



Planning Commission Staff Report

Date: June 22, 2011
Case No.: 5.1258 GPA
Type: General Plan Amendment
Location: Citywide
From: Craig A. Ewing, AICP, Director of Planning Services
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

On December 1, 2010, the City Council initiated a General Plan Amendment (GPA) to incorporate the Coachella Valley Non-Motorized Transportation Master Plan ("NMTMP") into the City of Palm Springs General Plan. An Amendment to the General Plan requires a public hearing before the Planning Commission for its recommendation to City Council

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Planning Commission

1. Open the public hearing, take any testimony, and close the public hearing.
2. Adopt the Negative Declaration as an adequate analysis of the potential environmental impacts of the proposed General Plan Amendment and Recommend approval by the City Council of Case 5.1258 GPA, incorporation of the Coachella Valley Non-motorized Transportation Master Plan into the City of Palm Springs 2007 General Plan subject to the attached conditions of approval.

BACKGROUND AND SETTING:

In October, 2001, the Coachella Valley Association of Governments (CVAG) commissioned Alta Transportation Consulting to prepare the Coachella Valley Non-motorized Transportation Master Plan ("NMTMP"). The purpose of this document was to establish a valley-wide master plan of bikeways, trails, associated facilities and programs. This master plan is intended to be a planning tool used by various jurisdictions to assure that their bikeways and trails can be constructed to foster interconnectivity between cities and to educate and promote safe bicycle

usage. Fostering this interconnectivity is envisioned as a way to enhance alternative modes of valley-wide transportation; reduce dependence on the automobile; and reduce traffic congestion, vehicle emissions and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). It would increase recreational opportunities for tourists and residents.

The NMTMP includes educational programs on bicycle safety, as well as information on infrastructure maintenance and funding. Promoting physical activity through biking and walking is seen as a means of improving the health and wellness of the community. Finally, jurisdictions in California that have adopted non-motorized master plans are eligible for numerous grants and funding opportunities from CalTrans and other sources for the construction and implementation of their non-motorized transportation initiatives.

In 2008, CVAG commissioned Ryan Snyder Associates to produce an update of this NMTMP. The result of this work included revised maps, prioritization of Plan initiatives for each jurisdiction, updated community input and budgeting information to make it compliant with most grant application requirements. This update was completed in 2010. Through 2011, city staff in both Planning and Public Works has collaborated with members of the City's Sustainability Commission and the Coachella Valley Community Trails Alliance (CVCTA) in reviewing and finalizing the Palm Springs maps and list of existing and proposed bikeways and trails in the NMTMP.

The procedure for amending the City's General Plan is outlined in State of California Governmental Code Section 65350. A public hearing for review and recommendation by the Planning Commission and approval by the City Council (the legislative body) is required.

RECENT PRIOR ACTIONS:

On September 27, 2010, the CVAG Executive Committee approved the 2010 update to the NMTMP.

On November 30, 2010, the City's Sustainability Commission voted unanimously to recommend that the City Council incorporate the NMTMP into the 2007 Palm Springs General Plan.

On December 1, 2010, the Palm Springs City Council initiated a General Plan Amendment to incorporate the NMTMP into the City's 2007 General Plan.

ANALYSIS:

Transportation master planning is an integral part of the City's General Plan. In 2007, the City adopted a comprehensive update of its General Plan, including Chapter 4, the Circulation Element. The General Plan Circulation Element addresses not only vehicular circulation, but also various other forms of "circulation" including mass transit, vehicular parking, aviation and utility circulation through the community as well as bikeways, trails and other non-motorized means of circulation.

Non-motorized transportation planning in Palm Springs encompasses everything from

dedicated bicycle lanes on public streets to hiking and equestrian trails in the surrounding mountains and canyons. A well developed non-motorized master plan provides residents and visitors with not only alternative choices of “how to get from Point A to Point B”, but also provides for an important tourist amenity and recreational resource of trails and bikeways between cities and to attractions and amenities throughout the valley.

The 2007 General Plan acknowledged the 2001 Coachella Valley Non-Motorized Transportation Master Plan as an important policy document to aid in the development of the complete circulation system for the City. Integration of the 2010 NMTMP into the City’s General Plan, fulfills certain policies and action items from the General Plan as follows:

Policy CR6.1 Adopt a program of non-motorized transportation facilities including those for bicycles and pedestrians.

Policy CR6.15 Coordinate with CVAG, adjacent cities, and affected agencies while planning for new trails, especially in areas adjacent to the Whitewater Wash and Cathedral City.

Action Item CR6.2: Resolve any inconsistencies between the City’s Master Plan of Bikeways and the CVAG Non-motorized Transportation Plan and adopt the CVAG Non-Motorized Transportation Master Plan.

In 2007, the California Legislature adopted AB 1351 “Complete Streets”. This bill, which went into effect January 1, 2011 directs cities that “...Commencing January 1, 2011, upon any substantive revision of the circulation element, the legislative body shall modify the circulation element to plan for a balanced, multimodal transportation network that meets the needs of all users of streets, roads, and highways for safe and convenient travel in a manner that is suitable to the rural, suburban, or urban context of the general plan.”

Although the integration of the NMTMP into the City’s General Plan contributes to the multi-modal nature of our General Plan, it does not constitute a full revision of the Circulation Element. Since our General Plan is only four years old, the Circulation Element remains current and does not need a wholesale revision at this time. The NMTMP is proposed to be incorporated as an appendix in the General Plan. In a few years when City growth necessitates a full scale revision of the Circulation Element, this appendix can be easily folded into such revision of the Circulation Element that would satisfy AB 1351 compliance requirements¹.

Funding/Grants

Tight budgetary conditions and competing demands on limited general fund resources require cities and counties to often rely on grants and other external sources to fund non-motorized facilities construction, maintenance, and educational and safety programs. Most competitive

¹ There is no time constraint dictated by AB 1351 that necessitates when this major revision must be completed.

grants require that the City have adopted a non-motorized transportation master plan in place. The CVAG Plan which was initiated in 2001 and updated in 2010 provides Palm Springs with a comprehensive non-motorized master plan that meets most grant application requirements and thereby broadens the City's opportunities and eligibility to pursue external funding sources to improve its non-motorized transportation facilities and programming. Integration of the NMTMP provides the city the opportunity to update the bicycle routes map in the General Plan and resolve inconsistencies in that map, which is instrumental in the grant application process.

Organization of the Non-Motorized Transportation Master Plan

The CVNMTMP is comprised of six basic parts:

- Chapter 2 – Goals and Objectives – These are reiterated from the 2001 Non-motorized Transportation Plan.
- Chapter 3 – Valley-wide bikeway, hiking and equestrian trails and an outline of safety, education and promotional programming.
- Chapter 4 – Non-motorized master plans for each Coachella Valley City.
- Chapter 5 – Identification of external funding sources and opportunities
- Chapter 6 – Strategy for phasing and implementation
- Chapter 7 – Design and maintenance guidelines.

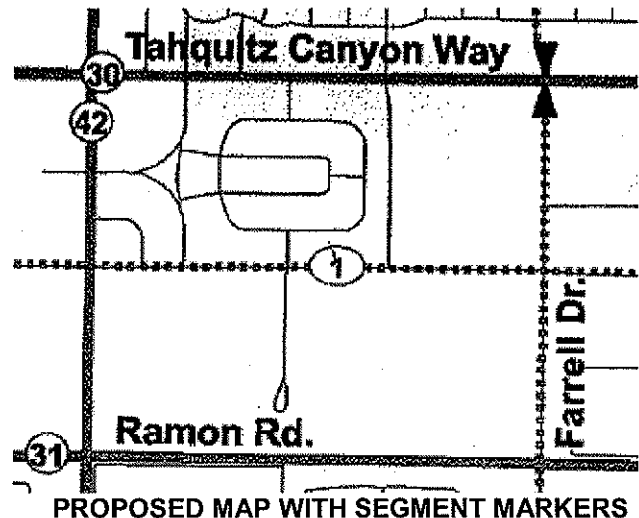
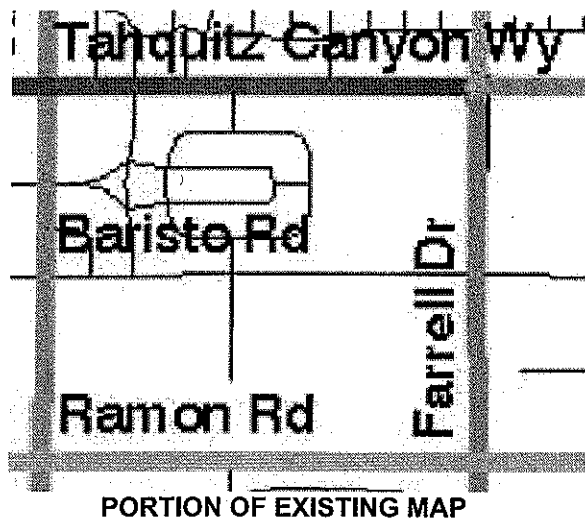
Relationship of the Non-Motorized Transportation Master Plan to the General Plan Circulation Element.

The goals and objectives of the MNTMP complement and add to the goals, policies and actions of the 2007 General Plan. As noted above, incorporation of the CVNMTMP fulfills several policies and action items listed in the 2007 General Plan. The non-motorized transportation master plan does not supersede, or cause the deletion or replacement of the current Circulation Element. The only changes to the existing Circulation Element are corrections and improvements to Figure 4-5 the Bikeways Map which has been updated and enhanced to provide more concise detail on various bikeway segments. Specifically the following information has been added to Figure 4-5, the bikeways map:

- Bikeways have been given segment numbers to better identify them for maintenance and future funding and improvement initiatives.
- Existing bikeways that were incorrectly shown on the 2007 map have been corrected.
- Future bikeways are grouped into three "priority lists" that aid in grant-writing efforts.
- Certain designated bikeways have been relocated to less busy streets to provide safer alternative routes for bicyclists. (For example; the segment previously shown on Ramon Road from El Cielo to Crossley was moved to Sunny Dunes. Similarly the route previously shown on Vista Chino / Highway 111 was moved to Via Escuela).

Portions of the old bikeway map and the proposed map are shown below which provide an example of the enhancements made by the addition of segment markings and delineation of existing bikeways (solid line) and future bikeways (dotted lines). These segment markings

provide much greater clarity for the City to make future grant applications, as well as to reference segments for ongoing maintenance and upkeep.



These same changes are reflected correctly on Figure 4-4, the Recreational Trails Map. (Bikeways shown on Figure 4-5 are also shown on Figure 4-4) Otherwise there are no other changes or updates proposed to the Circulation Element or other elements of the 2007 General Plan. The Non-motorized Transportation Master Plan is proposed to be integrated into the 2007 General Plan as "Appendix F".

It is particularly notable that the NMTMP takes a comprehensive approach to planning of non-motorized transportation facilities and programming. Not only does it outline existing and proposed bikeways, it also addresses inter-connections with other trails and between Palm Springs and other desert cities. There are also sections that discuss trail heads, maintenance and design standards, signage and pavement markings, and programs to promote increased bicycle use and bicycle safety.

CONCLUSION:

Amending the 2007 Palm Springs General Plan to incorporate the Non-motorized Transportation Master Plan provides a comprehensive set of tools that augment and enhance the basic information in the Circulation Element relating to bikeways, hiking, and equestrian trails. The goals, policies and maps in the Non-motorized Transportation Master Plan provide greater detail and refinement for planning and maintaining bikeways and trails in Palm Springs, as well as for developing programs related to bicycle safety. It also serves to foster integration with adjacent municipalities in the future development of non-motorized circulation throughout the Coachella Valley that contributes to cleaner air, less vehicular congestion, and greater recreational opportunities for residents and visitors.

ENVIRONMENTAL:

This proposed amendment of the Palm Springs General Plan has been determined to be a

“Project” as defined by Section 21065 of the Guidelines of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). An initial study was conducted in which the project was evaluated to determine whether it may cause any potentially significant impacts to the environment. The environmental analysis and notice of intent to adopt a negative declaration was made available for public comment for a 30-day period commencing on May 10, 2011 and ending on June 9, 2011. No comments were received and there was no new information or facts presented that would require recirculation of the documents or change any of the conclusions made within the analysis. A Negative Declaration is anticipated to be recommended to the City Council.

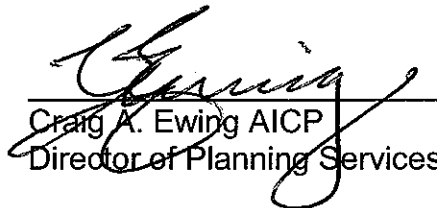
NOTICE:

In accordance with applicable law, public notice was provided citywide by posting in the Desert Sun. Pursuant to State Governmental Code Section 65352(a), written notification of the proposed General Plan Amendment was also provided to the following entities: Adjacent cities and agencies, LAFCO, The Federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM), The Coachella Valley Association of Governments, (CVAG), and Native American tribes pursuant to SB 18.

The Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians responded to the SB 18 noticing and City Staff communicated the scope of the proposed GPA to Tribal Staff. To date, no other comments have been received on the proposed General Plan Amendment.



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Craig A. Ewing AICP
Director of Planning Services

Enclosures:

- Draft Resolution
- The 2010 Coachella Valley Non-Motorized Transportation Master Plan
- Revised Bikeway Map and Recreational Trails Map from the 2007 General Plan (Due to size and printing limitations, these maps will be presented at the public hearing)

RESOLUTION NO. _____

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA, RECOMMENDING THAT THE CITY COUNCIL APPROVE CASE 5.1258 GPA, A GENERAL PLAN AMENDMENT INCORPORATING THE COACHELLA VALLEY NON-MOTORIZED TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN INTO THE 2007 PALM SPRINGS GENERAL PLAN.

WHEREAS, the City of Palm Springs adopted its General Plan on October 17, 2008 by resolution 22077; and

WHEREAS, on December 1, 2010, the City Council initiated a General Plan Amendment to incorporate the Coachella Valley Non-Motorized Transportation Master Plan ("CVNMTMP") into the 2007 General Plan; and

WHEREAS, a notice of public hearing of the Planning Commission of the City of Palm Springs to consider Case 5.1258, consisting of a General Plan Amendment to incorporate the Coachella Valley Non-Motorized Transportation Master Plan was given in accordance with applicable law; and

WHEREAS, on June 22, 2011, a public hearing on the application was held by the Planning Commission in accordance with applicable law; and

WHEREAS, the proposed project is considered a "project" pursuant to the terms of the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA"), and an Environmental Assessment has been prepared for this project and has been distributed for public review and comment in accordance with CEQA; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission has carefully reviewed and considered all of the evidence presented, including but not limited to the staff report, and all written and oral testimony presented.

THE PLANNING COMMISSION HEREBY FINDS AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1: A Negative Declaration (ND) has been completed in compliance with CEQA, the State CEQA Guidelines, and the City's CEQA Guidelines. The Planning Commission found that the incorporation of the Coachella Valley Non-Motorized Transportation Master Plan into the General Plan will have no impact on the environment. The Planning Commission independently reviewed and considered the information contained in the ND prior to its review of this Project and the ND reflects the Planning Commission's independent judgment and analysis.

Section 2: The Planning Commission makes the following findings:

- A. Integration of the CVNMTMP fulfills certain policies and action items from the General Plan as follows:
- Policy CR6.1 *Adopt a program of non-motorized transportation facilities including those for bicycles and pedestrians.*
 - Policy CR6.15 *Coordinate with CVAG, adjacent cities, and affected agencies while planning for new trails, especially in areas adjacent to the Whitewater Wash and Cathedral City.*
 - Action Item CR6.2: *Resolve any inconsistencies between the City's Master Plan of Bikeways and the CVAG Non-motorized Transportation Plan and adopt the CVAG Non-Motorized Transportation Master Plan.*
- B. The CVNMTMP, which was initiated in 2001 and updated in 2010, provides Palm Springs with a comprehensive plan that meets most grant application requirements and thereby broadens the City's opportunities and eligibility to pursue external funding sources to improve its non-motorized transportation facilities and programming.
- C. Integration of the CVNMTMP provides the city the opportunity to update the bicycle routes map and resolve inconsistencies in that map which is instrumental in the grant application process.
- D. Incorporation of the CVNMTMP into the General Plan provides a planning tool that has the following benefits:
- i. Assures that their bikeways and trails can be constructed to yield good interconnectivity between cities
 - ii. Fosters interconnectivity as a way to create a viable alternative means of valley-wide transportation; thereby requiring less dependence on the automobile.
 - iii. Helps reduce traffic congestion and vehicle emissions that contribute to poor air quality and greenhouse gas emissions (GHG).
 - iv. Increases recreational opportunities for tourists and residents.
 - v. Includes educational programs on bicycle safety, as well as information on infrastructure maintenance and funding.

- vi. Promoting physical activity through biking and walking was seen as a means of improving the health and wellness of the community.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that, based upon the foregoing, the Planning Commission hereby recommends that the City Council approve Case 5.1258, incorporation of the Coachella Valley Non-Motorized Transportation Master Plan into the 2007 Palm Springs General Plan.

ADOPTED this 22nd day of June, 2011.

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTAIN:

ATTEST:

CITY OF PALM SPRINGS, CALIFORNIA

Craig A. Ewing, AICP
Director of Planning Services