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Agenda Item: ID#19-1420 (1:30 P.M.#2)

Date: 5/2/2019

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CITY OF FRESNO
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Late Submission Information Packet

Agenda Related Item(s) – ID#19-1420 (1:30 P.M.#2)

Contents: Letter from Anthony Molina M.D.

(This letter was distributed to Council during the meeting)

Item(s)

HEARING to Consider Acceptance of the Southern Blackstone Avenue Smart Mobility Strategy

1. ADOPT a finding that there is no possibility that acceptance of the Southern Blackstone Avenue Smart Mobility Strategy will have a significant effect on the environment and is exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15061(b)(3);
2. RESOLUTION – Accepting the Southern Blackstone Avenue Smart Mobility Strategy.

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1:30 #2
5/2/19

RE: Southern Blackstone Avenue Smart Mobility Plan

May 2, 2019

Council President Caprioglio and esteemed Council Members,

I am Anthony Molina, M.D. , and I reside at 8308 N Victor Ave, Fresno CA 93711. I am a retired state employed family physician, first at Fresno State and subsequently at the California Dept of Corrections and Rehabilitation. I also serve as Vice Chair of the Fresno County Bicycle Coalition, whose mission it is to promote bicycling both for recreation and for everyday transportation in the County of Fresno. I also serve as Chair of the City of Fresno Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee, appointed to BPAC as District 2 representative by former council member Steve Brandau.

As a physician serving in the Fresno area for over 40 years, I am well acquainted with the multiple and directly linked public health epidemics of diabetes, obesity, asthma and cardiovascular disease associated with the consequences of our fossil-fuel based transportation system: sedentary lifestyle and air pollution. Bicycling and walking, i.e. active transportation, offers a relatively inexpensive and elegantly simple solution to both of these twin issues for those impacted residents of the central valley (which means all of us). We pay a tremendous price in terms of health costs, decreased quality and length of life in exchange for the low cost of living here. You get what you pay for...

Please also consider the economic impact of the high cost of gas and owning a vehicle in our region on the large segment of our population living in poverty . Cheap land and years of sprawl have contributed to the automobile dependent transportation system that grew up over the 70 years starting after World War II. The limits on this pattern of unchecked development were well recognized by this body under the General Plan update in 2014. The Southern Blackstone Smart Mobility Plan is truly consistent with the policies adopted in the General Plan that will increase density and infill development and improve health, safety as well as air quality by creating Complete Streets. We feel that revitalizing Blackstone is critical to successful implementation of the General Plan. Just look at the ample evidence from other economically vibrant communities as to the benefits experienced by local businesses due to increased biking and walking.

I want to thank the Council members and their staffs who attended the Fresno County Bicycle Coalition's kick off event yesterday for May is National Bike Month Mall to Hall Ride, which culminated on the steps outside City Hall. It is fitting that the annual ride that we have been doing for 18 years from Manchester to downtown is essentially the same as the project area. It gave those elected officials and over a hundred bike riders a close look at the street that most of us zoom by and try to spend as little time as possible on our transit to downtown. I think all who participated probably saw things that they may never have noticed before. That is the beauty of Complete Streets which allow bicyclists and pedestrians to have access to schools and businesses , access hitherto limited by the street design of a bygone era whose purpose has now been supplanted by an adjacent freeway. Yes, there is room for a complete street accessible to all street users. There is current and future excess capacity identified in the analysis developed for the plan. In fact the experiment has already been done. Traffic was reduced to four from six lanes for over a year during the BRT construction, and guess what, we survived quite well for over a year. As a bicyclist who has ridden on Blackstone before, during and after the BRT project, I can say it was actually easier during the construction as a consequence.

Another key benefit from implementing cycle tracks and walking facilities on this segment of Blackstone dovetails perfectly with the new Midtown Trail expansion (and hopefully other future trail expansion from Manchester to northwest Fresno), given the central location of Manchester Center is a nexus for BRT and commercial development. The missing link is a safe, comfortable and convenient connector to the Tower District, to City College and downtown. The Southern Blackstone Smart Mobility Project serves as that missing

link from the Midtown Trail.

On behalf of the City of Fresno Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, I would like to share our thanks and congratulations to Keith Bergthold and Fresno Metro Ministry, Rodney Horton, Planner, City of Fresno/Development and Resource Management Department , as well as to the consultants, for producing this visionary draft report. We wish to lend our strongest support and endorsement for this draft plan that would radically transform the heart of Fresno by re-creating Blackstone Ave as a truly complete street. Engaging the citizens of Fresno in this groundbreaking effort has been and will be no easy or inexpensive task, however it gives great hope to those who wish to see Fresno re-invent itself as a truly modern 21st century urban landscape that all Fresnoans could take great pride in.

I was very pleased with the extensive detail and thought that went into the design consideration for anticipated future traffic impacts as well as current. I would especially like to applaud the concept of phasing this project with an initial pilot project between Shields and McKinley. This would be a wise course in order to gauge community response, and to allow for earlier implementation at a reasonable cost. Likewise, the flexibility built into the plan for future choices regarding the "flex lane" also has great merit. Lastly, thank you for the great community engagement effort that went into this draft. All in all, this project could well serve as a model for other projects throughout the city. I sincerely hope others will agree this project is key to the future of Fresno. Having lived in Fresno most of my adult life, I have great hope for its future and the future of our children. A walkable bikeable future in Fresno is something we can all be proud of.

Sincerely,



Anthony Molina, M.D.

Chair, City of Fresno Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee