



STAFF REPORT – CITY COUNCIL MEETING

February 21, 2024

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Netra Khatri, City Engineer

PREPARER: Netra Khatri, City Engineer

DATE: February 13, 2024

TITLE: **Approve the U.S. 101 and Sunset Avenue Interchange Project and Direct the Staff to File a California Environmental Quality Act Document Declaration as a Notice of Exemption with the Humboldt County Recorder’s Office for the Project.**

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that the Council:

- 1) Approve the U.S. 101 and Sunset Avenue Interchange Project; and
- 2) Direct the staff to file a California Environmental Quality Act Document Declaration as a Notice of Exemption with the Humboldt County Recorder’s Office for the Project.

Staff has determined that the project qualifies for Class 1, 2, and 3 California Environmental Quality Act Categorical Exemptions.

INTRODUCTION:

The U.S. 101 and Sunset Avenue Interchange Improvements Project (Project) will consolidate three existing stop-controlled intersections into two new roundabouts, simplifying vehicle movements and providing significantly safer bicycle and pedestrian facilities through the interchange. The Project, which has been identified in long-range plans for more than a decade, is a high priority for the Arcata community to increase safety for all modes of transportation; improve traffic operations at a significant bottleneck in the local and regional transportation network; and provide affordable transportation options to students and residents accessing Cal Poly Humboldt.

BACKGROUND:

The City of Arcata is bisected by U.S.101, which separates portions of Arcata and Cal Poly Humboldt from the majority of the City. The existing intersection controls, roadway geometry, and high volumes of local and regional traffic on Sunset Avenue and L. K. Wood Boulevard result in poor traffic operations at and near the interchange.

In 2017, the City completed Central Arcata Areawide Traffic Study, that included these intersections. The traffic study identified a roundabout as a potential solution for the Sunset Avenue/L. K. Wood Boulevard Intersection, as it has the additional benefits of improving safety for

all users (motorized and non-motorized), accommodating complete streets concepts, and creating an entry to Arcata and Cal Poly Humboldt.

The overarching goal of the project is to transform the interchange intersections into one that supports all modes of travel, including pedestrians and cyclists, all while minimizing impacts to the adjacent properties, existing structures, and sensitive environmental areas.

In March 2022, the City solicited a Request for Proposals (RFP) from qualified consulting firms to provide preliminary engineering, public engagement and technical evaluations necessary to complete the environmental analysis for the project. The consultants have completed the environmental documents necessary to make CEQA determination. Project CEQA review memorandum is attached as Exhibit A.

Our project team is currently working on the 30% design plans for the project and will be completed in the coming months. Attached as Exhibit B is the rendering of the proposed project that was presented at the public meeting in November 2023.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS:

Completing the Project Approval & Environmental Document (PA&ED) phase for the project is listed as a CIP project (# 45-10) for the FY 23-24.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW (CEQA):

The Project qualifies for a combination of Class 1, Class 2, and Class 3 Categorical Exemptions from CEQA under Sections 15301 (c), 15302 (c), and 15303 (d) of the CEQA Guidelines. The environmental review and documentation reports prepared for the project did not identify any significant effects that will occur from the Project, and the exceptions listed in Section 15300.2 of the CEQA Guidelines were found not to apply to the Project.

BUDGET/FISCAL IMPACT:

No budget impact as all work associated with this phase of the project was allocated in the budget for FY 23-24.

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. City Review Arcata Sunset LK Wood CEQA Exemption Memo (PDF)
- B. Sunset Interchange Landscape Concepts (PDF)