

CITY OF SANTA ROSA
CITY COUNCIL

TO: MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
SUBJECT: SOUTHEAST GREENWAY CONCEPT PLAN UPDATE
STAFF PRESENTER: JENNIFER PHILLIPS, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER

AGENDA ACTION: NONE

ISSUE

Provide staff with Council direction for future consideration of the Southeast Greenway Concept Plan.



COUNCIL GOALS AND STRATEGIES

Goal 4, Strategic Objective 4, acknowledges the work of the community-based Southeast Greenway Committee.

BACKGROUND

The Santa Rosa Southeast Greenway Campaign was formed to advocate for and help create a greenway in the unused State right-of-way through Southeast Santa Rosa from Farmers Lane to Spring Lake Park. The Campaign has organized community support for this Greenway and has developed a design concept through a process led by the American Institute of Architects' Sustainable Design Assessment Team. The Campaign has advocated that the City of Santa Rosa participate with the Campaign to further the concept of the Southeast Greenway.

On August 7, 2012, the City Council last discussed the Southeast Greenway Concept Plan and agreed to send a letter to Caltrans requesting the vacant parcel that runs east from Hoen Avenue and Cypress Way toward Spring Lake County Regional Park be included in the Highway 12 West Transportation Concept Report and that non-motorized uses be considered as an alternative for this parcel. In addition, the City Council urged that communication occur with Caltrans so as to not miss any opportunities which may occur as a result of on-going studies.

Since the August 7th meeting of the City Council, City staff has had the opportunity to have several discussions with Caltrans staff regarding its in-process Highway 12 West Transportation Concept Report. This report, which Caltrans is preparing with in-house resources, will review the Highway 12 corridor from Napa County through Sonoma County. It will evaluate the future of this State Highway in the broader transportation network and will consider the unused right-of-way through Southeast Santa Rosa.

According to Caltrans, the Highway 12 West Transportation Concept Report is scheduled for in-house completion soon and it is anticipated that a public draft of this document may be available by the end of January 2013. Other feedback from Caltrans regarding the Highway 12 West Transportation Concept Report includes the following:

- The unused right-of-way in Southeast Santa Rosa will not be a focus and will likely be a minor part of the report;
- Because the Santa Rosa General Plan does not include a freeway or other road on the State right-of-way, a likely finding of the report may be that the vacant parcels in Southeast Santa Rosa will not be needed for freeway purposes; and,
- After review of the Southeast Greenway Concept Plan, it is likely that Caltrans will determine that the Greenway Plan involving bicycle and pedestrian uses is a good alternative, certainly better than the existing uses; however, not necessarily the only use(s) for this land.

If it is determined that the State right-of-way is not needed for freeway purposes in Southeast Santa Rosa, then based on feedback from Caltrans, the next step for the State may be to declare the right-of-way to be surplus property. To declare property surplus, the first step for Caltrans is to determine if it is independently developable. If the property can be independently developed, then the State officials responsible for rights-of-way will establish a value and offer the land for sale. According to Caltrans officials, land value will be based on highest and best use. Caltrans staff members have told City staff that a decision to declare the property surplus and offer the property for sale could take approximately 9-12 months.

In the intervening time since August 2012, City staff has also met with leadership of the Southeast Greenway Campaign. During these discussions, staff shared the feedback which has been received from Caltrans regarding the Highway 12 West Transportation Concept Report, including the potential of a declaration of surplus and future property sale. The members of the Campaign have a clear vision for the Southeast Greenway and continue to request more City effort in support of the Greenway. Toward this end, the Campaign has prepared a draft Work Plan Proposal for City of Santa Rosa and SE Greenway Campaign.

This proposed work plan is a summary of the ideas that have been jointly discussed with City officials and Campaign leadership since August of 2012. The Campaign requests that the City Council and staff take the following steps and actions:

1. List the Southeast Greenway Class 1 Bikeway in the Santa Rosa Capital Improvement Plan with Year 5 expenditure at \$0.
 - The Campaign realizes that there are not funds available for this project, nor are they making a request for funds. This item could have no dollars included

in the Capital Improvement program, but the Campaign is of the opinion that it is important to have recognition in the Capital Improvement Program.

2. Include the Southeast Greenway as a City Council Goal.

- The Campaign suggests that the Council consider a goal that provides that “the City of Santa Rosa will develop a strategy regarding how the Caltrans right-of-way can be acquired, managed and operated by a local agency.” Further, the Campaign suggests that the City support efforts to develop the right-of-way as a community amenity including bike paths, walking paths, gardens, parks, environmental restoration and other uses to be determined.”

3. Add the Southeast Greenway to the City’s Emerging Issues in 2013 and fund staff support.

- Develop a strategy to work with Caltrans during the next 12-18 months so as to not miss opportunities involving the State right-of-way;

This strategy would outline how the City, the Campaign and others will work with Caltrans regarding the State right-of-way. Developing this strategy will begin to position the Campaign and the City to approach Caltrans with one or more proposals regarding the State right-of-way. The Campaign is not presuming that the City will take responsibility for these roles, but they would like to work with the City and other local agencies to find a means to do so.

4. Develop a strategy for future planning activities with the Campaign.

- This would include meeting as needed with Campaign representatives and consultants and applying for grants that would further the City’s strategy in relationship to the State right-of-way.

5. Meet with Caltrans and other partners to foster an ongoing relationship.

- The Campaign would schedule 1-2 meetings in the first six months of 2013.

DISCUSSION

The requests made by the Campaign are timely in that over the next 4-6 months the City Council will have the opportunity to direct staff regarding the Capital Improvement Program, adopt the City Council 2-year Goals, decide which of the Emerging Issues should be the focus of the City’s limited resources and eventually adopt the City budget. This process will allow the City Council to compare the needs and requests defined by the Campaign with other in-process projects and new priorities. In addition, given that the Caltrans process to declare property surplus will take at least 9-12 months, beginning work during this time frame is timely.

If the City Council decides to assign staff resources to this project, these assets should focus on what should be done so as to not miss opportunities that may become available over the next 12 to 18 months regarding the State right-of-way in Southeast Santa Rosa. To do this, a first step could be to fund up to 100 hours of staff work by the Community Development Department, as an emerging issue.

RECOMMENDATION

It is the recommendation of the City Manager's Office that the City Council consider the requests made by the Southeast Greenway Campaign in the context of the upcoming Capital Improvement Program review, the City Council Goal setting process and City Council process to adopt priorities for Emerging Issues and provide staff with direction.

Authors: Jennifer Phillips, Assistant City Manager and Chuck Regalia, Director of Community Development