January 12, 2015

**To:** Mono County Local Transportation Commission

**From:** Wendy Sugimura, Mono County Associate Analyst

 Terry Erlwein, Caltrans District 9 Engineer

**Re:** Bridgeport Main Street Revitalization Project Performance Measures

**ACTION REQUESTED**

Informational only.

**BACKGROUND**

During August 23-28, 2012, Bridgeport residents were immersed in the Main Street Design Fair to explore the balance between community needs for a vibrant, successful main street and the function of a state highway that efficiently moves goods and vehicles. Led by nationally known walkability expert Dan Burden, a Design Team consisting of the Local Government Commission, a traffic engineer, and a design-and-architecture firm provided education, best practices, and technical expertise to facilitate the development of community consensus and direction on a Main Street Revitalization Plan to improve pedestrian and motorist safety, support economic vitality, and enhance the community.

Community participation throughout the workshops was excellent, with 41 people at the opening workshop, 19 at the walking audit and design session, and an impressive 78 at the closing presentation. Dan Burden, who has conducted these workshops in over 2,500 communities in all 50 states, claimed this was among the best participation rate he has seen, especially by main street business owners. In addition, focus groups were held to capture specific concerns of public safety entities, Caltrans, County public works staff, Main Street residents and businesses, and the Latino community.

Following the Design Fair, local outreach by Bridgeport Valley Regional Planning Advisory Committee (BVRPAC) members built further consensus on the location of back-in angle parking, the Design Team finalized a conceptual striping plan supported by the BVRPAC, and Caltrans refined and engineered the striping plan for final deployment. The new street design with more parking, bike lanes, and fewer travel lanes was in place by the end of October 2012, just eight short weeks after the Design Fair. The rapid implementation was an impressive display of interagency and community cooperation, and how things can “get done” through a complete and collaborative planning process.

Following the striping and in cooperation with Caltrans, the BVRPAC stenciled “BACK-IN ONLY” on the curb faces of parking stalls in response to a high number of incorrectly parked vehicles. Since then, the incorrectly parked car has been fairly rare.

**DISCUSSION**

At the last LTC meeting, information about “performance measures” for the Bridgeport Main Street project was requested. The standard performance measures for roadways have been primarily based on vehicle traffic speeds and delay, which the LTC has consistently suggested leave out important livability factors, including walking, bicycling, and community/economic vibrancy and health. “Multi-modal” performance measures that address these factors are under development at the national and state level (e.g., revisions to CEQA[[1]](#footnote-1)), and are expected to become the norm in the future. At this time, however, no measures are standardized or established.

Standardized performance data based on Level of Service (LOS) provide the following information:

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| **Measure** | **Data/Information** |
| **Average traffic speeds** | A November 2013 speed survey indicates no significant change. Consistent with state law, the 30 mph speed limit is based on the 85th percentile of traffic speed. However, anecdotal information from the community indicates an increase in comfort, especially when crossing the road, now that Main Street is no longer being used as a passing lane. |
| **Accident rates**  | *Two-Year Period Prior to Project:*Six collisions were recorded during the two-year study period with one injury collision and no fatality collisions. The single injury collision resulted in two injuries. All other recorded collisions were property damage only (PDO). *Two-Year Period After Project:*Three collisions were recorded during the two-year study period, all of which were property damage only (PDO).  |
| **Parking convenience and affordability** | The project increased the amount of available on-street parking from less than 38 spaces to approximately 48[[2]](#footnote-2) between Bridge and School streets, and maintained free parking. Since stenciling the curb faces, no written complaints about back-in parking have been received by the Community Development Department. |
| **Average congestion delay** | Not applicable. |

Therefore, no change has occurred to quantifiable average traffic speeds. Accident data indicate a 50% reduction in total accidents and a 100% reduction in injury accidents. (Note a single accident can dramatically change those figures.) Improvements include an increase in parking by roughly 25%, the elimination of Main Street as a legal passing opportunity, and increased comfort when crossing the street.

According to the Walkable and Livable Communities Institute, which was co-founded by Dan Burden, the new push for multi-modal and livability performance measures is complex. The Institute identified 22 different potential measurements (along with the LOS measures above; see attachment #1), many of which are difficult to quantify because of the size and location of Bridgeport, and the resources that would be needed to generate the data. The following data available for Bridgeport are largely anecdotal, yet still provides meaningful information:

* **Private realm improvements:** Two building façade upgrades have been completed. One upgrade was directly based on a project rendering, and the other was strongly influenced by the project and received ideas and input from the Design Team.
* **Public realm improvements:** The County Service Area (CSA) funded additional pedestrian furniture (flower planters, benches and trash cans) and hanging flower baskets for School Street Plaza. A local resident maintained the flower baskets. The intent is to secure a landscaping encroachment permit in the future and move the furniture to the sidewalk in front of the Courthouse. The permit will also allow business owners to place flowers outside their businesses to enliven the streetscape.
* **Real estate activity:** One real estate purchase was positively influenced by the project, and another inquiry was made, at least in part, due to the street changes. Another inquiry encouraged further implementation of the Main Street project.
* **Project serving as a model:** The Bridgeport project has been used in complete street presentations nationally and internationally, including Mexico, Bolivia, and Alaska. The project has been featured in Caltrans Sustainable Transportation classes, and the former Caltrans District 9 Director presented the project to other Directors. The Project for Public Spaces, an organization dedicated to “placemaking,” features the Bridgeport project as a case study for “rightsizing” streets (see attachment #2). The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) also contacted Mono County to learn about the innovative public process, partnership, and design.
* **Walking and bicycling:** Pre-project pedestrian and bicyclist counts do not exist. However, general observation indicates the bike lanes are being used.
* **Future projects & potential for future investment:** Caltrans and the County are continuing to partner on implementation, and submitted an Active Transportation Program (ATP) application that included the completion of sidewalk segments, a permanent curb extension (bulb-out) at School Street with pedestrian-activated crossing lights, removable curb extensions at Sinclair Street and a mid-street pedestrian refuge at the Jolly Kone crosswalk, and pedestrian-scale solar street lights. The application just missed being funded given the statewide completion of this program. In addition, the Community Service Area (CSA) is funding the design and engineering of a banner system across the highway, similar to the banner system in Minden, NV.
* **Community participation:** The ATPapplication scored full marks for public participation, and one reviewer commented, “This is one of the best public engagement/participation processes described by any of the applicants!” Ultimately, the project would not have been viable without community consensus and the support of individual community champions. A related measure in the political spectrum is community satisfaction. It is harder to define, and seems most easily measured by a lack of complaints. This project has not only been complaint-free since the curb faces were stenciled, but has actually received praise as noted above in the “serving as a model” discussion. In addition, the Chamber of Commerce presented plaques of appreciation to project staff, including Terry Erlwein (Caltrans District 9 Engineer) and Wendy Sugimura.

The Bridgeport Main Street project is achieving the goals and policies set forth in the Livable Communities section of the Mono County Regional Transportation Plan, and the Caltrans Complete Streets publications. The community appears to be positive about the project, motivated to continue implementation, and is investing community funds through the CSA. Progress appears to have been made with other indicators such as real estate activity, and public and private realm improvements. Caltrans and County staff have established a positive, productive working relationship and are continuing to explore new design possibilities and funding opportunities. The project is not yet complete, but the results to date appear positive.

This report has been reviewed and approved by the Local Transportation Commission Executive Director. Please contact Wendy Sugimura with any questions at 760.924.1814 or wsugimura@mono.ca.gov.

**ATTACHMENTS**

* Email from Robert Ping (Technical Assistance Program Manager, Walkable and Livable Communities Institute), dated December 16, 2014
* Project for Public Spaces: Small Community of Bridgeport Rightsized their Main Street in Record Time
1. California Environmental Quality Act. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Pre-project data are from a Scenic Byway inventory of parking spaces and likely over estimates as “partial” parking spaces were summed for a total number (e.g., a curb face with enough room for 0.68 parking spaces was simply added to the total, even though a vehicle can’t park there). Post-project data are estimated from Google Earth imagery by counting parking stalls. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)