



# Planning Commission Report

Planning Commission Meeting: August 28, 2013

Agenda Item: 5-A

To: Planning Commission  
From: Francie Stefan, Strategic and Transportation Planning Manager  
Subject: Michigan Avenue Neighborhood Greenway

## Recommended Action

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission review the information provided in this report on the Michigan Avenue Neighborhood Greenway and the attached Opportunities and Constraints Report and provide comments and direction to inform the project priorities and conceptual design.

## Executive Summary

A concept plan is underway for the Michigan Avenue Neighborhood Greenway that was identified in the Land Use and Circulation Element and the Bike Action Plan. A future Greenway would provide residents and visitors with a safe and comfortable place to walk, bike, and interact with neighbors, all while connecting the community to important destinations including schools, job centers, and future Expo stations. A well-attended community meeting was held on March 16, 2013, with the second workshop to be held on September 21, 2013.

## Background

The City was awarded a California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Environmental Justice grant to provide outreach and conceptual design services for the Michigan Avenue Neighborhood Greenway. The Greenway primarily travels along Michigan Avenue, with a beach connection on the west end and connections to Bergamot Arts Center and the Expo bike and pedestrian path on the east end. As an important component of the City's No Net New Trips strategy, the project is identified in the Land Use and Circulation Element (LUCE) and is a backbone bicycle facility of the network envisioned in the Bike Action Plan. The project also furthers LUCE goals of enhancing neighborhood quality of life, by introducing informal spaces for social interaction and through additional trees and landscaping. Staff has presented the project to various boards and commissions to date and is seeking input from the Planning Commission.

## Discussion

The Michigan Avenue Neighborhood Greenway is intended to create an inviting streetscape along Michigan Avenue and adjoining streets. This could be achieved through elements including roadway calming, increased landscaping, sidewalk widening, bike facilities, and enhanced crosswalks. The three-mile Greenway between

the Bergamot Arts Center and the beach would provide a safe and comfortable place for neighbors of all ages to walk, bike, recreate, and interact with one another. Additionally, it will be a functional circulation link to connect residents and visitors with many significant community and regional institutions, including schools, job centers, and future Expo stations. The project will make it easier to get around Santa Monica on foot and by bicycle, and is intended to enhance the livability of the neighborhood and improve environmental quality.



The Michigan Avenue Neighborhood Greenway provides the opportunity to improve connections for users along the route. Providing a legible and inviting link along the Greenway may provide enhanced access to the following destinations:

- Santa Monica State Beach*
- Santa Monica Pedestrian and Bike Path*
- Santa Monica Pier*
- Downtown Santa Monica*
- Santa Monica Civic Center*
- Santa Monica Place*
- Santa Monica High School (Samohi)*
- Pico Neighborhood*
- Memorial Park*
- 17th St. Expo Station (Future)*
- 4th St. Expo Station (Future)*
- Crossroads Elementary*
- Edison Elementary*
- Bergamot Station*
- Santa Monica College*
- Virginia Avenue Park*
- Stewart Park*

As elucidated in the attached Opportunities and Constraints Report, Michigan Avenue was selected as the location for the Greenway for several reasons.

Connection to community destinations and location:

- Michigan Avenue provides direct access to Santa Monica High School (Samohi). Students from most areas of the City can easily travel north or south to Michigan Avenue for a direct link to the campus.
- For cyclists in the neighborhood headed to points east or west, the closest bike facilities are Broadway and Pearl Street. Accessing both of these streets requires crossing Pico Boulevard or Olympic Boulevard, which are both busy thoroughfares. The Michigan Avenue Neighborhood Greenway would provide a convenient facility for those living within the neighborhood.

Ability to serve local community need:

- As of the 2010 US Census, the 90404 ZIP code (which is roughly the same borders of the Pico Neighborhood) has many young and senior residents. Fourteen percent of the residents are younger than 18 years old and 13% are 65 or older. Portions of each cohort depend on walking, biking, and transit for independence and mobility.
- Eighteen percent of residents 16 and older commute to work by walking, biking, and transit. This percentage will undoubtedly increase upon the opening of the Expo line.
- According to the [Youth Wellbeing Report Card](#), 1 in 4 SMMUSD students residing in 90404 were unable to pass at least 4 of 6 State physical fitness tests, which is the highest of the City's ZIP codes. Providing more opportunities for active transportation will work toward reversing this.

Michigan Avenue is used as a shortcut.

- Automobile volumes along Michigan Avenue between Lincoln Boulevard and 11th Street are much higher than would otherwise be expected given adjacent land uses. This indicates that motorists are using Michigan Avenue, a neighborhood street as designated by the LUCE, as a shortcut to avoid using Olympic, Pico, and Lincoln Boulevards.
- The LUCE sets forth the following guidelines (p 4.0-20) for Neighborhood Streets:
  - “Set design speed at below 25 mph so that bicycles can share travel lane with cars and pedestrians can safely walk across the street at any location.”
  - “Discourage regional traffic from using these streets.”
- The route of the Michigan Avenue Neighborhood Greenway is also designated as a Bikeway in the LUCE, which states (p. 4.0-21):
  - “Design street as a bicycle boulevard, with physical measures to reduce motor vehicles and volumes so that cyclists can comfortably share lanes with autos where right-of-way is not available for bicycle lanes.”

### Outreach

The attached report also summarizes feedback received from the community at the first community workshop hosted on March 16, 2013. Fifty-four members attended and participated in one of four walking or biking tours of the corridor. At the workshop, many identified traffic volumes and speeds as major issues for the study area, which they'd

like to see addressed through traffic calming and a more multi-modal emphasis on the street. Overall, attendees were supportive of the effort to improve the walking and biking environment. A few participants expressed concerns regarding gentrification and the fact that the project must be something that is designed for and by the community.

Many participants expressed the need for pedestrian enhancements to the sidewalk and the need to introduce improvements for bicyclists of all ages and abilities. A few comments discussed the need to “think big” and introduce improvements such as dedicated bike facilities and sidewalk widening. Detailed pedestrian and cyclist feedback is mapped on pages 16 and 17 of Attachment A.

In addition to the workshop, staff has also presented the project to the following boards and commissions:

- Task Force on the Environment
- Recreation and Parks Commission
- Disabilities Commission
- Commission on the Status of Women
- Commission for the Senior Community
- Social Services Commission

#### Next Steps

On September 21, 2013, the City will host the second workshop for the project. Held along the central portion of the Greenway on Michigan Avenue between 9th and Euclid Streets, this unique event will present a number of “pop-up” temporary installations that are representative of possible measures for the three-mile corridor. Examples of the temporary installations that participants should expect to see include curb extensions, enhanced landscaping, places for impromptu neighborhood interactions, wayfinding signage, and traffic calming measures. Participants will be able to experience the elements and provide feedback. Food, entertainment, and family-friendly interactive activities will also be a part of this event.

At the workshop, staff will present three alternatives for the Greenway to the public. The first alternative makes use of neighborhood traffic circles to control automobile speeds and volumes. The proposed traffic circles would be smaller than the existing roundabout at 26th Street and Washington Avenue. Additionally, automobiles travelling eastbound or westbound on Michigan Avenue would be required to turn left or right at 11th Street, eliminating the ability to use the corridor as a shortcut. The trade-off is that this restriction would also apply to residents, requiring them to reroute.

The second alternative employs slow movement intersections and chicanes to reduce automobile speeds. Similar to the intersection of Longfellow Street and Ozone Street, slow movement intersections make use of varied paving colors and patterns to indicate that the intersection is space shared among all road users. Chicanes cause the roadway to appear narrower, resulting in slower travel. Chicanes may result in the loss of some on-street parking at locations along the Greenway, and the more extensive curb changes could increase project construction costs.

The third alternative introduces a two-way cycle track along the north side of Michigan Avenue between Lincoln Boulevard and 20th Street. A cycle track is a bike facility that is separated from automobile traffic with a physical barrier, creating a comfortable place for cyclists. This alternative would necessitate the removal of on-street parking along the north side of Michigan Avenue. Increased on-street parking in the neighborhood through perpendicular striping on adjacent streets could be explored to minimize the net loss.

Consistent elements among all alternatives include wayfinding signage, enhanced landscaping, places for neighbor interaction, and opportunities for public art.

The project is currently in the outreach and conceptual design phase, using funding from a Caltrans Environmental Justice grant. The next steps are to seek funding for schematic and final design; obtain necessary permits from related agencies, including Caltrans; and pursue project construction funding. The City applied and has been recommended by Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) staff for funding to construct a portion of the project along Michigan Avenue between 9th and 19th Streets. The Metro Board adoption of Call for Project recommendations is scheduled for September 26, 2013. Additional construction money will be needed for the project.

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### **Attachments**

A. Opportunities and Constraints Report