




Office of the City Manager

April 4, 2023

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From:  Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager
Re: Public Information for Hopkins Corridor Project

I am writing to you and the City Council regarding the Hopkins Corridor project, requesting that you postpone scheduling a Special Session of the City Council on April 18, 2023, to hear staff's report on the Hopkins Corridor. This request is based upon recent operational developments, that have impacted the overall project timeline, as well as, the direction adopted by the City Council on May 10, 2022 and subsequent direction on October 11, 2022.

There are significant operational concerns with moving forward and other issues as bulleted below:

- Vacancies and project management changes within the Transportation Division of the Public Works Department have impacted the City's readiness to move forward with the Hopkins Corridor Project as planned. Additionally, new proposals, external reports, and deeper analysis of this project require a continued review of the work product to date along with a new project timeline. The lack of staffing resources has ultimately prompted me to pause the work directed by the City Council on May 10, 2022 which was to further develop specifications details and designs for the selected Hopkins project.
- Additional time and review are necessary to convey confidence and integrity in the work product to date, as well as, an assurance that the City Council's direction adopted in October of 2022 is fully met and properly reviewed by all stakeholders party to this project.
- Lastly, the project does not currently meet the following Fire Department related statutory or best practice requirements:

A segment of the project is in the Very High Fire Danger Severity Zone (VHFDSZ) and is a designated evacuation corridor. The Fire Department requires 26' of unobstructed width in this segment to ensure

safe access for responders while civilians evacuate. Cal. Code Regs. Tit. 14, § 1273.00 prohibits road modifications that do not provide for safe access for emergency wildfire equipment and civilian evacuation concurrently, and shall provide unobstructed traffic circulation during a wildfire emergency.

Further, CFC, Section 503.4.1 requires that traffic calming devices shall be prohibited unless approved by the fire code official, which has not yet occurred.

The Fire Department requires 26' of unobstructed road width on roadways where hydrants are present. This is required in Berkeley Fire Code Appendix D (CFC Appendix D, D103.1) and has been enforced since December 27, 2007.

[Best Practice/Safe Operations] Sections of the project include 10.5' lane widths. Fire Department vehicle widths are 10' wide, mirror-to-mirror. A 10.5' width only allows 6" of clearance for vehicles that may be closing at 50-70 mph, if the operator of the fire vehicle is able to align the mirror on the fog line and if the opposing driver doesn't stray over the median line. This is too little clearance for normal safe operation of opposing large vehicles (buses, delivery trucks, large SUVs).

The General Plan Transportation Element identifies Hopkins Street as an Emergency Access and Evacuation Route. The project proposal is likely to cause a significant reduction on the through-put of vehicles during an evacuation of the Fire Zones. This is difficult to quantify and as such the Fire Department has worked with Planning and Public Works to bring a contract before Council for a Response Time and Evacuation Time Study, which was approved on March 14, 2023. This will provide quantifiable data that will allow more informed decisions on this project, as well as future transportation projects. It will also allow the City to meet the requirements outlined in SB 99, AB 747, and AB 1409.

I understand that this news may be disappointing for the community and all of you, especially given that the Hopkins Corridor project has been in development for the past two years. However, it is equally important to ensure that we follow our codes as established, and provide the City Council with the necessary information to guide their decisions.

While this has been a difficult project for some, our team, along with many of you have worked tirelessly on this project. We also recognize that community members have been eagerly anticipating a report back to Council. We will continue to work diligently to address our staffing needs, and to keep you informed of any updates. However, multiple

infrastructure projects city-wide are impacted and will need to be reprioritized, including the Hopkins Corridor project. As such, I am unable to provide a timeframe on when this project will return to the City Council.

Our top priority is the safety and well-being of our community and we cannot compromise on this singular issue. We remain committed to delivering a successful project that benefits our community and enhances our city's infrastructure.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

cc:

LaTanya Bellow, Deputy City Manager
Anne Cardwell, Deputy City Manager
Farimah Brown, City Attorney
Jenny Wong, City Auditor
Mark Numainville, City Clerk
Matthai Chakko, Assistant to the City Manager
Liam Garland, Director of Public Works
Aram Kouyoumdjian, Director of Human Resources
David Sprague, Interim Chief, Berkeley Fire Department