

## REPORT TO CITY COUNCIL

**DATE: JANUARY 9, 2013**

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

**FROM: GREG RAMIREZ, CITY MANAGER**

**BY: MIKE KAMINO, PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR**

**SUBJECT: KANAN ROAD/THOUSAND OAKS BOULEVARD INTERSECTION PEDESTRIAN PLAN AND GRANT APPLICATION**

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The purpose of this report is to present to the City Council, for its consideration and acceptance, the Kanan Road/Thousand Oaks Boulevard Intersection Pedestrian Evaluation (Pedestrian Plan) prepared by Alta Planning + Design, and to obtain the Council's approval to apply for a grant to fund the final design and construction of the improvements identified in the Pedestrian Plan.

The Pedestrian Plan proposes improvements to the general area around the Kanan Road/Thousand Oaks Boulevard intersection for pedestrians, as well as cyclists. Initially, the project was to look for ways to improve pedestrian facilities; however, upon studying the area more closely, cycling deficiencies were also identified and accommodations proposed for those users as well. The Pedestrian Plan consists of three components:

Existing Conditions – describes the traffic and circulation conditions, as well as surrounding land uses, of the area.

Community Outreach – summarizes comments from the public regarding how people utilize the intersection and their suggestions on what would encourage them to walk more frequently to uses in the general area of the intersection.

Proposed Improvements – outlines programs and measures to increase pedestrian activity and ensure the safety of all modes of travel, including bicycling and vehicle travel.

The following are background information and a summary of the Pedestrian Plan.

### **BACKGROUND**

A major theme in the General Plan 2035 is to increase pedestrian and cyclist activity in Agoura Hills by making the City a safer, more enjoyable environment within which to walk and ride bikes. The General Plan has three goals that relate to this theme:

**Goal M-6**

**Alternative Transportation.** Reduced reliance on single-occupancy vehicle travel through the provision of alternative travel modes and enhanced system design.

**Goal M-7**

**Pedestrians.** Transportation improvements and development enhancements that promote and support walking within the community.

**Goal M-8**

**Bikeways.** Enhanced bicycle facilities throughout Agoura Hills for short trips and recreational uses.

Seven General Plan policies more specifically address these goals. They include:

Policy	Description
LU-13	<u>Connectivity to Neighborhoods.</u> Require that commercial districts be linked to adjoining residential neighborhoods and other retail districts by well-designed and attractive pedestrian sidewalks and corridors.
M-6.2	<u>Mode Choice.</u> Expand the choices of available travel modes to increase the freedom of movement for residents and reduce reliance on the automobile. Ensure that existing and future infrastructure will be adequate for future transportation modes.
M-7.1	<u>Walkability.</u> Create a pedestrian environment accessible to all that is safe, attractive, and encourages walking. Maintain and promote the walkability within the City by identifying and completing deficient links within the sidewalk system.
M-7.2	<u>Pedestrian Connectivity.</u> Preserve and enhance pedestrian connectivity in existing neighborhoods and require a well-connected pedestrian network linking new and existing developments to adjacent land uses, including commercial uses, schools and parks.
M-7.3	<u>Pedestrian Experience.</u> Promote walking and improve the pedestrian experience with streetscape enhancements and by orienting future development toward the street, where appropriate.
M-8.1	<u>Bikeway Linkages.</u> Provide bikeway connectivity between residential areas and surrounding natural resources areas, parks, schools, employment centers, and other activity centers in the community.
M-8.2	<u>Continuous Bikeway Connectivity.</u> Provide a bicycle network that is continuous, closes gaps in the existing system, and permits easy bicycle travel throughout the community and the region.

One of the busiest intersections in the City is that of Kanan Road/Thousand Oaks Boulevard. In close proximity to this intersection are three commercial shopping centers (Agoura Meadows, Agoura Hills City Mall, Twin Oaks), two elementary schools (Willow and Sumac), Agoura High School, Chumash Park, and multi-family and single-family residential neighborhoods. The intersection is also serviced by a Metro bus line, and recreational cyclists frequently travel along

Kanan Road in this area. Therefore, the Kanan Road/Thousand Oaks Boulevard intersection serves many different modes of travel and users.

In late 2011, the Planning and Community Development Department applied for, and the City was fortunate to be awarded, a grant from the Southern California Association of Governments' (SCAG) in the amount of \$74,000 for a Compass Blueprint Demonstration Project. SCAG's Compass Blueprint Growth Vision and Implementation Framework guides regional planning policy by integrating land use planning and transportation investment decision-making. The grant was for the preparation of the subject Pedestrian Plan for the Kanan Road/Thousand Oaks Boulevard Intersection. The grant did not include final design and construction of the proposed improvements. Alta Planning + Design (Alta) was selected by SCAG, with input from City staff, to prepare the Pedestrian Plan, and an agreement between Alta and SCAG was executed, with the City of Agoura Hills overseeing the work of Alta.

## **SUMMARY OF PEDESTRIAN PLAN**

The three components of the Pedestrian Plan (Existing Conditions, Community Outreach, Proposed Improvements) are discussed thoroughly in the report. The following are highlights from the report.

### **Existing Conditions**

For existing conditions, vehicle, pedestrian and cyclist counts were obtained, and the current pedestrian and cyclist amenities, as well as vehicle turning movements, were assessed. Data on collisions involving pedestrians or cyclists was also obtained. The project area is relatively dense in development, with 587 residential units within a 1,200 feet radius of the intersection, which is a walkable distance (see Figure 2 of the report). The analysis of the Kanan Road/Thousand Oaks Boulevard Intersection shows that vehicular traffic is operating at Level of Service (LOS) D or E during the morning, evening, and weekend peak hours.

Pedestrian count data collected as part of the study show a steady flow of pedestrians crossing the intersection to access the shopping centers and Agoura High School. The pedestrian counts validated staff's belief that the intersection is frequently traveled by pedestrians. The data indicate that more pedestrians cross Kanan Road than Thousand Oaks Boulevard during both the weekday peak travel periods and on weekends. The largest number of pedestrian crossings occurs on the north leg of the intersection, followed by the south leg on both weekdays and weekends. In addition, pedestrians were observed crossing both Kanan Road and Thousand Oaks Boulevard at mid block, particularly crossing Kanan Road near the Starbucks, and crossing on Thousand Oaks Boulevard between the Twin Oaks and Agoura Meadows shopping centers.

More cyclists were observed travelling on Thousand Oaks Boulevard during weekdays, while Kanan Road had a higher number of riders on weekends. The former suggests most of these trips are being generated by the high school or shopping centers, while the latter consist of more recreational trips.

## **Community Outreach**

Community outreach consisted of a survey posted on the City’s website and distributed by Alta staff on two separate days to passers-by (“intercept surveys”) in the general area of the intersection. The intent of the survey was to gather information on local travel characteristics and on which improvements the community believes are most needed to improve pedestrian access and safety within the study area and increase the likelihood of walking. Additionally, Alta conducted stakeholder interviews with key property owners/tenants of the nearby shopping centers, and representatives of the school district. Alta concludes in the report that the relatively low number of survey participants that responded that they walk on a regular basis for shopping and school trips, along with the large portion that responded that they feel driving is more convenient, indicates that it is possible to influence travel behavior by making walking or bicycling more convenient, safe and enjoyable for different trip purposes, other than simply recreation.

## **Proposed Improvements**

Figure 1 of the report shows the proposed improvements. The improvements consist of upgrades to the Kanan Road/Thousand Oaks Boulevard Intersection and beyond, along the four legs leading to the intersection, to improve conditions for pedestrians and cyclists. Another major improvement is the creation of a multi-use path along the Medea Creek flood control channel to the west of the intersection. This path provides an alternative corridor for pedestrians and cyclists.

### *Thousand Oaks Boulevard Crossing*

The proposed improvements were selected based on their overall benefit to increasing pedestrian and cyclist activity and safety. Two mid-block pedestrian crossings on Kanan Road (north of the intersection, near Agoura Meadows and Agoura City Mall shopping centers) were initially evaluated, due to the tendency for pedestrians to cross the street in this area currently. While establishing formal crossings could increase pedestrian safety, City staff also believed that formal crossings could present pedestrian-vehicle conflicts, given the roadway geometrics (i.e., curved street) and corresponding visibility concerns from vehicles travelling southbound on Kanan Road. Additionally, City staff was concerned with reduced traffic flow and increased congestion on Kanan Road if the formal crossings were installed. Therefore, these two mid-block crossings were eliminated from further consideration.

Instead, the Pedestrian Plan includes a pedestrian and cyclist crossing on Thousand Oaks Boulevard, west of the intersection, where Medea Creek (flood control channel) meets Thousand Oaks Boulevard (see discussion below regarding the “Medea Creek Multi-Use Path”). A signal would be installed at the crossing, which would be activated by a pedestrian/cyclist. The signal would be synchronized with the Kanan Road/Thousand Oaks Boulevard intersection signal so that no vehicle queuing or reduction in Level of Service (LOS) or volume/capacity ratio would result along Thousand Oaks Boulevard or at the intersection.

### *Medea Creek Multi-Use Path*

The signalized crossing at Thousand Oaks Boulevard is critical to the establishment of a pedestrian/cycling path (Medea Creek Multi-Use Path) along the east side of the Medea Creek flood control channel, extending generally from the intersection of Hillrise Drive/Kanan Road on the south to Laro Drive on the north. City staff has had initial conversations with staff of the County Flood Control District about utilizing a portion of the channel access road for such a path, and District staff was receptive to the concept.

At the northern terminus, a decomposed granite trail would be established at Laro Drive, near Willow Elementary, and would proceed southerly through a City-owned parcel adjacent to Medea Creek. Near the border of Agoura Hills City Mall and Agoura Meadows shopping centers, the trail would follow along the eastern side of the flood control channel, then cross Thousand Oaks Boulevard, and continue along the channel south to Kanan Road near Hillrise Drive. The flood control access road on the west side of the channel would remain, while the east side access road would be transformed into a paved path with decorative elements, landscaping along the eastern edge of the path, and other amenities, such as benches, trash receptacles, and low bollard lighting (see Figure 20 of the report). A decorative fence would be added along the path, between the path and the channel, for safety purposes.

At the intersection of Kanan Road and Hillrise Drive, the existing crosswalk would be enhanced with decorative paving. Staff has observed individuals, particularly high school students, traversing the slope along the east side of Kanan Road at Medea Creek (north of the Hillrise/Kanan intersection) via an existing informal footpath which leads to Chumash Park and beyond to Agoura High School, along the east side of Medea Creek. Currently, at the southeastern corner of Chumash Park is a continuation of the footpath, which travels through the Oak Creek Apartments complex to Canwood Street. The Medea Creek Multi-Use Path improvement would end with the installation of a ramp at the slope along Kanan Road to connect with the existing informal footpath.

Therefore, the Medea Creek Multi-Use Path would offer key linkages, providing a Class I bikepath from Laro Drive to connect with the existing Class II bikeway on Kanan Road near Hillrise Drive, and a pedestrian path from Laro Drive to Kanan Road at Hillrise Drive, proceeding to Chumash Park, where it would meet with the existing footpath that leads ultimately to Canwood Street. The Multi-Use Path would provide alternative access for students traveling to and from school and/or the shopping centers during lunch or after school. It would also provide alternative access for residents travelling to the shopping centers and for recreational walkers and cyclists.

### *Intersection Improvements*

The Pedestrian Plan includes improving technical components of the Kanan Road/Thousand Oaks Boulevard intersection, as well as creating a defined sense of place. The Plan includes installing pedestrian “countdown heads” at the traffic signals to provide pedestrians with information about the remaining time to cross. To emphasize the crosswalk, a colored, stamped concrete treatment would be added.

The lanes for all four legs of the intersection would be restriped, and a right turn only lane northbound on Kanan Road would be added (there is sufficient space currently for this lane), but would not result in any reduction in capacity. Separate bike lanes and pavement markings would be added for better visibility of cyclists and to keep bicycle and vehicle traffic apart as much as possible. To accommodate the improved bicycle lanes, the raised median on Kanan Road would be reduced by two feet.

Other amenities to create a distinct “district” around the intersection include decorative pedestrian lighting, decorative traffic signals, patterned pavement treatments along the sidewalks, benches and bus shelters (see Figure 17 of the report). The bus shelters are those previously proposed for the area, and shown to the City Council. Landscaping would be added in the form of a new median along Thousand Oaks Boulevard, west of the intersection, as well as street trees, with the plant palette to match the existing.

To create a more complete sense of place with even greater amenities for this intersection, a partnership with the adjacent property owners, including the three shopping centers in the area, is also important. The Pedestrian Plan outlines proposed improvements that can be accomplished on public land or right-of-way only. However, it does briefly list additional improvements that could be made if there is a partnership between the City and adjacent landowners at some point in the future. These include additional landscaping, signage, bicycle racks, public gathering spaces, and pedestrian paths from the shopping centers to the parking areas and public sidewalks.

## **GRANT APPLICATION**

In October, Metro released its “Call for Projects,” which provides opportunities for cities in Los Angeles County for grants to fund special local projects under distinct modal categories that provide regional benefit. Staff would like to take advantage of this funding opportunity, and, with City Council authorization, is proposing to submit a grant application by the January 19, 2013 deadline for Metro’s 2013 Call for Projects program, in the mode category of “Pedestrian Improvements,” to prepare the final design and construction of the improvements outlined in the Pedestrian Plan. The Call for Projects is a competitive grant program that co-funds (along with state and federal monies) new regionally significant capital projects. The goals for the 2013 Call for Projects are to: improve mobility; maximize person throughput on streets; reduce vehicle miles travelled, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Staff finds Metro’s Call for Projects presents a great opportunity to fund implementation of the Pedestrian Plan, however funding for the 2013 Call for Projects will not be available until 2018.

The maximum amount awarded for each project under the Call for Projects is \$2.5 million. The total estimated cost of all elements of the Pedestrian Plan is approximately 3.6 million. Given the award limitation, staff is planning to request grant funding for a portion of the project - in the amount of \$1,200,292. This sum would cover the cost of the Kanan/Thousand Oaks intersection enhancements, the enhanced crosswalk at Kanan Road and Hillrise Drive, and the ramp at the east side of Kanan Road at Medea Creek, including design/engineering, project administration, permitting, and construction. Staff believes that if these portions of the project are successfully funded, significant enhancement to the Kanan/Thousand Oaks intersection, the core intersection

in our community, could be achieved. Moreover, an improved pedestrian connection and aesthetic enhancements in the Hillrise Drive/Kanan Road area would be achieved. The Medea Creek Multi-Use Path, from the west side of Kanan Road near Hillrise Drive in the Hillrise community to Laro Drive in Morrison Ranch, including the Thousand Oaks mid-block pedestrian crossing at Medea Creek, would be constructed once other funding is found. The total cost of these additional improvements is estimated at \$2,430,600. Staff will continue to pursue funding for these remaining portions.

The Pedestrian Category of the Call for Projects has a twenty percent (20%) monetary local match requirement. With grant funding of \$1,200,292, the local match would be roughly \$240,000. Since the grant would not be funded until 2018, the City has several years to plan for the local match. Metro staff has indicated that the City's Measure R local return funds could be used toward the City's local match. In addition to Measure R local return funds, City staff will be exploring other options to provide the necessary local match before 2018.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The Pedestrian Plan is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3). The project consists of transportation improvements in already developed areas, and would not be within an environmentally sensitive area.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends the City Council accept the Kanan Road/Thousand Oaks Boulevard Intersection Pedestrian Evaluation (Pedestrian Plan) as drafted, and direct staff, via minute motion, to apply for the 2013 Metro Call for Projects grant (Option 1 below). Other options the City Council may choose from are listed below. Please note that if the Council decides to proceed with Option 2, any substantive change to the Pedestrian Plan would need to be re-evaluated by the consultant and the Pedestrian Plan would therefore not be complete in time to apply for the 2013 Call for Projects; minor changes could likely be accommodated.

Options for City Council consideration:

1. Accept Pedestrian Plan as drafted and direct staff to apply for the grant;
2. Accept Pedestrian Plan with changes and direct staff to apply for the grant;
3. Only apply for the grant and defer action on Pedestrian Plan to a later date;
4. Accept Pedestrian Plan, but do not apply for the grant; or
5. Defer action on the Pedestrian Plan to a later date, and do not apply for the grant.

Attachment:

*Kanan Road/Thousand Oaks Boulevard Intersection Pedestrian Evaluation* (December 2012) – provided previously, under separate cover