



## STAFF REPORT

To the Honorable Mayor and City Council  
From the City Manager

**DATE:** April 27, 2020

### **SUBJECT**

Slow Streets Program

### **RECOMMENDATION**

By motion, authorize City Manager to move forward with implementing *Slow Streets – Redwood City*.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN GUIDING PRINCIPLE**

Transportation

### **BACKGROUND**

The purpose of this staff report is to outline a proposed new program called *Slow Streets – Redwood City* and to solicit City Council feedback on the first phase of included streets.

On March 4, 2020, the Governor proclaimed a state of emergency in response to the outbreak of respiratory illness due to a novel coronavirus now referred to as COVID-19. On March 16, 2020, the County of San Mateo Health Officer issued an order to "shelter in place", effective March 17, 2020 at 12:01 am. The City Council also declared a local health emergency on March 12, 2020. As a consequence of this declaration, the City Manager, acting as the City's Director of Emergency Services, was authorized to make and issue rules and regulations on matters reasonably related to the protection of life and property as affected by such emergency. With that said, actions taken by the City Manager, if not enacted by the City Council, shall be ratified or rescinded by the City Council at the earliest practicable time after issuance.

The Municipal Code of the City of Redwood City, in Section 20.94, authorizes the City Manager to erect temporary signs prohibiting the operation of vehicles on certain streets during emergency traffic conditions. The use of additional street space for the purpose of physical activity that adheres to social

distancing protocols during a pandemic constitutes a function under which the City Manager may limit the operation of vehicles.

Formation of a Slow Streets Program would support safe physical activity by creating more space for physical distancing by closing designated streets to through traffic so that people can more comfortably use these low-traffic streets for physically distant walking, wheelchair rolling, jogging, and biking in neighborhoods throughout the city. Cities around the world, the country and in the Bay Area are taking this approach. The most extensive program locally was launched in the City of Oakland<sup>1</sup> on April 11, 2020. The cities of Palo Alto, San Francisco and San Mateo are also rolling out similar programs.

This program is also intended to discourage drivers from using designated streets unless necessary to reach a final destination, urges all drivers to drive slowly and safely, and reminds drivers to expect people walking and biking along all streets. This effort does not impact emergency vehicle access, transit service, or the ability to receive deliveries.

### Implementation

If approved by the City Council, *Slow Streets-Redwood City* would be led by an interdepartmental team with representatives from City Manager's Office, Community Development & Transportation, Fire, Parks, Recreation & Community Services, Police, and Public Works Services.

Key steps include:

- Developing a street list
- Purchasing and installing signs and barricades at key intersections
- Community outreach
- Monitoring
- Decommissioning once the shelter-in-place orders have been lifted or sooner if directed

Staff would install signs/barricades at key intersections on program streets to implement a "soft closure." Drivers should avoid these streets unless it's absolutely necessary to access their home, a final destination (e.g. to visit a business or for a delivery to be made), or in emergency situations. Not all intersections would receive City-provided signage; City signs would be prioritized for more major intersections. Staff plans to develop signs that residents can print and post as yard signs along the route to raise awareness. Drivers should drive slowly on all streets and expect to encounter people walking and biking. Although there are fewer cars on the road, there are more people getting fresh air and physical activity on our streets all across the City.

Under a Safe Streets program everyone must obey physical distancing at ALL times. The Safe Streets are intended for jogging, walking, and biking individually or with household members, not for exercising or playing with people outside of one's household. As outlined in the most recent shelter-in-place order, people should take steps to limit the droplets that they spread when exercising. When running, biking, or doing other activities outside, people may spread droplets farther than normal. This makes the 6-foot physical distance less adequate. People should avoid running or riding directly in front of or behind people or through groups of people to minimize droplet exposure. People should have a face covering with them and wear it when they may be too close to others while exercising.

The interdepartmental team would work with the Neighborhood Associations and community partners

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oaklandca.gov/projects/oakland-slow-streets>

to spread messages supporting the program. Staff has talked with the Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission regarding support that they may be able to provide.

## ANALYSIS

Staff took a data-driven approach to selecting the street segments for the program while considering their geographic distribution and how the program can promote the City's long-term sustainability and mobility goals.

### Evaluation factors:

- **Emergency response routes:** to the extent possible, staff avoided primary response routes but some of the candidate streets are secondary fire response routes; emergency responders would still have access to all streets
- **SamTrans service:** staff checked whether regular service SamTrans buses use the recommend street segments. Roads with active transit routes were avoided to the extent possible
- **Traffic volume:** focused on streets with lower traffic volumes; some recommended streets have lower than usual volumes due to school closures and COVID-19
- **Existing or planned bicycle facilities:** selecting streets with existing or proposed bicycle routes would reinforce those streets as priority streets for people walking and riding bicycles
- **Communities of Concern:** staff used the latest version of the Communities of Concern maps, generated by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC), to evaluate if a street segment is within a Community of Concern. Communities of Concern are defined by factors such as income level, race, and zero-vehicle households (see [Plan Bay Area 2040](#) for more detail)
- **Housing density:** staff used Census population density data to identify where more people are living and by association, which street segments would benefit the most people
- **Air pollution:** staff used CalEnviroScreen (the air quality index) published by the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment to identify neighborhoods most impacted by air pollution

Suggestions were also provided by the public and feedback was solicited from members of the Transportation Advisory Committee. Candidate street segments were screened according to their emergency response route designation and whether they have regular transit service and were then scored and ranked using the remaining factors. Using these results and a desire to have streets spread throughout the city, Table 1 lists the streets proposed for the first phase of installation. The first phase includes eleven streets covering 6 miles (see Attachment A). This represents roughly 3% of the miles of streets under the City's jurisdiction.

<b>Table 1: Candidate Street Segments for <i>Slow Streets</i> – Redwood City</b>			
<b>Street</b>	<b>From</b>	<b>To</b>	<b>Length (miles)</b>
Flynn Avenue	Middlefield Road	Spring Street	.4
Stambaugh Street	Charter Street	Maple Street	.6
Allerton Street	Winslow Street	Whipple Avenue	.3
Poplar Street	Woodside Road	Hudson Street	.4
Vera Avenue	El Camino Real	Alameda de las Pulgas	1.1
Ebener Street	Geneva Avenue	Roosevelt Avenue	.4
Page Street	Second Avenue	17 <sup>th</sup> Avenue	.8
Cypress Street / East Oakwood Boulevard	Woodside Road	Oakwood Avenue	.6
C Street	Stafford Street	Industrial Avenue	.3
Katherine Avenue	Elwood Street	Nevada Avenue	.6
Bridge Parkway (one lane in each direction)	Redwood Shores Parkway	Marine Parkway	.5

If approved, the first round of installations would begin around May 1, 2020 and streets would be monitored to see how they are being used – with a particular focus on safety and compliance with sheltering in place rules. After these soft closures are in place and have been observed, staff would consider adding streets to the program and creating longer, potentially continuous routes – but the primary goal of the program is to provide safe space for people to get physical activity within their own neighborhood, without jeopardizing their health.

#### **FISCAL IMPACT**

Implementation costs would scale with the number and length of the streets included. The cost to buy or rent signs and barricades for the initial implementation on eleven streets is estimated at \$10,000. Program costs could reach \$30,000 with a more extensive rollout. The cost of the program would be funded by previous allocations in the Fiscal Year 2019-2020 budget in the Mayors Fund (150 65121 60 and 150 61220 60) to be used for creation of a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) reporting tool and for transportation-related study sessions and communications. The cost of the TDM reporting tool can be covered by existing budget and staff resources can be used as needed for transportation-related communications.

#### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

As the lead agency, City of Redwood City has determined that the installation of temporary barricades and signs at various locations are a temporary use of land having negligible or no permanent effects on the environment which meets the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) exemption criteria as set forth in Section 15301, (“Minor Alterations to Land”).

## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with the agenda items being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

The City Council may choose not to direct City Manager to move forward with implementing a Slow Streets Program.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A – Map of Proposed Phase 1 Streets

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