



Local News

Yolo County, Caltrans seek federal funding for Causeway work, new bike/pedestrian structure

By **Anne Ternus-Bellamy** From page A1 | November 01, 2017

Caltrans and the Yolo County Transportation District are proposing to remove the existing bike lane from the Yolo Causeway in order to add bus/carpool lanes and build a new bike path structure adjacent to the causeway.

The agencies are applying for federal infrastructure funds, which — combined with SB 1 gas-tax funding and other sources — would enable the construction of bus/carpool lanes from the Kidwell Road interchange on I-80 to the U.S. 50/I-5 and I-80/West El Camino interchanges, as well as a new bicycle/pedestrian structure crossing the Yolo Bypass.

The plan has the support of the Yolo County Board of Supervisors, which voted last week to send a letter of support with the application for federal funds after hearing a presentation from Caltrans Deputy Director for Planning Marlon Flournoy.

The project, Flournoy said, “will take care of some congestion issues between Davis and Sacramento.”

Currently, Flournoy said, 140,000 vehicles travel up and down this corridor daily.

“If we were to do nothing in this corridor,” Flourney said, “you’re going to get a 97-percent increase in delay going eastbound (and) a 288 percent increase in delay (westbound).

“So you know how bad it is today? Just imagine that double to three times the congestion,” Flourney said.

With the proposed changes, he said, congestion eastbound would be reduced by 50 percent by 2035 and congestion westbound by 38 percent.

“So that’s going to be huge for this region,” Flourney said.

The proposal would remove the existing bike path on the north side of the causeway to make room for bus/carpool lanes in both directions. Then a “world-class bicycle pedestrian structure (would replace) the existing Class 1 path along the causeway,” Flourney said. “It would be approximately 3.2 miles long and 18 feet wide and would include improved local bikeway connections.”

“This is great to hear,” said Supervisor Jim Provenza of Davis. “Anyone who has to go to Sacramento from Davis appreciates this.”

He urged Flourney to focus on the connection to the causeway as well.

“I’m particularly concerned about the bike path ... the approach on Road 32A,” he said.

“We only have about 20 people making the commute now (and) one of the reasons is that it’s a dangerous commute,” Provenza said. “We have bikes having to cross traffic that is supposed to be going 55 but is sometimes going 85 ... bikes crossing railroad tracks ... cars sometimes having problems navigating those tracks at the same time bikes are trying to do that ... and we have a bike path that is smaller than the standard size.

“So if you could in any way include in this project really the entire approach from Davis to West Sacramento, that would truly be a state-of-the-art bike trail that ... would increase the number of people choosing to use it, because there are many who would like to now but don’t want to take the risk.”

Flourney agreed that a critical piece of the plan is “convincing people to get out of their cars.”

“Any barrier that we have we want to (eliminate),” he added.

“We also want to make sure we’re thinking beyond the structure to how to improve connection between the county and cities along the corridor as well,” Flournoy said. “That’s something we’ll be working through with each agency to make sure you’re (not) on this beautiful structure, it’s the most pleasant experience, and you get off of it and it’s a horrible experience. We want to make sure we’re thinking about that on a continuous basis.”

Flournoy said planning is still in the early stages.

Caltrans will be working with all local jurisdictions involved over the next several months to refine the project, and expects the environmental review process to begin next summer if not earlier, with construction beginning in 2021. That’s provided the federal funds come through.

The money would come from the Department of Transportation’s Infrastructure for Rebuilding America program.

Supervisor Don Saylor of Davis sounded optimistic.

“Caltrans is limited to submitting three projects from the state (for federal funds),” Saylor said. “We can win this funding ... if we work together. So I’m really excited about it.”

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