



CITY OF COSTA MESA

77 Fair Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

Agenda Report

File #: 25-375

Meeting Date: 7/15/2025

TITLE:

RESOLUTION FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS ALONG NEWPORT BOULEVARD (SR-55) SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS IN THE CITY OF COSTA MESA

DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT/ENGINEERING DIVISION

PRESENTED BY: RAJA SETHURAMAN, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

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RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council approve Resolution (2025-xx) requesting the State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to implement safety improvements along Newport Boulevard (State Route (SR) -55) in the City of Costa Mesa.

BACKGROUND:

Costa Mesa Freeway (SR-55) currently terminates at 19th Street and continues south through Downtown Costa Mesa as Newport Boulevard. This major arterial, under the jurisdiction of Caltrans, while providing for regional transportation needs for vehicular traffic, creates significant barriers for pedestrian and bicycle traffic. Therefore, crashes along Newport Boulevard often involve vulnerable roadway users such as people walking and bicycling. Between 2021 and 2023, there have been three pedestrian fatalities along Newport Boulevard between the limits of 19th Street and Industrial Way.

ANALYSIS:

Caltrans recently initiated a project (12-OR32UR) with plans to construct improvements along SR-55 between SR-1 (Pacific Coast Highway) in Newport Beach and SR-91 in Anaheim. In January 2023, Caltrans facilitated a public meeting with invitations sent to members of the Costa Mesa community regarding this project. During the meeting, the community requested Caltrans to consider more aggressive treatments for improving safety along Newport Boulevard, including separated bicycle lanes as well as additional pedestrian treatments. Following this meeting, Caltrans conducted a feasibility analysis and determined that separated bicycle lanes were infeasible and did not include them in the design plans. The Caltrans project included limited improvements for Newport Boulevard (SR-55) within the City of Costa Mesa, including the following:

- New pedestrian accessible curb ramps along Newport Boulevard intersections at 17th Street, Harbor Boulevard, 19th Street, Baker Street, and Paularino Avenue.

- Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) and pedestrian countdown signals at signalized intersections.
- Battery backup systems to maintain operations during power outages.

Caltrans has initiated the project implementation and indicated that the project construction schedule is June 2025 to 2027.

The current Caltrans project excluded several safety features desired by the City of Costa Mesa staff and community including:

- Installation of Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPIs) with supplemental No Right-Turn blankout signs.
- Installation of passive pedestrian detection to supplement push button use (e.g., pedestrian video camera detection).
- Inclusion of advance stop bars at crosswalks.
- Provision of quick build (striping) or permanent (concrete) curb extensions where feasible to reduce pedestrian crosswalk crossing distances across Newport Boulevard or across cross-streets.
- Installation of additional lighting along corridor and at crosswalks for improved pedestrian visibility.
- Provision of a new crosswalk at the Newport Boulevard/Rochester Street-18th Street intersection north leg.
- Provision of a new crosswalk at the Newport Boulevard/Harbor Boulevard intersection south leg.
- Reduction of travel lane widths to reduce pedestrian exposure in crosswalks, manage speeding behavior, and other engineering countermeasures.
- Provision of refuge islands that extend the median past the crosswalk for reduced pedestrian exposure (e.g., Newport Boulevard/Harbor Boulevard north leg).
- Potential for installation of high visibility crosswalks.
- Addition of speed limit signs and stencils reminding motorists of the posted speed limits.
- Consideration of additional posted speed limit reductions consistent with Assembly Bill 43 (AB 43) which provides greater flexibility based on recommendations that the Zero Traffic Fatality Task Force made in January 2020.

- Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) features to reduce potential conflicts (e.g., extended yellow for dilemma zone issues, delayed green for unfinished pedestrian crossings).
- Vehicle-to-Infrastructure (V2I) technologies to alert motorists of potential conflicts and enhance safety of vulnerable road users.
- Traffic signal timing modifications to manage speeding behavior customized for time-of-day conditions (e.g., late night with minor cross-street traffic).
- Other safety corridor improvements and features to address traveler safety.

The Costa Mesa City Council, through the attached resolution, requests Caltrans to prioritize pedestrian and bicycle safety in Downtown Costa Mesa. The resolution also requests that Caltrans take immediate steps to incorporate measures to address pedestrian and bicycle safety along this major corridor as part of the current project. The resolution further requests that Caltrans engage with the City on a routine basis to review and address traffic safety concerns of pedestrians and bicyclists in Downtown Costa Mesa.

ALTERNATIVES:

No alternatives were considered since this item is administrative in nature.

FISCAL REVIEW:

There are no fiscal impacts to the City for the approval of the recommended action.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The City Attorney's Office has reviewed this agenda report and resolution and approves them both as to form.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS AND PRIORITIES:

This project supports the following City Council goal:

- Strengthen the Public's Safety and Improve the Quality of Life.

CONCLUSION:

Staff recommends the City Council approve Resolution (2025-xx) requesting the State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to implement safety improvements along Newport Boulevard (State Route (SR) -55) in the City of Costa Mesa.