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8.1 Role of the City's Bicycle Advisory Commission

The City Bicycle Advisory Commission (BAC) served as the Project Committee and received inputs from plan stakeholders and City Staff. Input was in the form of public comments and staff reports, respectively, that were offered at regularly scheduled meetings of the BAC in 2012 and 2013. As the Project Committee, the BAC advised the Staff concerning the content of the BTP. The endorsement of the *2013 BTP* by the BAC was presented to the City's Planning Commission, who made the formal recommendation on the *2013 BTP* to the City of Merced City Council.

8.2 Bicycle Transportation Plan Stakeholders

8.2.1 Stakeholders

Stakeholders have an interest in the outcome of the plan, and represent bicycle riders and advocates, government entities that provide services to populations that utilize bicycle facilities; bicycle recreationalists; public health advocates; and transportation providers, and included:

- Merced Bicycle Coalition
- Building Healthy Communities
- Merced/Mariposa Asthma Coalition
- UC Merced Transportation and Parking Services (TAPS)
- Merced County Public Health Department
- Merced City School District and Merced Union High School District
- Golden Valley Health Center



8.2.2 Stakeholders Letters of Recommendation

Appendix A contains letters of support from the plan's stakeholders.

8.3 City Sponsored Public Workshops

In addition to the regularly scheduled meetings of the City of Merced Bicycle Advisory Commission, at which draft chapters of the sections the *2013 BTP* were presented and discussed, multiple community workshops were held to afford greater opportunity for the public to participate in the crafting of the plan. Public comments received at these workshops are included in Appendix H of the *2013 BTP*.

8.3.1 BTP Public Workshop #1

Public Workshop #1 was held on August 29, 2012. Public input concerning existing bikeways and bicycle support facilities was gathered. Public notice was sent as a press release and to groups and individuals who had previously expressed interest in bicycling issues in Merced. Public comments were received and incorporated into the *2013 BTP* as appropriate. The Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG) in coordination with Golden Valley Health Centers hosted the event at the Senior Health and Wellness Center (857 West Childs Avenue) from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

8.3.2 BTP Public Workshop #2

Public Workshop #2 was held February 13, 2013, in the Sam Pipes Room, Merced Civic Center, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. This workshop was hosted by the City of Merced with assistance from many stakeholders including: The Merced Bicycle Coalition, Building Healthy Communities, UC Merced, MCAG, and Golden Valley Health Centers.

At this workshop, the public provided information about their bicycling habits and needs by mapping: 1) where they ride; 2) what streets they avoid riding on; and, 3) by identifying where they would like to ride if improvements were made. Various City Staff were present to discuss road maintenance and traffic safety concerns. Bike Plan stakeholders participated as station facilitators and note takers.

Public notice was provided by flyers that were distributed throughout the City at locations frequented by bicyclists including numerous neighborhood shopping and dining areas, UC Merced, Merced College, Downtown Merced, the Merced Civic Center and local bicycle shops. A 30-second radio announcement in English and Spanish languages was played in the days preceding the event. Press releases were run in local newspapers. The event was also advertised in the City's monthly billing newsletter. Information about the workshop was posted on several websites including those of the City of Merced, MCAG, the Merced Bike Coalition, Building Healthy Communities and Golden Valley Health Centers.

Language interpretation service was made possible for Spanish and Hmong speakers through City Staff and Golden Valley Health Centers efforts.

8.3.3 BTP Public Workshop #3

Public Workshop #3 was held March 11, 2013, in the Sam Pipes Room, Merced Civic Center, from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. This workshop was hosted by the City of Merced with assistance from many stakeholders including: The Merced Bicycle Coalition, Building Healthy Communities, UC Merced, MCAG, Golden Valley Health Centers, and the Merced County Public Health Department.

At this workshop, the public provided information about their bicycling habits and needs at three work stations including: 1) High School Bicycle Routes; 2) North / South Bikeway; and, 3) Fixing Existing Bikeways/Maintenance. A Bicycle Safety Class was also held. Bike Plan stakeholders participated as station facilitators and note takers.

Public notices and provision for language interpreters were performed as described in Workshop #2.

8.3.4 Formal Public Review

The Draft 2013 BTP was presented to several appointed and elected bodies prior to being certified by the Merced County Association of Governments (MCAG), who then delivered it to Caltrans. These included:

- The City of Merced Bicycle Advisory Commission
- The City of Merced Recreation and Parks Committee
- The City of Merced Planning Commission
- The Merced City Council
- Plan Certified by MCAG

8.4 Community-Based Public Workshops

Independent of or in partnership with local governments, members and groups in the Merced community are actively engaged in bicycling issues. This section describes community-based public outreach efforts.



8.4.1 South Merced Bike Summit

On October 27, 2012, Golden Valley Health Centers and The Merced Bike Coalition co-hosted *The South Merced Bike Summit* at Tenaya Middle School. The event was filled with fun and informative activities for the whole family. Over 50 attendees had the opportunity to participate in the discussion about how to make South Merced more bicycle-friendly and how to increase the number of students who ride their bikes to school. They also had the opportunity to ask questions regarding safety and get some hands on training on how to change a flat tire.

Participants with a bike had the opportunity to take a bike tour of South Merced and experience what it is like to ride on the south side of town where there are fewer bike lanes and no bike paths.

At the end of the day the participants agreed on three priorities that would make South Merced a more bicycle friendly community:

- Teach bicycle safety in schools
- Connect bike lanes throughout the City and County
- Maintain streets clear of hazards (of all sorts)

8.5 2013 BTP Development

The development of the *City of Merced 2013 Bicycle Transportation Plan* (2013 BTP) was designed to be a dynamic process built on: 1) realistic assessments of past and future bike-related conditions; 2) consistency with the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan* and other guiding documents; 3) local community engagement and comments; and, 4) professional planning and engineering guidance.

8.5.1 Plan Development Schedule

Table 8.1: City of Merced 2013 BTP Plan Development Schedule

Phase 1: Organize the Planning Process (June 2012)
1. Establish a Planning Process and Public Outreach Plan
2. Implement Planning Process and Public Outreach Plan
Phase 2: Describe the Existing Setting (July – December 2012)
1. Map and Describe Existing Land Uses, Bike Routes, Lanes, Paths, and Parking Facilities
2. List Past Bike Expenditures
3. Estimate Number of Current Bike Commuters
4. Assess Bike Plan Consistency with other Plans
5. Map and Describe “Mobility Connections” and “Changing and Storage Sites”
6. Describe Affect of Education and Enforcement on Bike-Related Accidents
Phase 3: Identify New / Adjusted Bike Facilities (January – April 2013)
1. Identify which 2003 Bike Plan projects were constructed or not
2. Map and Describe proposed Bike Routes, Lanes, Paths, and Parking Facilities
3. Map and Describe proposed “Mobility Connections” and “Changing and Storage Sites”
4. List anticipated Expenditures for Bike-Related Projects
5. Prioritize Bike-Related Projects
6: Estimated Increase in Number of Bike Commuters
Phase 4: Hearing Preparation Tasks (May 2013)
1. Prepare Admin Final Draft of Plan
2. Prepare CEQA Document
3. Collect Letters of Support
Phase 5: Formal Adoption Process
1. Plan Comments from Bicycle Advisory Commission (June 2013)
2. Plan Comments from Parks Commission (June 2013)
3. Plan Recommendation from Planning Commission (August 2013)
4. Plan Adoption by City Council (September 2013)
5. Plan Certified by MCAAG (October 2013)
6. Submit Adopted and Certified Plan to Caltrans (October 2013)

8.5.2 Narrative Description of the Plan Development Process

The planning process narrative describes all required tasks to complete a plan in conformance with Streets and Highway Code Section 891.2 (see Section 1.4). The applicable code section, indicated by a letter in parenthesis, for example, (a), denotes how each planning step aligns with this Streets and Highway Code (see Section 6.2.3 of this plan). The narrative is arranged by phase and steps that describe how the order in which the plan was crafted. Responsibilities and public participation are also provided.

PHASE 1: ORGANIZE THE PLANNING PROCESS

Step 1: Establish a Planning Process and Public Outreach Plan.

MCAG and City Staff established a 5 Phase planning process and public outreach plan (see Section 8.5). A general overview of community involvement is included in the planning narrative. The BAC reviewed and commented on it at their June 26, 2012, public hearing. (h)

Step 2: Implement Planning Process and Public Outreach Plan.

In this ongoing task, MCAG, the City and plan stakeholders shared the task of providing public outreach to the community (see Chapter 8). MCAG also contacted local employers for the purposes of collecting plan-related data. The City of Merced posted public meeting notices of commissions who were engaged in the planning process, and posted draft sections of the plan on the City's website for public review and comment, (h).

PHASE 2: DESCRIBE THE EXISTING SETTING

Step 1: Map and Describe Existing Land Uses, Bike Routes, Lanes, Paths, and Parking Facilities.

MCAG created a map depicting several features of importance to bike transportation including, but not limited to:

- Existing and proposed locations of residential neighborhoods, schools, shopping centers, public buildings, and major employment centers (b);
- Location of existing bike routes, lanes, and paths (c) (based on inventory by MCAG); and,
- Existing end-of-trip bicycle parking facilities including, but not limited to, parking at schools, shopping centers, public buildings, and major employment centers. MCAG contacted local employers regarding bike programs and incentives, and bike parking (d).

A written description of these three features was crafted by City Staff (see Section 4.3) and accompanies the map in the plan. The general public and plan stakeholders were invited to review and comment on the map and description during a BAC regularly scheduled public meeting, (h).

Step 2: List Past Bike Expenditures.

A list of bike-related improvements that were installed since 2008 was crafted by City Staff (Table 4.7). For each project, the City Engineering Division applied a cost estimate, using actual costs when available (k).

Step 3: Estimate Number of Current Bike Commuters.

MCAG estimated the number of current bike commuters (see Section 4.2) (a).

Step 4: Assess Bike Plan Consistency with Other Plans.

The draft bike plan was examined to assure consistency with other local plans and programs that provide incentives for bicycle commuting. MCAG compared the bike plan with the regional transportation plan, and the City of Merced compared the bike plan with the: 1) *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*; 2) *Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Plan*; 3) *2012 Climate Action Plan*, and 4) the *South Merced Community Plan*. A written description of how the bike plan is consistent with these plans was crafted and placed in the bike plan (see Chapter 2, Appendix B) (i).

Step 5: Map and Describe “Mobility Connections” and “Changing and Storage Sites.”

MCAG crafted a map showing existing bike support facilities:

- Bicycle transport and parking facilities for connections with and use of other transportation modes including Greyhound, YARTS, the BUS, CatTracks, Amtrak, park and ride lots, etc. (e); and,
- Facilities for changing and storing clothes and equipment including, but not limited to, locker, restroom, and shower facilities near bicycle parking facilities (f).

A written description of these features was crafted by MCAG and accompanies the map in the plan. The general public and plan stakeholders were invited to review and comment on the map and description during a BAC regularly scheduled public meeting, (h).

Step 6: Describe Effect of Education and Enforcement on Bike-Related Accidents.

To document and assess bike accident prevention, City Staff drafted a written description of:

- Bicycle safety and education programs that were conducted in the plan area;
- Efforts by the law enforcement agency having primary traffic law enforcement responsibility in the area to enforce provisions of the Vehicle Code pertaining to bicycle operation; and,
- The resulting effect on accidents involving bicyclists (g).

PHASE 3: IDENTIFY NEW / ADJUSTED BIKE FACILITIES

Step 1: Evaluation of how much of the 2008 Bike Plan was implemented.

City Staff compared the project list with the list of bike facility projects to determine which projects were constructed or not. This list was utilized to identify bike facility projects for the 2013 BTP.

Step 2: Map and Describe proposed Bike Routes, Lanes, Paths, and Parking Facilities.

The City hosted three well-attended public workshops to discuss and collect comments about existing and proposed bikeways and bicycle support facilities. Using data and public and stakeholder input, MCAG created a map depicting several features of importance to bike transportation including, but not limited to:

- Existing and proposed locations of residential neighborhoods, schools, shopping centers, public buildings, and major employment centers (b);
- Location of proposed bike routes, lanes, and paths (c, j); and,
- Proposed end-of-trip bicycle parking facilities including, but not limited to, parking at schools, shopping centers, public buildings, and major employment centers (d, j).

A written description of these features was crafted by City Staff (Appendix E) and accompanies the map in the plan. The general public and plan stakeholders were invited to review and comment on the map and description during regularly scheduled public meetings of the BAC, (h).

Step 3: Map and Describe Proposed “Mobility Connections” and “Changing and Storage Sites.”

Using data provided by the City, MCAG crafted a map showing proposed bike support facilities:

- Bicycle transport and parking facilities for connections with and use of other transportation modes including Greyhound, YARTS, the BUS, CatTracks, Amtrak, park and ride lots, etc. (e, j); and,
- Facilities for changing and storing clothes and equipment including, but not limited to, locker, restroom, and shower facilities near bicycle parking facilities (f, j).

A written description of these features was crafted by City Staff and accompanies the map in the plan. The general public and plan stakeholders were invited to review and comment on the map and description during regularly scheduled public meetings of the BAC, (h).

Step 4: List Anticipated Expenditures for Bike-Related Projects.

A list of bike-related proposed projects in the 2013 BTP was crafted by City Staff. For each prioritized proposed project, the City Engineering Division applied a cost estimate (Appendix E), creating a description of future financial needs for projects that improve safety and convenience for bicycle commuters in the plan area (k).

Step 5: Prioritize Bike-Related Projects.

The BAC rated various objectives that were used to prioritize all projects. Staff performed a rating exercise for projects to be prioritized (Appendix F). The BAC assisted with adjusting their final prioritization, (h).

Step 6: Estimated Increase in Number of Bike Commuters.

MCAG estimated increase in the number of bicycle commuters resulting from implementation of the plan (a).

PHASE 4: HEARING PREPARATION TASKS

Step 1: Prepare Admin Final Draft of Plan.

Finalizing the preceding work, City Staff prepared an “administrative draft” of the *2013 BTP*, including any new information since the draft language was prepared (d).

Step 2: Prepare CEQA Document.

City Staff prepared a CEQA Notice of Exemption (NOE) for the bike plan.

Step 3: Collect Letters of Support.

Letters of support and resolutions were collected from Plan stakeholders, (h).

PHASE 5: FORMAL ADOPTION PROCESS

Step 1: Plan Comments from Bicycle Advisory Commission.

City Staff presented the administrative draft of the *2013 BTP* to the City’s Bicycle Advisory Commission at its regularly scheduled public meeting to obtain a resolution of support (see Appendix A).

Step 2: Plan Comments from Recreation and Parks Commission.

City Staff presented the administrative draft of the *2013 BTP* to the City’s Recreation and Park’s Commission at its regularly scheduled public meeting to obtain a resolution of support (see Appendix A).

Step 3: Plan Recommendation from Planning Commission.

The BTP contains bike-related policies and the City’s Official Bicycle Circulation Transportation Map, making it an extension of the City’s *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*. The update to the BTP is considered to be an amendment to the General Plan. In order for the City Council to act on changes to the General Plan, it must consider the recommendation of the Planning Commission regarding the plan and associated CEQA review. City Staff presented the administrative draft of the *2013 BTP* to the City’s Planning Commission at its regularly scheduled public meeting to obtain a resolution of support (see Appendix A).

Step 4: Plan Adoption by City Council.

At its regularly scheduled public meeting, City Staff presented the administrative draft of the *2013 BTP* and associated CEQA document for formal adoption by resolution to the City of Merced City Council (see Appendix A).

Step 5: Plan Certified by MCAG

At its regularly scheduled public meeting, MCAG Staff presented the City of Merced City Council adopted *2013 BTP* to the MCAG Regional Planning Transportation Planning Authority (RPTA), locally known as the MCAG Governing Board, to certify the plan for “Completeness/Compliance” with Streets and Highways Code Section 891.2 (Appendix A).

Step 6: Submit Adopted and Certified Plan to Caltrans

Upon certification, MCAG Staff delivered the Plan to Caltrans for review and acceptance.