



Legislation Text

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TITLE:

GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT PGPA-23-0001 TO AMEND THE 2015-2035 GENERAL PLAN CIRCULATION ELEMENT BY ADDING A REFERENCE TO THE COSTA MESA PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN AND REVISING POLICIES UNDER GOALS C-1 TO C-12; AND APPROVAL OF THE DRAFT COSTA MESA PEDESTRIAN MASTER PLAN AND FIND THE PROJECT EXEMPT FROM CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) PURSUANT TO CEQA GUIDELINES SECTION 15262 AND 15061(B)(3)

**DEPARTMENT: TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DIVISION/
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT**

**PRESENTED BY: JENNIFER ROSALES, TRANSPORTATION SERVICES MANAGER AND
BRETT ATENCIO THOMAS, ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION COORDINATOR**

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RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning Commission recommends the City Council:

1. Find that the project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies), 15276 (Transportation Improvement Programs), and 15061 (b)(3) (Common Sense Exemption);
2. Approve the Draft Pedestrian Master Plan (PMP) as recommended by the City's Planning Commission by adoption of a resolution; and
3. Approve General Plan Amendment PGPA-23-0001, amending the Circulation Element to revise and include new policies outlined in the PMP by adoption of a resolution.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

On March 11, 2024, the Planning Commission found that the project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies), Section 15276 (Transportation Improvement and Congestion Management Program) and Section 15061(b)(3) (Common Sense Exemption).

The project is specifically excluded from CEQA pursuant to statutory exemptions defined under Sections 15262 and 15276. Section 15262 excludes a project from CEQA if it involves only feasibility or planning studies for possible future actions which the City has not approved, adopted, or funded and does not require the preparation of an environmental impact report or negative declaration, but

does require consideration of environmental factors. Section 15276 states that CEQA does not apply to the development or adoption of a regional transportation improvement program.

The draft PMP complements the City's 2018 Active Transportation Plan (ATP) by providing pedestrian programs, pedestrian infrastructure toolbox, and policy recommendations to improve the pedestrian experience in the City. The proposed project will update the Circulation Element to incorporate the PMP by reference and will include policies to ensure that future projects will consider and include street design elements to enhance pedestrian mobility. Therefore, the project is statutorily exempt from CEQA pursuant to Sections 15262 and 15276.

Furthermore, the proposed project is exempt from CEQA pursuant to Section 15061 (b)(3), which states that "where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA." The PMP provides guidance on improving the environment where pedestrian activities occur and does not implement any specific project, action, or funding. Therefore, there is no possibility that the project (adoption of the PMP and General Plan Amendment) will have a significant effect on the environment.

BACKGROUND:

PROJECT SUMMARY

The proposed project includes the following:

- Review and recommend approval of the Draft Pedestrian Master Plan (Attachments 2 and 3) as recommended by the City's Planning Commission.
- A General Plan Amendment (PGPA-23-0001) to update the City's 2015-2035 General Plan Circulation Element as follows:
 - Revise policies and recommendations under Goals C-1 through Goal C-12 to incorporate the recommended policies outlined in the Draft PMP (Attachment 4).

2015-2035 General Plan

During the preparation of the General Plan, the City held various workshops and study sessions that helped shape the 2015-2035 General Plan update that was adopted on June 21, 2016. One outcome of the General Plan workshops was the formation of the Bikeway and Walkability Committee. The City Council created the Bikeway and Walkability Committee on April 7, 2015, and renamed it as Active Transportation Committee (ATC) in 2022. The ATC makes recommendations for active transportation related improvements to the City Council.

On June 5, 2018, the City Council approved General Plan Amendment GP-18-01 to revise the Conceptual Bicycle Master Plan and revised policies of the Circulation Element and adopted the ATP. The ATP outlines the vision, strategies and actions that will improve the active transportation experience in Costa Mesa. The ATP developed a Bicycle Facilities Map and primarily focused on completing the local bicycle network. An additional plan is needed to complement the ATP by providing a primary focus on walking for users of all types, ages, and abilities.

In accordance with the General Plan Circulation Element, Goal C-12: *Monitor, Evaluate, and Pursue Funding for Implementation of the Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan*, staff have sought out grant funding for the development of a Pedestrian Master Plan from various sources since 2018. In January 2020, City staff was successful in securing grant funding from the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) to develop a PMP through its Sustainability Planning Grant Program in the amount of \$125,000, and City Council approved a local match in the amount of \$75,000. Following the initiation of the PMP project, the City Council identified the following Strategic Objective: “Present the Pedestrian Master Plan update to the City Council for direction,” under the City Council Goal to Advance Environmental Sustainability and Climate Resiliency.

The proposed PMP includes additional General Plan polices and tools specific for improving the pedestrian experience to support the following ATP vision for active transportation in the City: “The City of Costa Mesa will have a comprehensive and visible active transportation network and will promote safety, education, health, recreation and access to important locations within the City while connecting to the larger regional network.”

ANALYSIS:

The Draft PMP expands upon the pedestrian opportunity zones developed in the ATP with further analysis and provides pedestrian programs, a pedestrian infrastructure treatment toolbox, and specific policy recommendations to improve the pedestrian experience in the city. The draft PMP is intended to:

1. Promote a pedestrian-friendly transportation system in Costa Mesa;
2. Create a safer place to walk;
3. Integrate pedestrian elements into the circulation system and land use planning;
4. Promote a culture of walking;
5. Promote the positive air quality, health, and economic benefits of walking; and
6. Monitor, evaluate, and pursue funding for implementation of the PMP.

Community outreach and engagement played a central role in the development of the draft PMP. A combination of in-person public events, electronic and in-person surveying, and online mapping exercises were employed to help the project team understand community sentiment on pedestrian infrastructure. Community members participated throughout the development of the plan through the following opportunities:

- Six (6) Walk Audits
- Three (3) Community Workshops
- Seven (7) ATC Presentations
- One (1) Project Survey
- One (1) Online Mapping Tool

From these community engagement efforts, a total of 551 unique community member comments were received. A qualitative analysis was conducted from the comments gathered to identify common concerns and input shared by community members. This analysis is reflected in the PMP.

Components of the PMP

The draft PMP contains seven chapters and seven supporting appendices that outline the vision, strategies, and actions that will be implemented to improve the pedestrian experience in Costa Mesa. The chapters of the PMP follow:

- 1. Introduction** - provides a plan overview and summary of the City's policies and programs;
- 2. Community Engagement** - discusses community participation in plan development;
- 3. Existing Conditions** - documents the planning context to the pedestrian environment;
- 4. Policy Recommendations** - outlines policies and recommendations to create a pedestrian-friendly environment for users of all types, ages, and abilities.
- 5. Pedestrian Infrastructure Toolbox** - provides treatment options to be considered for ongoing and planned projects;
- 6. Infrastructures Projects** - provides recommendations to help advance the PMP and ATP vision; and
- 7. Implementation Strategy** - provides a list of grant opportunities.

Active Transportation Committee

In June 2022, the ATC unanimously voted to recommend the Draft PMP, as prepared, to the Planning Commission and City Council and recommend that staff proceed with next steps on a General Plan amendment. In December 2023, the ATC discussed the Draft PMP for a second time, and re-affirmed their support of the draft PMP, with the following provisions:

- Inclusion of the 2022 *City of Costa Mesa Local Road Safety Plan* and 2021 *Berkeley SafeTREC City of Costa Mesa Complete Streets Safety Assessment* as appendices to the PMP;
- Additional language to the PMP for future expansion of the scope of the PMP including additional corridors; and
- A one (1) year project implementation horizon.

The above was included in a letter from the ATC to the Planning Commission supporting approval of the PMP on March 6, 2024. As noted in the Planning Commission Agenda report, staff can incorporate the two documents identified for inclusion as appendices to the PMP. The pedestrian treatments identified in the PMP as well as walk-audits along additional corridors can be included as part of the City's ongoing capital improvement projects and proposed five-year capital improvement program. However, staff cannot commit to timelines and further additions to the PMP, such as an implementation plan, outlined in the ATC letter to the Planning Commission as it is outside the scope of the project and will require additional resources, both in staff and funding. In addition, the upcoming Safe Routes to School Action Plan will significantly complement the PMP.

Planning Commission Action

The Planning Commission considered this item at its March 11, 2024 meeting. The Commission recommended approval of the Draft Pedestrian Master Plan by adoption of Resolution No. PC-2024-07; the Commission also recommended approval of the General Plan Amendment PGPA-23-0001 amending the Circulation Element to revise and include new policies outlined in the Pedestrian

Master Plan by adoption of Resolution No. PC-2024-08. Both actions were approved on a 6-0 vote and their resolutions are included as Attachment 5.

On March 11, 2024, the Planning Commission recommended that the City Council find that the project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15262 (Feasibility and Planning Studies), 15276 (Transportation Improvement Programs), and 15061 (b)(3) (Common Sense Exemption).

The Planning Commissioners made individual suggestions for City Council consideration regarding the content of the Draft Pedestrian Master Plan and proposed revisions to the policies in the amendment to the Circulation Element. The Planning Commissioner's suggestions are outlined in the March 11, 2024, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes (Attachment 6). While the Planning Commission as a body did not authorize staff to make any changes to the Draft PMP, they requested staff to make the suggestions available for Council consideration. Some of the major suggestions include:

- The General Plan Amendment includes several "Recommendations" and "Policies" per earlier Council approval. The Commission suggested converting the following Recommendations to Policies: C-7.11, C-7.25, C-7.28, C-8.13, C-8.21, C-9.16, C-10.3.
- Commissioners provided comments on pedestrian toolbox treatments regarding pedestrian crossing times, left turn signal phasing, driveways, crosswalks, pedestrian lighting, and speed feedback signs.

General Plan Amendment

The proposed General Plan Amendment (PGPA-23-0001) will update the Circulation Element policies to ensure that the PMP goals and provisions are considered and implemented as private and public projects are approved by the City. The proposed Circulation Element policy amendments can be found in Attachment 4 to this report.

The intent of the revised and additional policies is to add long-term programs and policy recommendations that would enhance the pedestrian environment for all pedestrian types, ages, and abilities. This will help the City achieve the vision identified in the ATP and further highlighted in the PMP that states that "the City of Costa Mesa will have a comprehensive and visible active transportation network and will promote safety, education, health, recreation, and access to important locations within the City while connecting to the larger regional network."

Applicable to this project, Senate Bill (SB) 18 (Government Code Section 65352.3), requires that prior to the adoption of a general plan amendment, the City shall provide an opportunity for consultation to the Native American tribes as informed by the Native American Heritage Commission. The purpose of the consultation is to avoid and protect impacts to cultural places when creating or amending General Plans, Specific Plans and Community Plans. In May 2023, staff notified the local Native American tribes identified by the Native American Heritage Commission of the opportunity for consultation as required by SB 18. Following the notification to the tribes, staff did not receive any requests for consultation. However, the Gabrieleno Band of Mission Indians - Kizh Nation requested notification if any ground disturbances would occur in the future. The City will include the Gabrieleno

Band of Mission Indians - Kizh Nation in the notification lists for any future implementation pedestrian projects that require ground disturbances.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Pursuant to Title 13, Section 13-29(d), of the Costa Mesa Municipal Code, a 1/8th page public notice was published once in the Daily Pilot newspaper no less than 10 days prior to the May 7, 2024 public hearing.

ALTERNATIVES:

The City Council could propose amendments to the Circulation Element and the Draft PMP. If these amendments are minor, they could be incorporated without any further analysis. Significant changes may require additional review by staff and will be brought back at a future meeting.

Another alternative is to not approve the proposed amendments and the Draft PMP. However, this alternative will result in gaps in pedestrian infrastructure improvements as a part of private and public developments and may result in lowering grant funding opportunities for pedestrian improvement projects.

FISCAL REVIEW:

There is no fiscal impact with the adoption of the recommended actions. Active transportation projects that include pedestrian treatments outlined in the Draft PMP are programmed through the budget process and subject to approval by the City Council.

LEGAL REVIEW:

The proposed resolutions (Attachment 1) and General Plan Amendment have been reviewed and approved as to form by the City Attorney's Office.

CITY COUNCIL GOALS AND PRIORITIES:

This project works toward achieving the following City Council goals:

- Strengthen the Public's Safety and Improve the Quality of Life.
- Advance environmental sustainability and climate resiliency.
- Maintain and Enhance the City's Facilities, Equipment and Technology.

CONCLUSION:

The Draft PMP and recommended Circulation Element policies have been reviewed at public workshops, Active Transportation Committee meetings and the Planning Commission. Approval of the PMP and the General Plan Circulation Element Amendment will promote a pedestrian-friendly environment and complete streets network. The recommended policies and PMP will help the City achieve the vision identified in the City's Active Transportation Plan for a comprehensive and visible active transportation network promoting safety, education, health, recreation, and access to important locations within the city while connecting to the larger regional network.