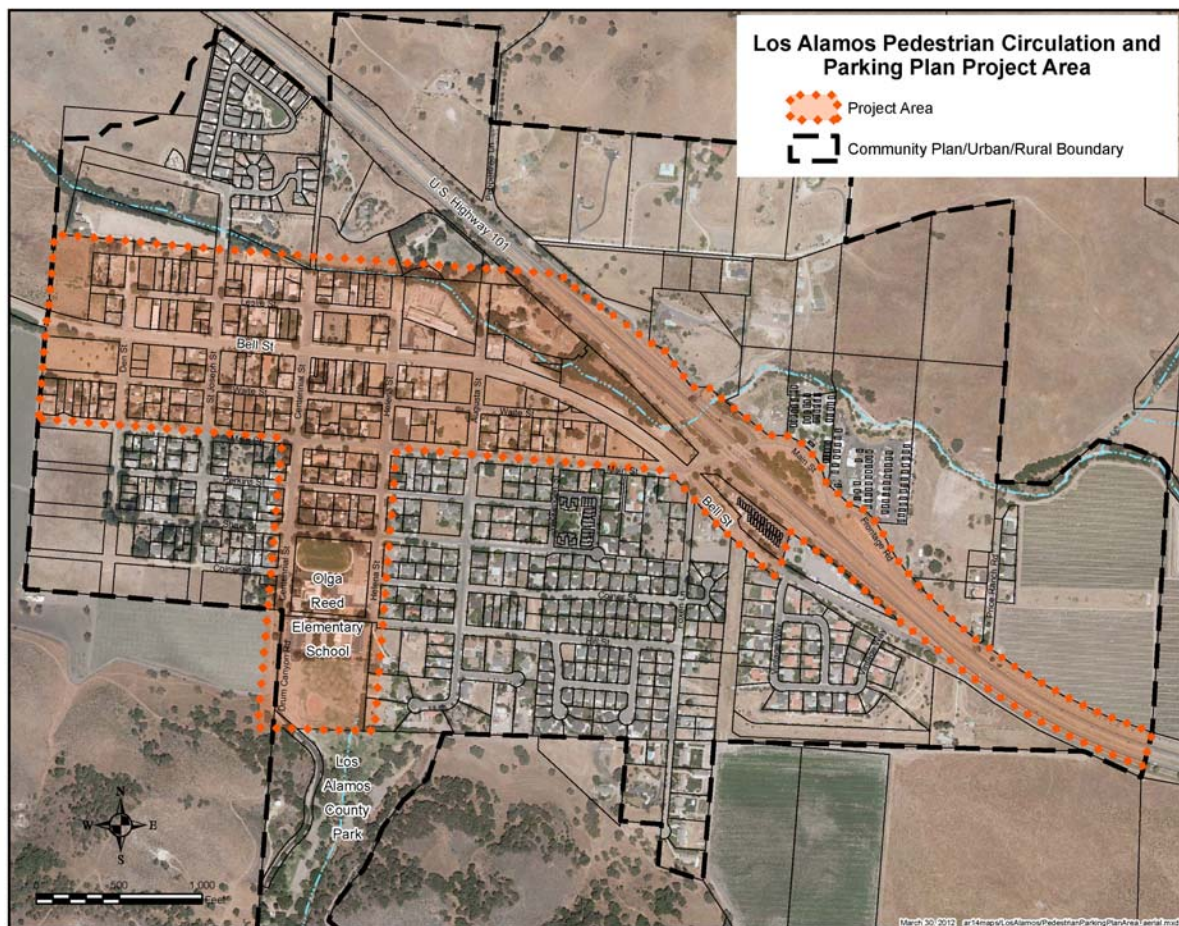
Supervising Planner: Allen Bell

Supervising Planner Phone #: 568-2056

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Environmental Document: CEQA Exemption §15262

Planner's Phone #: 568-3518



1.0 REQUEST

Hearing on the request of the Planning and Development Department to consider recommending that the Board of Supervisors receive and refer to County Public Works Department the Draft Los Alamos Pedestrian Circulation and Parking Plan for inclusion in the Capital Improvement Program; and determine the project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15262.

The project involves public roads located in the Los Alamos Plan Area, Third Supervisorial District.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION AND PROCEDURES

Your Commission's motion should include the following:

1. Recommend that the Board of Supervisors determine the project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15262, included as Attachment A; and
2. Recommend that the Board of Supervisors receive and refer to County Public Works Department the Los Alamos Pedestrian Circulation and Parking Plan, included as Attachment B.

3.0 JURISDICTION

This project is being considered by the County Planning Commission for review, comment, and recommendation prior to consideration by the Board of Supervisors as the Draft Los Alamos Pedestrian Circulation and Parking Plan (Circulation Plan) pertains to transportation planning issues. Specifically, Section 2-25.2(b)(3) of the Santa Barbara County Code states:

... the following shall remain within the jurisdiction of the county planning commission ... consideration and recommendations or decisions on ... matters involving countywide transportation ...

Neither the California State Government Code nor the County Code requires that the Planning Commission or the Board of Supervisors take action on this matter. However, referral of the Circulation Plan to the Public Works Department for inclusion in the County's Five-Year Capital Improvement Program would strengthen funding options for future implementation of the concept plans included in the Circulation Plan.

4.0 PROJECT INFORMATION

4.1 Introduction

The town of Los Alamos is an unincorporated community of 1,890 residents and is surrounded by agricultural land. U.S. Highway 101 and State Route 135 are the main transportation corridors through the town. State Route 135 becomes Bell Street where it traverses Los Alamos and is considered the "main street," supporting antique stores, art galleries, a post office, convenience markets, wine tasting rooms, restaurants, hotels, and gas stations. There is one K-8 grade school in town, Olga Reed Elementary School. High school students commute approximately 15 miles north to attend schools in the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District.

In 2012, Caltrans awarded Santa Barbara County Planning and Development Department, Long Range Planning Division an Environmental Justice grant for the Circulation Plan (\$112,750). Santa Barbara County Association of Governments (SBCAG) provided matching grant funds from Measure A, the Bicycle and Pedestrian and Safe Routes to School program (\$35,000). In

part, the grants were used to hire a transportation consultant (Alta Planning and Design). In addition, County Public Works Transportation Division staff provided critical technical and planning assistance throughout all phases of the project.

The Circulation Plan is a community-driven effort to create concept plans for a safe transportation network connecting neighborhoods to downtown, supporting downtown revitalization, and providing safer walking and bicycling routes to Olga Reed Elementary School. Pursuant to the Caltrans Environmental Justice and Community-Based Transportation Planning Grant Handbook, the County's scope of work must not include environmental, complex design, or engineering work. Thus, the County only prepared concept plans. Engineering, traffic studies, and environmental review will occur in the future. Because the Circulation Plan only provides concept plans for possible future actions, the Board of Supervisors is not required to adopt or fund it at this time. The Circulation Plan does not commit the County to any final course of action, nor does it commit any funds to implement the concept plans. Thus, the project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15262 of the State CEQA Guidelines (Attachment A). County Public Works will conduct environmental review as proposed improvements are adopted and/or funded.

The Circulation Plan is comprised of concept plans with priorities identified for future funding and implementation. Based on results of extensive community surveys and two public workshops, County staff and the Los Alamos Planning Advisory Committee (LAPAC) worked with consultants (Alta Planning and Design) to prepare the concept plans. Caltrans and County Public Works staff reviewed the concept plans for general consistency with engineering standards. The Project Report for the Circulation Plan details the existing setting and public outreach process, and includes concept plans, cost estimates, funding options, and phasing recommendations (Attachment B).

4.2 Background

The Circulation Plan implements the following Actions from the 2011 Los Alamos Community Plan and complements the Community Mixed Use – Los Alamos (CM-LA) zone district and the Los Alamos Bell Street Design Guidelines (Design Guidelines).

- **Action LUC-LA-3.1:** *The County Public Works Department shall work with Caltrans to develop a plan for installing improvements on Bell Street which would enhance the streetscape as well as enhance pedestrian safety. Improvements should include amenities such as wide sidewalks, crosswalks, street lighting, street trees, furniture, landscape planters, and traffic calming measures.*
- **Action CIRC-LA-1.4.1:** *The County Planning and Development and Public Works Departments shall prepare a Pedestrian Circulation Plan for the CM-LA zone district which provides for a safe and efficient circulation system which meets legal mandates for accessibility, and reinforces the community's informal, rural character.*

- **Action CIRC-LA-1.2.3:** *The County shall work with Caltrans to design, fund, install, and maintain safe aesthetically pleasing pedestrian walkways and bicycle lanes linking residential and commercial uses in Los Alamos, including uses located east of Highway 101, with downtown Los Alamos and Bell Street.*

4.3 Project Components Summary

The overarching project goal was to conduct extensive public outreach to develop a community-based concept pedestrian circulation and parking plan. The main project components included project initiation and administration, stakeholder outreach and public meetings, and preparation of concept plans. Details about these components are provided below.

4.4 Stakeholder Outreach

The first task under this component included a “Design Your Street” poster contest for students at Olga Reed Elementary School. Video taken at the school for the poster contest was used to produce a CSBTV bilingual public service announcement about the project. Outreach also included development of a project webpage, English and Spanish-language flyers distributed to area businesses and the Los Alamos Post Office, postcard mailings, webpage and Facebook postings, and email notices to Los Alamos residents and other interested parties. Three community surveys were prepared and the results were compiled and shared at public workshops. Finally, special outreach and informational materials were provided to commuters and Ernest Righetti high school students who assisted with the first public workshop.

4.5 Public Meetings

Public meetings included two public workshops, a Central Board of Architectural Review (CBAR) meeting, and two LAPAC meetings. The first public workshop in March 2014 resulted in participants agreeing on a few focused improvement areas as follows:

- Bell Street/State Route 135: traffic needs to be slowed, more crosswalks are needed, and sidewalks should be finished.
- U.S. 101 Underpass: sidewalks and lighting should be installed.

At the second public workshop in May 2014, the project team presented exhibits of focused project concepts and options with cost estimates. Workshop participants were asked to select their top three priority project concepts.

Following the two public workshops, the concept plans were presented to the CBAR for a courtesy review. The CBAR provided comments that generally supported community preferences (Attachment C). Finally, the two LAPAC meetings were held in July 2014, and September 2014. The planning process included preparation of draft concept street sections, designs, and renderings for public input. The LAPAC reviewed options for bike lanes,

crosswalks, angled parking, and other features and made recommendations on style, location, and priorities that were folded into the Circulation Plan.

4.6 Los Alamos Pedestrian Circulation and Parking Plan

The Circulation Plan provides concept plans for future street improvements in Los Alamos. These improvements will provide safer routes to school for the town's children and will support and sustain a vibrant and walkable downtown by planning for adequate parking for residents and visitors. The Circulation Plan lays out a vision of what potential street improvements could look like.

4.7 Key Improvements

The LAPAC and the community identified several key improvements as the highest priority to improve pedestrian and cyclist safety over the short term. These include improvements at the U.S. 101 undercrossing and along Bell Street in the town center. The full list of recommended improvements is included in the Circulation Plan.

U.S. 101 Undercrossing Short-Term Recommendations

- Install a barrier on the north side of undercrossing to protect pedestrians and cyclists;
- Stripe bike lanes in each direction;
- Install lighting on the underside of the overpass;
- Paint standard crosswalk across Bell Street at Main Street.

Bell Street (downtown) Short-Term Recommendations

- Paint standard crosswalks across Bell Street at each intersection;
- Stripe bike lanes on each side of Bell Street to narrow travel lanes.

Centennial Street (downtown) Short-Term Recommendations

- Formalize on-street parking near the southeast corner of Bell;
- Paint standard crosswalk at Bell Street.

Key long-term recommendations were also identified to further improve safety as well as to provide better aesthetics consistent with the community character.

U.S. 101 Undercrossing Long-Term Recommendations

- Construct curbed sidewalks;
- Paint standard crosswalks at intersections with the on/off ramps.

Bell Street (downtown) Long-Term Recommendations

- Construct interlocking paver crosswalks across Bell Street at St. Joseph, Centennial, and Helena streets;
- Stripe bike lanes and add integrally colored asphalt buffer between bike lane and street-side parking;

- Add curb extensions on Bell Street only (not on side streets) at St. Joseph, Centennial and Helena streets.

Centennial Street (downtown) Long-Term Recommendations

- Create central angled parking and landscape area south of the flagpole;
- Formalize walkways leading to Bell Street;
- Formalize parking north of Bell Street.

4.8 Implementation

Additional steps will be required to implement the Circulation Plan. County Public Works Transportation Division played an important role in preparing the Circulation Plan. It will also take a lead role in implementing the plan. Upon your Commission's recommendation, in early 2015, the Board of Supervisors will receive and refer the Circulation Plan to County Public Works Transportation Division for incorporation into the County's Capital Improvement Program. Implementation of specific projects in Los Alamos will occur balanced with other County transportation project priorities.

The County will seek grants and other funding sources to construct and otherwise complete the identified improvements considering the priorities laid out in the Circulation Plan along with competing priorities in the County overall. The majority of improvements will occur within the rights-of-way of U.S. 101 and SR 135 (Bell Street), which will require coordination with, and permits from, Caltrans. Implementation will require several steps to move the concept plans forward to the point of construction. These next steps include, but are not limited to:

- Formal survey of the road right-of-way, where required;
- Traffic and parking studies, where applicable;
- Preliminary design engineering;
- Full environmental review pursuant to CEQA;
- Permits and/or rights-of-way; and
- Final design engineering, often known as PSE (Plans, Specifications and Estimates).

In addition, the final selection of materials and styles for each improvement will depend on the funds available and the conditions at the time of implementation.

Implementation of the Circulation Plan will occur as funds become available with the goal of first moving forward with the community's highest priority projects presented in the Circulation Plan. However, in certain circumstances it may be simple and cost effective to implement short-term priority projects. For example, painting standard striped parallel crosswalks across Bell Street at Centennial, St. Joseph, and Helena streets would improve pedestrian safety until such time as funding becomes available to construct crosswalks with pavers or other attractive pavements in a style consistent with the town's rural, western character. Thus, the short-term and long-term priorities, as laid out by the Circulation Plan, provide the blueprint for taking action in the future.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Notice of Exemption
- B. Draft Los Alamos Pedestrian Circulation and Parking Plan (copy available at http://longrange.sbcountyplanning.org/planareas/losalamos/los_alamos_circplan.php)
- C. CBAR Minutes Comments

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