



Memorandum

TO: TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

FROM: John Ristow

SUBJECT: King Road Complete Streets Plan Status Report

DATE: August 19, 2024

Approved



Date: 8/29/2024

RECOMMENDATION

Accept a status report on the King Road Complete Streets Plan.

BACKGROUND

In 2020, the City of San José adopted En Movimiento, the East San José Multi-modal Transportation Improvement Plan. This plan identified King Road as a key corridor needing enhancements to safety and comfort for people walking and biking. The section north of I-280 was also identified as a transit priority corridor. In 2022, City Council adopted a General Plan text amendment to designate King Road north of I-280 as a Grand Boulevard to reflect En Movimiento's recommendation to prioritize improving transit reliability and rider experience.

The King Road Complete Streets Plan ("Plan"), funded by the Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant program, aims to transform this critical 5.8-mile corridor in East San José in line with the En Movimiento plan's findings. This corridor is a Vision Zero Priority Safety Corridor, meaning it is among the most problematic streets in San José for traffic-related injuries and fatalities. By addressing safety concerns and improving transit reliability, the Plan seeks to enhance the quality of life for residents, particularly those in historically underserved communities. The planning process began in December 2022 and is expected to complete with a conceptual design in Spring 2025.

Geographic and Demographic Context

King Road serves as a vital north-south corridor in East San José. The 18 neighborhoods surrounding the corridor are predominantly low-income communities of color that have faced historical underinvestment in transportation infrastructure and other community resources. According to the United States Department of Transportation's Climate & Economic Justice Screening Tool (CEJST), approximately 2

miles of the King Road corridor run through two areas of persistent poverty: El Rancho and Lochridge-Luby neighborhoods and the Little Portugal South and Mayfair West neighborhoods. These neighborhoods have experienced at least 20% of their populations living in poverty over consecutive measurement periods.

Approximately 90% of the King Road communities are historically disadvantaged. Per CEJST, the most disadvantaged neighborhoods are Anne Darling and Little Portugal North, which face significant burdens related to climate change, energy, housing, legacy pollution, transportation, water and wastewater, and workforce. The King Road Complete Streets Plan aims to help address these disparities by improving access to essential services and enhancing transportation infrastructure. Figure 1 shows the 18 neighborhoods along or near King Road.



Figure 1: King Road Complete Street Plan Geography and Neighborhoods

ANALYSIS

The King Road Complete Streets Plan addresses longstanding transportation challenges in one of San José’s most vibrant and diverse areas. The plan aims to create a more equitable and connected transportation network by improving safety, enhancing transit reliability, and engaging with under-resourced communities.

Since December 2022, the City of San José Department of Transportation (DOT) has conducted a community-based planning process to engage with the King Road neighborhoods in defining project goals and identifying design concepts. Figure 2 shows the project timeline. The project includes five phases, with robust community engagement accompanying each phase:

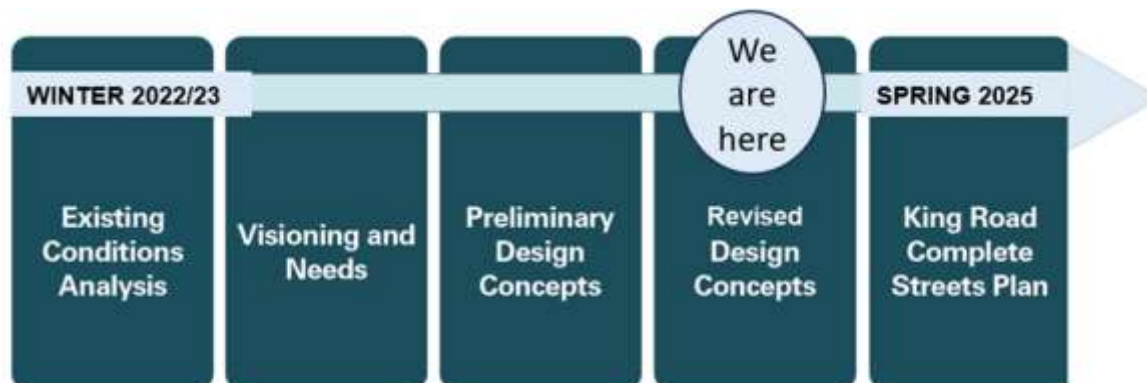


Figure 2: Project schedule

Project Goals

The King Road Complete Streets Plan is grounded in a comprehensive community-based planning process initiated by DOT in December of 2022. Through engagement with the King Road neighborhoods, the project aims to develop a conceptual design that reflects community and City priorities.

1. King Road is safer for users of all travel modes and abilities.
2. Bus rides are quicker, more reliable, and more enjoyable.
3. Underserved and marginalized populations have better travel options and access to transit.
4. More walking, biking, and use of public transit on King Road.
5. Design decisions are made with deep and meaningful community engagement.

Transportation Challenges

Based on a comprehensive analysis incorporating public input and policy direction, the project has focused on three transportation challenges:

- 1. High Number of Traffic Deaths and Severe Injuries** – King Road is one of San José's Vision Zero 30 Priority Safety Corridors due to its high incidence of traffic collisions and fatalities. Between 2018 and 2022, the stretch of King Road between Berryessa Road and Capitol Expressway witnessed 770 crashes, resulting in nine fatalities and 25 severe injuries. Pedestrians and cyclists are particularly vulnerable, with six of the nine fatalities and nine of the 25 severe injuries involving people walking or bicycling.
- 2. Unreliable Transit Service** – King Road is a key corridor for the Valley Transportation Authority (VTA), supporting some of the highest bus ridership in the system. Three major VTA routes utilize the corridor: the 22, 70, and 77, each of which operates on 15-minute headways. Despite its importance, transit service along King Road is currently hampered by traffic congestion, reducing speed and

reliability. This has disproportionately affected transit-dependent riders, who are often from lower-income and minority communities. The unreliability of transit inconveniences existing riders and deters potential users, limiting access to jobs, healthcare, and other essential services.

- 3. Quality of Life** – King Road is a major retail, school, and neighborhood activity center. Yet the corridor is currently designed around auto access at the cost of the experience of those outside of cars. While most sections of the corridor have sidewalks, some areas have missing or narrow sidewalks, curb ramps, and crossing facilities that fail to accommodate the needs of people with disabilities. Sidewalks are generally too narrow, have objects blocking the path, and lack amenities such as street trees, pedestrian-scale lighting, and buffering from fast-moving traffic. Street trees are sparsely located and, in some areas, have large and extended tree roots that lead to cracking or upheaval of concrete on the sidewalks, creating uneven surfaces and trip hazards.

Visioning and Needs

In Summer 2023, the first phase of the project began with the aim to build community awareness, define a community vision for the corridor, and understand existing conditions, constraints, and opportunities. This phase started with interviews with 20 community leaders from neighborhood associations, community-based organizations, schools, business groups, and advocacy groups. The project team engaged with more than 600 community members by conducting seven focus group interviews, a community workshop, five pop-ups, three walk audits, three advisory meetings, 13 intercept survey events, and online surveys. The project team met people where they were and provided flexible and adaptable opportunities for inclusive participation.

Community members were asked about their vision for the corridor, how they experience traveling along King Road, and what they see as key opportunities for improvement. Six themes emerged from the vision of the King Road communities:

- Incentivize residents to take transit by making bus rides comfortable, accessible, and time-competitive.
- Improve streetscape with wider sidewalks, especially in isolated and poorly maintained areas.
- Improve safety and visibility for pedestrians, cyclists, and people with disabilities.
- Add trees and shades to bus stops and improve the street's cleanliness.
- Increase crossing opportunities and time and reduce the crossing distance at
- Protect bicyclists from conflicts with vehicular traffic.

Preliminary Design Concepts

In Spring 2024, the team conducted the second phase of the project to identify high-priority improvements that met the community's vision. The project team engaged with

more than 500 community members by conducting 13 focus groups, three pop-ups, and two advisory meetings. Of the 40 types of improvements evaluated and discussed, eight received the most support from the King Road communities. Figure 3 shows sample pictures of the high-priority improvements.

1. Wider sidewalks and curb ramps to improve walkability and promote local businesses.
2. Tree shades and pedestrian lighting to improve the walking experience and quality of life.
3. Protected intersections to reduce the speed of turning traffic and conflict points between drivers and bicyclists.
4. Upgraded or relocated bus stops to improve passengers' experience accessing and waiting at the bus stops.
5. Protected bike lanes raised to the sidewalk level to provide bicyclists total separation from car traffic.
6. New and high-visibility crosswalks to increase pedestrian safety and crossing opportunities.
7. Dedicated lanes for buses and right-turn vehicles to improve transit speeds and reduce transit delays due to congestion.
8. Landscape medians with tree canopy to reduce urban heat and enhance community identity.



Figure 3: High-priority improvements

Next Steps

Beginning in Fall 2024, the project team will conduct the third phase of the project and engage with the communities to review a draft conceptual design for the corridor. The draft conceptual design will be based on the eight high-priority improvements. The

project recognizes that the six-mile King Road does not have consistent street width and that the narrowest section of the street is in the Plata Arroyo, Little Portugal North, and Anne Darling neighborhoods, where one traffic lane and one parking lane in each direction are in high demand. The narrow section poses challenges in designing high-priority improvements such as raised bike lanes and dedicated lanes for buses and right-turn vehicles. DOT will partner with these neighborhoods to identify the design challenges at the narrow sections of King Road, proactively address potential unintended consequences in the design, and build trust via open and transparent communication.

The last phase of the project will occur in 2025, when a revised conceptual design will be circulated for public review before a final concept plan is completed in the spring. After the Plan is complete, DOT will seek grants and other funding to design and construct the Plan's recommendations. DOT will continue to engage with the King Road communities during subsequent project phases to ensure that their vision for the corridor is realized.

COORDINATION

This memo has been coordinated with City Attorney Office.

/s/
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Director, Department of Transportation

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