Tab 57

CITY OF LAGUNA HILLS

City Manager

January 12, 2017 Via email: LDunn@OCBC.org

The Honorable Lucy Dunn
California Transportation Commission

Subject: La Paz Road Sidewalk Widening ATP – Benefits

Dear Commissioner Dunn:

Thank you for taking the time to discuss the City of Laguna Hills' requested Change in Scope of our ATP Project designed to widen a four-foot sidewalk along the heavily traveled arterial highway, La Paz Road, for the purpose of improving the safe access of school children and other pedestrians seeking an alternative and healthy mode of transportation to their neighborhood school. As you know, the subject project Scope Change request is on the California Transportation Commission's Agenda for January 19, 2017, as Tab 57. The City of Laguna Hills offers the following supportive information for your consideration.

Increased Pedestrian Use

The proposed project scope change will continue to improve safety and encourage walking and bicycling for elementary-school-aged students attending Valencia Elementary School, and other pedestrians, as contemplated in the original project scope. While the length of the sidewalk widening is being shortened due to changed conditions and increased costs, the same student population and the same active transportation goals are being served.

Further, the student population accessing the northerly La Paz Road sidewalk widening is from 540 single-family homes within the attendance boundary of Valencia Elementary School. Approximately 30 pedestrians in the morning peak hour from this community are currently walking along the barely four-foot wide sidewalk next to a wall and active travel lanes. It is very reasonable to project that the number of students from this school boundary area who choose to walk to school will double as a result of a widened sidewalk due to the real, as well as perceived, increase in safe walking conditions.

As confirmation of this estimate, we reference a five state study of Safe Route to School (SRTS) Projects (Orion Stewart, Anne Vernez Moudon, "Moving Forward: Safe Routes to School Progress in Five States," July 2012) prepared for the State of Washington Department of Transportation. Said study determined that among completed SRTS projects with before and after travel data, rates of walking increased from 9.8 percent to 14.2 percent. Applying that analysis to the Laguna Hills project, approximately 76 pedestrians should be reasonably expected to utilize the new sidewalk upon project completion (14.2% x 540 homes).

24035 El Toro Road • Laguna Hills, California 92653 • (949) 707-2610 • FAX (949) 707-2614
website: www.ci.laguna-hills.ca.us

In addition, an analysis published by the National Complete Streets Coalition "Complete Streets: Fundamentals" www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/complete-streets-fundamentals., stated that Complete Streets provide increased opportunities for active transport for all users including children, elderly, and the disabled and this can have a profound effect on physical health. Research has found that "43% of people with safe places to walk within 10-minutes of home met the recommended activity levels…[and that] among individuals without safe places to walk, just 27% were active enough." This is an overall 59% increase in activity level. If this is applied to the 540 homes, assuming one pedestrian per home, there would be well over a 100% increase in current pedestrian activity along La Paz Road.

It is noted that Valencia Elementary School currently serves 700 plus students, the vast majority of which are driven to school. The school parking lot is woefully inadequate for the number of vehicles accessing the lot at the beginning and end of the school day resulting in a long, slow-moving line of cars as they cue up to enter the parking lot. Numerous cars idling in line for extended periods of time is a measurable source of greenhouse gas emissions. Our project will greatly increase the number of students walking safely to school and thereby reduce the number of parents choosing to transport their children to school by automobile. The increase in pedestrian activity will cut greenhouse gas emissions to the benefit of climate change.

Local Funding Commitment

The City Council of the City of Laguna Hills has increased its local funding commitment to this project to $161,000 based upon the current project cost estimate of $639,000. This local commitment, in comparison to the total ATP funding of $478,000, represents an overmatch of 33.6% of General Funds. The City Council is committed to getting this project done and has demonstrated this commitment through the additional funding along with the following statement:

> *"City Council requests the CTC approve the La Paz Road Sidewalk Widening project ATP scope change request to widen only the northerly La Paz Road sidewalk to eight-feet wide at this time with the City's commitment to widen the southerly sidewalk to eight-feet wide at the earliest future opportunity when funding becomes reasonably available." December 13, 2016, Minute Action.*

We respectively request your support for the La Paz Road Sidewalk Widening Scope Change Request.

Sincerely,

Cgs for Bruce Channing

BRUCE E. CHANNING
City Manager

SADDLEBACK VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

25631 Peter A. Hartman Way · Mission Viejo, California 92691 · (949) 586-1234 · www.svusd.org

Board of Education

Ginny Fay Aitkens, President · Dolores Winchell, Vice President · Dennis Walsh, Clerk · Amanda Morrell, Member · Suzie R. Swartz, Member

Clint Harwick, Ed.D.
Superintendent

December 6, 2016

California Transportation Commission
1120 N Street, MS-52
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Safety for the Students and Families of Valencia Elementary School

To Whom It May Concern:

Please let this letter serve as our support for the City of Laguna Hills in their quest to secure funding to widen La Paz Road by Valencia Elementary School. Valencia Elementary School is located at a very busy intersection in Laguna Hills where we have elementary students and their families walking to and from school five days a week. The existing sidewalks are very narrow and do not allow for double file walking, which causes our students to walk out into the busy street in order to pass.

We urge you to seriously consider the safety of the children and families of Laguna Hills by making the funding for this important project a priority.

Sincerely,

Dolores Winchell

Dolores Winchell
Vice-President, Saddleback Valley USD Board of Education