

City Council Questions

April 21, 2020 Council Meeting

ITEM 3.1 PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2020-21 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM

1. I see that the AGT has been added back since the March material. Is staff proposing to add this back? Why is the total dollar amount the same for active projects between the March material and the April material if AGT has been added back?

The two AGT projects are shown on the April 21st Attachment 2 (List of Active and Planned Pedestrian and Bicycle Projects) in error. They were correctly omitted from the March 17th attachment. The total dollar amount of \$92,785,000 does not include the AGT projects and is correct in both the March and April material.

Although not a bicycle/pedestrian project, these two AGT projects are currently active, funded projects.

2. For the deferred projects listed in attachment 4, are they being deferred to FY 2021-22? If not, to what fiscal year are they being deferred?

Staff recommends considering the timing of these projects next Fiscal Year during consideration of the full Capital Improvement Program. A lengthy deferral is not recommended for any of these projects, so some or all will likely be recommended for funding in FY 2021-22.

3. How long will it take to implement a Land Management System and a Paperless Permitting System?

Staff's goal is to have the Paperless Permitting System in place by the end of 2020. The Land Management System will require more time to procure and implement. The preliminary timeline is to begin procurement in early 2021 with deployment starting in fall 2021 and completed by early 2023.

4. In Attachment 5 - Responses to Council Questions, staff provided Exhibits 1 and 2, two helpful maps showing the PCI of each street in the City and the scheduled pavement maintenance projects, respectively. Can staff place these maps on the City website? We frequently receive questions about pavement maintenance, and these would be helpful resources for residents. Perhaps on this page, or one like it:

<https://www.mountainview.gov/depts/pw/projects/highlights.asp>

Yes, these exhibits can be posted on the City's website in the Public Works section.

5. In Attachment 5, staff indicated that the City does not make a distinction between major/arterial roads and local/neighborhood streets in the pavement maintenance program. Given the financial uncertainty resulting from COVID-19 and related economic impacts, would it make sense to make this distinction and prioritize high-volume/arterial streets over local/neighborhood streets? Or, is our pavement maintenance program well-enough funded that such prioritization is not currently necessary?

With the current level of funding, which is considerably higher than the years prior to FY 2018-19, staff considers the current system of prioritization appropriate. If funding is reduced in future years due to an economic downturn or other factors, the City may consider prioritizing by street type or other changes to the current methodology.

6. Residents have reached out periodically to request status updates about pavement maintenance, sidewalk repairs and replacements, intersection traffic signal system projects, and other “non-highlighted” capital improvements. Is there a way the City can provide some periodic status updates for these kinds of projects on the website? Or, at the very least, awarded contracts listing the locations of such improvements made each year?

Yes, staff can post additional information about such projects on the City’s website.

7. Rengstorff Park Maintenance and Tennis Buildings Replacement, Design (\$1,200,000) – Who is designing this? Is it the same architect that’s doing the pool facility? Is the design aligned with the pool project in any way?

The designer for the Park Maintenance and Tennis Building Replacement project is not yet known, as staff anticipates initiating a selection process after the project is funded. This project will be done in parallel with the Magical Bridge Playground project. The existing Maintenance Building will be demolished to improve ADA access to Magical Bridge. The Maintenance Building will be rebuilt near the BBQ area of the park and will include a ranger station and restrooms. A new restroom and tennis building is planned to replace the existing tennis building adjacent to Magical Bridge.

Aside from the Aquatics Center being part of the general context of Rengstorff Park, the two projects are not closely aligned. However, the project design will be coordinated with the Community Center and the Aquatics Center.

8. CDD improvements – Will these improvements interface with the building replacing the Wells Fargo building in any way?

The response to the COVID-19 pandemic has caused staff to evaluate both short and long-term space challenges in City Hall. At the Study Session, staff will propose combining the two CDD projects to create one City Hall space planning project that would include CDD and other areas within the building. While it is possible that the need for additional space will be identified, staff's initial evaluation will focus on the existing space in City Hall rather than additional locations such as the proposed building on the Wells Fargo site.

9. Shoreline Sea Level Rise Study Update (\$490,000) – Are we coordinating this with other cities?

While the recommended study focuses on protecting Mountain View's bay frontage, the study will coordinate with the efforts of a variety of local, regional, State and Federal agencies. Particularly close coordination is required with the City of Palo Alto as there is no barrier to impede flooding between the cities. Palo Alto's and Mountain View's efforts near the cities' boundaries must be planned together.

10. “When escalated to 2024 dollars, nearly \$3.3 million or approximately two-thirds of the anticipated annual revenue from the business license tax for transportation purposes (\$5.0 million) would be committed to shuttle operations.” Given the city’s large changing needs due to the pandemic, do you see changes that we may want to make to how we strategically spend business license tax funds? For example, might we spend some supporting neighborhood-serving businesses so that people walk instead of drive to do errands? Or might we focus on encouraging telecommuting to meet our carbon reduction goals and cut congestion and put off some projects?

Allocation of the business license tax is a policy question for the City Council. Staff's recommendation is based on previous Council direction regarding use of the funds for transportation purposes, including the Community Shuttle, Caltrain grade separation projects, and bicycle/pedestrian improvements. Staff will provide other alternatives for use of these funds if directed by Council.

ITEM 4.2 2018 GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS GREENHOUSE GAS INVENTORY

1. Are employee commutes counted by assigning half the carbon emission to MV and half to the city they live in?

The employee commute emissions include 100% of the emissions generated from an employee’s round-trip commute. The protocol for calculating government operations GHG inventories differs from the community inventory, as community inventories are designed not to double-count emissions across jurisdictions. Organizational-based inventories (such as this 2018 government operations inventory) consider many indirect emissions sources related to operations, and therefore such inventories inherently have overlap across organizational boundaries.

2. Is there a way to reduce landfill off-gassing even more?

The City has an advanced methane collection system in place at the Shoreline Landfill, with a methane collection efficiency of 93.7%. (For reference, the default collection efficiency level provided in the GHG protocols is 75%.) Destruction of the collected methane through flaring is more than 99.99% efficient. The current methane collection system is operating at an optimal level based on landfill conditions, and increasing the extraction of landfill gases could create hazardous conditions. Landfill emissions have decreased 37% from the 2005 baseline, and are expected to continue to decline significantly without additional action.

ITEM 4.3 CARBON NEUTRALITY RESOLUTION

1. How and when can this resolution enhance upcoming CIP projects like bike and pedestrian improvements, complete and green streets?

The largest part of achieving carbon neutrality will be GHG reductions, since the City has an adopted GHG reduction target of 75% below 2005 levels by 2045, and GHG reduction efforts are already reflected in the City's bike and pedestrian improvement projects. Certain green streets components, such as street trees, will also be assessed as part of the Community Tree Master Plan (CTMP) update, which is currently scheduled for FY 20-21. Funding to enhance the CTMP analysis to include quantifying the GHG sequestration potential of the tree canopy improvements was approved as part of the current Sustainability Action Plan 4. Any formal integration of carbon neutrality into the CIP, beyond GHG reductions, could be considered as part of developing the City's Carbon Neutrality Plan (CNP). The CNP will be a multi-departmental effort to quantify the GHG reduction and carbon sequestration potential of various projects, and integrate the carbon neutrality goal into the City's planning processes.

ITEM 4.5 MOUNTAIN VIEW TRANSIT CENTER GRADE SEPARATION AND ACCESS PROJECT-CONTRACT AMENDMENTS

1. The attached proposed scope of work includes references to "roadway profile sheets" (p2) and "signage sheets" (p3) for Easy St. In what way is Easy St related to this project? What work is being proposed for Easy St?

When the road crossing of the train tracks is closed, some public and private shuttles serving destinations north of downtown will have a slightly more circuitous route to get to the Transit Center. To address that, the project includes a new shuttle loading area along the south side of Central Expressway. However, for shuttles to access that loading area, new turning movements on Central Expressway are needed. One of those is a new left turn from eastbound Central Expressway to Easy Street. That movement allows shuttles to access SR 85 and Middlefield in order to get to employment areas. No other modifications to Easy Street are planned.

2. This project is described as "augmented preliminary engineering" - what does this mean?

There can be variations in how public agencies define the level of engineering detail provided in 35 percent design or preliminary engineering plans. The 35 percent plans developed by the City followed the City's typical level of detail for preliminary engineering. Caltrain staff reviewed the City's 35 percent plans and indicated that they would typically expect a higher level of detail in their 35 percent plans before proceeding into final design. The "augmented preliminary engineering" will bridge the gap between the City's 35 percent design and Caltrain's definition of 35 percent design.

3. I don't fully understand this project. The scope includes architectural, interior surfacing and staging interactions with the downtown. This interfaces with Mountain View's major public space, the 100 and 200 block of Castro St. How will this interact with the pedestrian mall? How will the public get to weigh in on these issues?

The scope of work for the 35 Percent Augmentation is not changing the project as previously reviewed by the Council. The focus on the work is a deeper dive into the engineering details already developed in the City's 35 percent plans. The architectural plans at this engineering stage are developing the framework plan sheets to be used in final design. For example, the wall surface treatments plan sheet will just show the areas where wall surface treatments will be needed; the refined architectural sections and profile views of the actual wall surface treatments will be developed during final design. The construction staging plans will be consistent with the following sequence of phases as developed by the City and previously reviewed at community meetings and with the Council: 1) construct the ramp to Shoreline Blvd, 2) close the road crossing of the train tracks while maintaining bicycle/ pedestrian crossing, and 3) construct the bicycle/ pedestrian undercrossing of Central Expressway and train tracks. The Construction Staging Plans in the 35 Percent Augmentation will further detail how pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles will be accommodated during each phase of construction.

In June 2020, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Caltrain, VTA, and the City for final design of the GSAP will be brought to the Council. In addition to the final design engineering details, the scope of work under the MOU will include City-led community outreach for the final design of the project, including GSAP urban design features and integration of public art.

As noted in the memo, if the Council chooses a concept for the Castro Pedestrian Mall Feasibility Study that extends the bicycle/ pedestrian crossing south of Evelyn Avenue and/or requires reconfiguration of Castro Street between the two Evelyn Avenue intersections, it would be pursued as a separate project. The Grade Separation and Access Project's bicycle/ pedestrian undercrossing of Central Expressway and the train tracks will not preclude future modifications along the 100 block of Castro Street. Public input into the Castro Pedestrian Mall Feasibility Study will begin as soon as the shelter-in-place order is lifted and the Public Life Public Space assessment can be conducted for the 100 block of Castro.

ITEM 7.1 ADOPT A RESOLUTION DENOUNCING XENOPHOBIA AND ANTI-ASIAN SENTIMENT DUE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

1. Have there been any reported incidents in Mountain View?

No. There have been no reported incidents in Mountain View.

2. What new actions will the city take as a result of this resolution?

The Police Department will continue to encourage reporting, as well as investigate and seek prosecution for all hate crimes. Staff will also promote this resolution across communication channels in a display of solidarity to all members of our community.

ITEM 8.1 SENATE BILL 743: CEQA TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS

1. On page 2 of the staff report it says that if a project is screened out from CEQA review then it will be required to conduct a Multi-Modal Transportation Analysis. This implies that the CEQA screen is done first. On page 3 of the staff report Figure 1 shows the MTA analysis being first. These seem to be in conflict with one another. Can you please explain how they are in sync?

Per the flowchart, the MTA screening will be done first, and its findings will inform the CEQA screening, at which time the CEQA screening will be done. The exact details will be defined as we develop the MTA process.

2. Is there a draft of the multi-modal analysis that can be shared? When will this come to the Council for review?

A draft the MTA has not yet been completed. It will be based on the City of San Jose's Transportation Analysis Handbook:

<https://www.sanjoseca.gov/home/showdocument?id=28461>.

Staff is working with the consultant who helped prepare the handbook for San Jose. The proposed MTA approach and analysis requirements for level of service, queuing and circulation, and bicycle/pedestrian/transit access will be shared at the adoption hearing in June. This information will be the basis for the MTA handbook which will provide the technical guidance for consultants preparing project MTAs.

3. On page 4 of the staff report it says that the VTA VMT Evaluation Tool will have information on the applicability to screening criteria? Can you explain this further? If each city can define their own screening criteria, how will this be incorporated into the tool?

According to VTA, the VTA VMT Evaluation Tool is a web- and GIS-based tool that will estimate the VMT from certain types of land use projects, compare them to screening criteria established by local agencies, and evaluate potential reductions associated with certain VMT-reducing measures. The tool will include the standard screens recommended by OPR, such as transit screening. The City is able to add its own customized, adopted screens to the tool.

4. The VMT data from VTA is from 2015. Is this really the most recent data? Would we expect more current data to be any different? If so, why? If not, why not?

The 2015 data is the most recent data from the VTA travel demand model.

5. Is it correct to conclude that workers in Mountain View come from further distances than workers in other cities in Santa Clara County or the Bay Area based upon the data in Table 1 on page 4?

The data shows that the average commute distance for Mountain View employees is greater than the average commute distance for employees in the 9-County Bay Area or Santa Clara County.

6. On page 5 of the staff report it says that VTA does not yet have the ability to modify the data. Why would we want them to modify data?

The large-scale of the analysis unit of VTA's model is not able to capture the nuances of Mountain View's smaller areas (e.g. the downtown). Over time, cities may have the ability to make corrections to the model.

However, for current policy defining purposes, the downtown will be screened out due to its proximity to transit (Caltrain and the El Camino transit corridor).

7. Since CEQA says a proposed project within a Transit Priority Area per page 6 of the staff report may be presumed to have a less-than-significant impact. Does this mean we have a choice as to whether or not to adopt TPAs?

Per OPR CEQA guidance (which is based on a lot of research), lead agencies generally should presume that certain projects (including residential, retail and office projects as well as mixed-use projects that contain a mix of these uses) proposed within ½ mile of an existing major transit stop or an existing stop along a high quality transit corridor will have a less than significant impact on VMT.

The MTC defines Transit Priority Areas consistent with the definition in the Public Resources Code which defines "a major transit stop" as a site containing an existing rail transit station, a ferry terminal served by either a bus or transit service, or the intersection of two or more major bus routes with a frequency of service interval of 15 minutes or less during the morning and afternoon peak commute periods. Similarly, a "high quality transit corridor" is one defined as having a frequency of service interval of 15 minutes or less during the morning and afternoon peak commute periods.

This metric is also recommended by the VTA and is being used by San Jose as well as other jurisdictions in Santa Clara County as they draft their screening criteria. Staff is therefore recommending use of this metric in order to be consistent with OPR guidance and cities in the County.

8. On page 8 of the staff report it says OPR recommends requiring VMT analysis for projects resulting in tenant displacement. This is in the affordable housing paragraph. So does the tenant displacement sentence apply to just displacement from affordable housing?

OPR guidance indicates that where a project replaces existing VMT-generating land uses, if the replacement leads to a new overall increase in VMT, then it would have to be analyzed. For example, a project near transit that replaces affordable residential units (including naturally affordable units) with a smaller number of moderate or high-income residential units may increase overall VMT. In this case, a lead agency would be required to analyze VMT under CEQA. The CEQA determination will be done based on the characteristics of the project and how it affects VMT.

9. The staff report indicates that all maps are from VTA. Is the source data for the regional average VMT per capita shown in Exhibit 9 from the MTC model or VTA model?

The source data for the regional 9- County Bay Area average VMT per capita is from MTC. All the County and City based data is from VTA. This consistency in data source follows OPR's guidance: "Where a travel demand model is used to determine thresholds, the same model should also be used to provide trip lengths as part of assessing project VMT."

10. Since the VTA VMT Evaluation Tool is not yet public, can staff or the consultant give a simple example of how the VMT calculations are made from the VTA model for both an existing residential and commercial address?

The VMT data outputs are from the VTA regional travel model, which is currently available to cities/lead agencies in Santa Clara County. VTA's VMT Estimation Tool is still in the works and not yet available to the public. Staff expects that VTA may have the tool available by June 2020.

11. Does the consultant have examples of actual VMT from developments in Mountain View or similar developments in other communities that could be utilized to validate the accuracy of Heat Map 1 in Exhibit 3? Heat Map 2 in Exhibit 4?

The VTA model will provide average results based on a regional geography and is informed by land uses and travel times on a regional basis. VMT from individual developments may vary from the average based on the land use and project characteristics.

12. Since staff has identified downtown Mountain View as an anomaly that warrants further investigation, are there other areas of Mountain View where suspected anomalies occur? For example, does it make sense that Waverly Park is the same dark green color as some lower-income areas of Mountain View where auto ownership is not as prevalent? Overall, how confident is staff in the recommended use of Heat Map 1 for residential and Heat Map 2 for office development?

Mountain View's neighborhoods compare well to the region because services such as schools, neighborhood shopping and parks are within walking and biking distance and the City has a much more fine-grained street network which reduces the length of trips. As a result, their VMT is lower than the regional average.

However, there are some anomalous areas identified by staff such as the Downtown and North Bayshore. We have workarounds at the City level until staff is able to work VTA as they refine their model. For example, the Downtown is within a 1/2 mile of a TPA and will get screened out.

13. The staff report indicates that OPR “recommends requiring VMT analyses for projects resulting in tenant displacement.” Is this OPR recommendation incorporated into staff’s broader set of recommendations, or should the Council explicitly provide direction to include this requirement?

No further direction from Council is needed to inform this requirement. OPR’s technical advisory states: “A project or plan near transit which replaces affordable residential units with a smaller number of moderate- or high-income residential units may increase overall VMT because the increase in VMT of displaced residents could overwhelm the improvements in travel efficiency enjoyed by new residents.” This is incorporated into staff’s broader set of recommendations for CEQA thresholds of significance and project screening criteria.

14. Is staff evaluating the use of VMT mitigation banks and exchanges as potential mitigation measures?

There has been study of the possibility of VMT mitigation banks and exchanges as a theoretical solution, but no cities have implemented this approach so far. Given the high level of monitoring that either of these approaches would require, it is likely more feasible to establish a VMT mitigation bank or exchange at the regional level. VTA might be an appropriate partner for this in the future, but does not have plans to implement these mitigation frameworks in the near term, so it is not part of the current policy recommendations to meet the July 1 deadline.

15. The staff report indicates that, according to OPR, “developments with a high proportion of affordable housing...typically generate fewer vehicle trips than market-rate projects when located on infill sites.” How much less VMT would a 50% affordable development generate compared to a 100% market rate development? Can staff provide an analysis of VMT impacts as the percentage of affordable units increases in a residential development?

The VMT impacts would decrease relative to the proportion of affordable housing. The 100 percent affordable units is recommended by OPR. OPR also suggests local agencies may develop their own presumption based on a smaller proportion (but high percentage) of affordable housing based on substantial evidence. There are other tools already available that take affordability into consideration for other related analyses; these tools may serve as the evidence needed to justify a presumption of less than significance for developments with less than 100 percent affordable units.

Additionally, smaller portions of affordable units could count as VMT mitigations to reduce the project’s total VMT per capita to below the threshold.