

Mono Basin Regional Planning Advisory Committee
Special Meeting Minutes
Thursday, February 17, 2022, 5:30pm
remote/virtual meeting via Zoom/conference call

Members present: Kevin Brown, Lisa Cutting, Duncan King, Elin Ljung, Bartshe Miller. **Members absent:** Ronda Kauk.

Public attendees & presenters: Mono County: Bentley Regehr, Wendy Sugimura. Caltrans: Jacob Burkholder, Mike Collins, Ryan Spaulding, Jill Tognazzini. Public: Grace Anderson, Lynn Boulton, Janet Carle, Margaret Eissler, Ken Harrison (KIBS/KBOV), Stephanie Heller (USFS), Amy Lewis, Nora Livingston, Chris Lizza, John Ljung, Ilene Mandelbaum, Dave Marquart, Paul McFarland, Connie Millar, David Rosky, Karl Seiberling, Jake Suppa, Dan Taylor, Didi Tergesen, Margy Verba, (760) 914-3610, zoomroom@monocoe.org.

1. Call to order & pledge of allegiance: 5:32pm

2. Public comment: none

3. Workshop on Lee Vining Main Street Rehabilitation Draft Initial Study and potential 5:35pm action to approve a comment letter or recommended street configuration. Project information available at <https://deavpm.wixsite.com/d9lvrehab>:

Kevin gave a summary of the project. Mike Collins (Caltrans engineer) clarified that this process is structured to separate design elements from paving elements so there's more time for the community to be involved in design elements.

Kevin gave a summary of what the Mono Basin Community Plan says about transportation:

The Mono Basin Vision (p. 13): "...Small, compact communities. ... Our low-density limited development patterns lead to a small-town rural character, featuring a walkable town with public gathering spaces..."

Issues/Opportunities/Constraints (p. 15-16): "10. The physical layout of Lee Vining's Main Street area, where a five-lane highway under the authority of Caltrans bisects the corridor, creates challenges for establishing a vibrant, walkable commercial area, ensuring safe and convenient pedestrian crossings, and creating physical connectivity between the east and west sides of the highway."

Mono Basin Goals & Policies (p. 17-30)

Goal 1, Objective E: "Promote well-planned and functional community uses that retain small-town character and increase quality of life."

Policy 3 (p. 22): consider relocating Caltrans/County yards, including to "improve connectivity between the high school, park, community center, USFS visitor center and the community." [no specific actions listed]

Policy 5 (p. 23): "Parking standards should contribute to business viability and residential livability." [Action 5.1 and 5.2 – related to relaxing commercial requirements for parking/paving, and investigating residential parking needs]

Policy 6 (p. 23): "Provide safe and convenient pedestrian and biking facilities, working with Caltrans when applicable, to reduce vehicular traffic, increase local livability, and encourage visitors to explore town."

Action 6.1: Prioritize pedestrian safety facilities and improvements on Highway 395 over other facility improvements and as consistent with goals and policies in the Circulation Element of the General Plan, with an emphasis on the Livable Communities section, and Objectives A and D in the Mono Basin Policies. (See Appendix A.)

Action 6.2: Emphasize safe travel for pedestrians to community and activity centers, such as schools, parks, library, museums and visitor centers.

Action 6.3: Support transit connections in Mono City and Lee Vining that provide local and regional connections for residents and visitors consistent with the Circulation Element of the General Plan.

Action 6.4: Initiate community discussions to consider pedestrian and street lighting in appropriate locations for safety, connectivity, and comfort and ensure compliance with Dark Sky Regulations.

Action 6.5: Pursue the Livable Communities goals and policies in the Circulation Element of the General Plan.

Action 6.6: Pursue Objective D of the Mono Basin Policies in the Circulation Element of the General Plan to make progress toward a comprehensive streetscape plan for the Lee Vining Main Street area that enhances pedestrian safety, connectivity (including trails), and makes Lee Vining a more attractive place to walk, live and work. (See Appendix A.)

Action 6.7: Support installation of a bus stop in front of the County Yard in Lee Vining that is accessible to pedestrians.

Questions/comments/etc. for Caltrans:

Q: Explain the difference in the pavement options that people need to comment on?

A: Will look the same regardless of option 1 or 2. Reconstructing all pavement would take more time, be more expensive, would allow Caltrans to change some grades, would last 40 years before major pavement maintenance needed but chipseal etc. needed in between. Other option is a "mill & fill" outside of town grinder takes off several inches of old asphalt and then pave back that same depth with new asphalt, not as intensive of a pavement rehab and would give 20 years of pavement life, quicker operation and less expensive.

Q: What needs input before March 4 and what can happen later?

A: Things that need to be defined right now: pavement alternative, drainage, 3 lanes vs. 5 lanes, bulb-outs or not (increase pedestrian safety but the tradeoff is that snow removal happens more slowly).

Q: Is there a significant difference in ambient noise created by road travel in the two different pavement strategies? For example, a chipsealed road is louder.

A: Either option would do reduce road noise. Contractors are held to a smoothness spec when they pave, no chip seal now.

Q: If the more expensive pavement option is selected, would that prevent some of the design options community might want?

A: Yes, there is that possibility. One of the largest asset targets is pavement miles; have to meet primary targets and with the leftover money can meet other targets. Staff coming from Los Angeles to study the pavement substrate; their findings will influence pavement alternative choice. They will consider differences as a 20-year vs. 40-year pavement life. Concrete is more expensive than asphalt; wider sidewalks and narrower asphalt will be more expensive to construct.

Q: Where does the narrowing of the lanes begin and end outside/near town? Near the high school there's a potential bioswale that looks like it's in the school property; could the project shrink the lanes near the school so there would be room for the bioswale but not destroy the landscaping that lines the high school?

A: Where sports field and mature trees are below the road grade a bioswale wouldn't work; would need to be a pipe that runs water north of the field. Considering a swale near the maintenance stations to create potential for landscaping because the road is flush with those properties. At driveway to high school the water would go into a pipe. Would transition between 5 and 3 lanes north of the high school, important to provide a passing opportunity between town and Mono Lake.

Comments: South of town at the walled section there's no use for 5 lanes but a great need for better pedestrian safety and bike lane and/or parking/snow storage, snow could be stored between end of wall and Tioga Green instead of near the Lee Vining Creek Trail where it's stored now, encouraged a bike lane and sidewalk to a roundabout at Highway 120 junction to help transition traffic to 3 lanes.

Response: Have considered a roundabout and there's no way state could afford it. Doing this project thru town wouldn't preclude a roundabout in 5–10 more years.

Q: Does either pavement option preclude dealing with humps through town?

A: Core in-town Lee Vining would be fully reconstructed no matter the alternative chosen. Can adjust grades but in a constrained area can only do so much to match grades of buildings and properties and accessibility requirements (can adjust by roughly 6 inches but not dramatic changes).

Q: Nobody in town wants to keep 5 lanes. What does Caltrans need to go ahead with 3 lanes?

A: Feedback from everyone is needed.

Q: What's Caltrans' take on diagonal parking? Doesn't seem safe to back out into traffic or back in to park.

A: Caltrans is okay with angled parking on Highway 395. Lee Vining probably doesn't need angled parking throughout the whole town but in certain spots would be helpful like in front of the Mono Market. State prefers back-in parking because of studies and the maneuver required to back into a spot is safer than the maneuver of backing out into traffic. Would consider head-in parking if there's a strong feeling against back-in parking.

Q: What's the amount of space required for angled parking to work? People like to U-turn just south of the Market; would that still work?

A: It would be a tighter U-turn with 3 lanes and would probably be safer to drive to Utility Road to turn around. Angled parking is 18–20 feet wide: wouldn't be room to provide a back-in/pull-in lane: people pulling in and out of spots helps to slow traffic.

Comment: Supports option B: solves two big issues that have existed for a long time, traffic calming and lack of parking. Mixed parking is appropriate to accommodate trucks/RVs that can't use angled parking. Back-in parking is THE solution and much safer than head-in parking, safety advantage of back-in parking is that car occupants open doors and migrate to the sidewalk and open trunk near the sidewalk instead of toward the traffic. Cites Community Plan Objective E, Policy 5 regarding need for parking in town.

Q: Is there any suggestion to change the speed limit through town? Is a 25 mph speed limit an option like in some of the other towns to the south of us?

A: Adjustment of speed limit would be done after the build of this project.

Q: How many more spots would we get with just parallel vs. a mix of angled? Block of Bronze Bear and Market would make sense for angled parking and Mono Cone parking needs help.

A: Chris Lizza calculated the difference once and at the Market it would go from 5 to 20 spots with back-in angled parking. Caltrans agrees about parallel parking for trucks/RVs along the wall south of town. Caltrans has identified some awkward parking spot in town that need work: Lake View Lodge on east side of town, Mono Cone, Shell Station.

Comment: Concern with angled and mixed parking would be compromising large sidewalks, which signal to people to slow down. Biggest priority is traffic calming. Don't give way to parking for a few months

instead of larger sidewalks and a downtown feel for locals all year long.

Response: Another potential option is a large bulb-out or gateway structure to define the entry point into town.

Q: How will we know what alternative you choose?

A: We'll come back to the RPAC and let everyone know. Final environmental document will indicate what pavement alternative was chosen; due April 1.

Comment: Entering town traveling southbound is a huge wide expanse. Reinforce the calming efforts as far north of town as possible to calm southbound traffic entering town from the north.

Discussion in the chat about street trees: Community would like them to be preserved. They'll be a topic of discussion later on.

Discussion about the RPAC letter:

Letter introduces what RPAC is, describes the Mono Basin Community Plan, uses Community Plan as a reminder of the values related to transportation, includes Community Plan bullets about transportation and street character, states that the RPAC supports seven aspects of the project: 3 lanes, bike lanes, wider sidewalks, bulb-outs, pedestrian-scale lighting, landscaping, drainage infrastructure to stop erosion problems.

Comments: Would like to see a reference to the parking problem as reflected in community plan as the need for parking is acute, but shouldn't go so far as to voice an opinion on how to deal with the parking issue because RPAC may not represent the greater community on that point.

Add in a reference to actual Complete Streets policy.

Would like to see a little more excitement from community in the letter.

Ffantastic project, well reflected in Community Plan, traffic calming strategies are so important, echo call for a little more enthusiasm, urge saving money for design features. Support build alternative 1.

Duncan moves to approve the letter with amendments, Lisa seconds, approved unanimously with four changes (mix of parking, reference Complete Streets, more enthusiasm, RPAC supports Build Alternative 1).

4. Adjourned to next meeting, March 9, 2022: 7:05pm