



CITY OF COSTA MESA

Agenda Report

77 Fair Drive
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

File #: 25-395

Meeting Date: 8/5/2025

TITLE:

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

DEPARTMENT: PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT/ENGINEERING DIVISION

PRESENTED BY: RAJA SETHURAMAN, PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR

CONTACT INFORMATION: PAUL MARTIN, P.E., TRANSPORTATION SERVICES MANAGER
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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 and safety challenges for pedestrian and bicycle traffic, resulting in a concentration of injuries and fatalities. Crashes along Newport Boulevard often involve vulnerable roadway users such as people walking and bicycling. Between 2021 and 2024, there have been five pedestrian fatalities along Newport Boulevard between the limits of 19th Street and Industrial Way. Since 2009, more than half of pedestrian fatalities within the City of Costa Mesa occurred on Newport Boulevard, between 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 recognize the concentration of crashes, injuries, and fatalities on Newport Boulevard, prioritize safety for pedestrians and bicyclists, and incorporate effective treatments for improving safety along Newport Boulevard. 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:

- 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.
- Installation of additional lighting along corridor and at crosswalks for improved pedestrian visibility. Upgrade all existing high pressure sodium lighting fixtures to brighter LED fixtures.
- Reduction of travel lane widths to reduce pedestrian exposure in crosswalks, manage speeding behavior, and facilitate other safety improvements such as bulb-outs.
- Installation of Leading Pedestrian Intervals (LPIs) with supplemental No Right-Turn blank-out signs.
- 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.
- Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) features to reduce potential conflicts (e.g., extended yellow for dilemma zone issues, delayed green for unfinished pedestrian crossings, “rest-on-red” at selected intersections during off-peak hours to discourage excessive speeding during low traffic conditions, and video monitoring systems and analytics to detect near-miss incidents for proactive safety management, etc.).

The items above are consistent with SB-960 (2024), the Transportation: Planning: Complete Streets Facilities: Transit Priority Facilities Bill, which mandates Caltrans to “incorporate Complete Streets (CS) elements, like pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities, into asset management plans, setting specific performance targets for these features.”

The Costa Mesa City Council, through the attached resolution (Attachment 1), 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 goals:

- Strengthen the Public's Safety and Improve the Quality of Life.
- Maintain and enhance the City's facilities, equipment, and technology.
- Advance environmental sustainability and climate resiliency.

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.