

Item 8a

DATE: February 14, 2024

TO: Governing Board

FROM: Meg Prince

RE: Draft Regional Active Transportation Plan

SUMMARY

MCAG has been working with local jurisdictions, stakeholders, residents, and its consultant for approximately 18 months to develop a Regional Active Transportation Plan (ATP). MCAG entered a contract in June 2022 with Fehr and Peers for \$236,380 utilizing federal Planning Funds (PL). The Regional ATP is intended to guide efforts to improve and increase non-motorized trips, such as walking and bicycling throughout the Merced County region. The draft plan will be available for public review beginning the second week of February. The final plan will be brought to the Governing Board on March 21, which is the day the Caltrans Active Transportation Program Cycle 7 Call for Projects is released.

REQUESTED ACTION

For information only.

BACKGROUND

The goal of the Regional Active Transportation Plan is to help establish a safe and functional regional network of pedestrian and bicycle facilities to better connect where people live to where they need to go in Merced County. Active transportation facilities include sidewalks, crossings, bicycle lanes, trails or other elements that provide safe and convenient opportunities for physically active travel. The plan will advance strategies from the Regional Transportation Plan to help reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and prioritize equitable access to the regional transportation network.

As each jurisdiction must spend at least 20% of their local Measure V funding on alternative mode projects such as bicycle and pedestrian projects, this plan is intended to identify strategies to address needs and develop prioritized lists of proposed improvements. The plan also builds

upon past efforts by complementing and aligning with non-motorized, active transportation plans, and bicycle-pedestrian plans adopted by local jurisdictions. The Regional ATP will provide all the cities and Merced County with a viable, current resource to use when competing for funding opportunities.

PAST ACTION TAKEN

None	
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DISCUSSION

For approximately 18 months, MCAG and Fehr and Peers have coordinated with local jurisdiction staff, stakeholders, and residents to analyze existing plans and active transportation facilities and develop the draft plan.

The list of projects included in the draft plan was developed based on a variety of factors identified throughout the plan. This includes pulling in projects from previous plans, feedback from staff and stakeholders, identifying opportunities to close gaps within the existing network, projects that respond to identified safety issues, and feedback from the general public at events like the Merced Mercado and Spring Fair. Coordination with City staff has included focus groups and stakeholder meetings (during the existing conditions phase), follow up calls, and walking audits with jurisdiction staff in June 2023. All of these items also contributed to the project list.

Fehr and Peers sent the draft project list to jurisdictions for review on November 14 and followed up on November 30 to request feedback and set up one-on-one meetings with jurisdictions to discuss the draft project recommendations. Fehr and Peers and MCAG staff met with each jurisdiction one-on-one in early/mid-December to discuss the draft project list and requested feedback by the end of December. MCAG was originally aiming for a February adoption, as the State's ATP Cycle 7 Call for Projects will be released on March 21, but pushed the adoption back to March to allow jurisdictions additional time for review and comment.

The draft plan will be released for public review and comment the second week of February. The plan will be available on the project website: <https://www.mcagov.org/374/Active-Transportation>

MCAG will host a virtual workshop on Thursday, February 22 at noon for those interested in asking questions or submitting comments on the draft plan. Register for the workshop here: <https://fehrandpeers.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZYqfuCsqDMjGNFNVIYMdkJdqZXrqFND4kbD#/registration>

Comments can be submitted to meg.prince@mcagov.org through Tuesday, March 5.

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

STAFF CONTACT

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