

City of Las Vegas

AGENDA MEMO

CITY COUNCIL MEETING DATE: DECEMBER 3, 2008
DEPARTMENT: PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT
ITEM DESCRIPTION: DIR-29999 APPLICANT/OWNER: CITY OF LAS VEGAS

**** CONDITIONS ****

The Planning Commission (6-0 vote) and staff recommend APPROVAL.

**** STAFF REPORT ****

APPLICATION REQUEST

This request is for acceptance of the Las Vegas Downtown Pedestrian Circulation Study conducted by Kimley-Horn and Associates in association with the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada. The study is intended to be used as a resource in future policy or budgetary decisions regarding pedestrian facilities in the Downtown area.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (RTC) retained a consulting team from Kimley-Horn and Associates to conduct a comprehensive study examining existing pedestrian facilities and circulation patterns in the downtown area. The goal of the study was to recommend ways to improve walkability downtown and attract pedestrians to this area. Recommendations were offered in the areas of pedestrian policy, programs and improved facilities.

Staff recommends acceptance of the Las Vegas Downtown Pedestrian Circulation Study to be used as a resource in future policy or budgetary decisions regarding pedestrian facilities in Downtown Las Vegas.

BACKGROUND

In recent years, downtown Las Vegas has seen increased development activity, particularly investment in high-rise, high-density mixed-use redevelopment projects. One of the city's goals for downtown redevelopment is to foster social interaction through the creation of an urban village concept that contains residences, small-scale retail stores, restaurants, and art galleries. Many of these newer projects are designed to reduce traffic congestion, increase walkability and facilitate access to transit. To realize this goal, some of the current downtown pedestrian facilities will need to be improved.

Funded through the Unified Planning Work Program, the Las Vegas Downtown Pedestrian Circulation Study is a 10-year improvement plan to make pedestrian travel in the central business district safer, more attractive and inviting to residents and visitors alike. It builds upon the findings from an earlier RTC document, the Downtown Traffic Capacity, Transit, and Parking Needs Study, a master transportation plan for Downtown which emphasized the need for pedestrian and bicycle amenities typically associated with an urban core while preserving or expanding capacity on certain arterial streets in and around Downtown.

Actions associated with the proposed study:

| Date | Action |
|-------------|--|
| 07/07 | The RTC released the Downtown Traffic Capacity, Transit and Parking Needs Study completed by Kimley-Horn and Associates. |
| 12/04/07 | The first Technical Working Group meeting was held. |
| 02/26/08 | The second Technical Working Group meeting was held. |
| 03/25/08 | The third Technical Working Group meeting was held. |
| 05/06/08 | The final Technical Working Group meeting was held. |
| 05/27/08 | The RTC Metropolitan Planning Subcommittee received the Downtown Pedestrian Circulation Study final report. |
| 05/28/08 | The RTC Transportation Access Advisory Committee received the Downtown Pedestrian Circulation Study final report. |
| 05/29/08 | The RTC Executive Advisory Committee received the Downtown Pedestrian Circulation Study final report. |
| 06/10/08 | The RTC released the Downtown Pedestrian Circulation Study final report. |

ANALYSIS

Study Area

The project study area differs from the downtown boundaries defined by the Las Vegas Downtown Centennial Plan. It includes the area generally bounded by Washington Avenue on the north, Martin Luther King Boulevard or I-15 to the west, Sahara Avenue on the south and Maryland Parkway on the east. For locations inside the study area but outside of the Downtown Overlay District, the study recommended that the city adopt standards consistent with the Downtown Centennial Plan to promote mobility and safety.

Stakeholders

The consultants were guided in their study by a technical working group consisting of representatives of local governmental agencies and the Downtown Alliance. The city of Las Vegas contributed members from the Office of Business Development, Planning and Development, Leisure Services, Detention and Enforcement and Public Works Departments to the working group. The group met four times over the course of a six-month period to address issues during each phase of the study.

Data Collection

Information used for analysis in the study came from several sources, primarily from a previous study conducted by the consultants regarding downtown traffic capacity, transit and parking needs. The city of Las Vegas provided current and projected land use data. The Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department and Nevada Department of Transportation provided pedestrian and vehicle crash data for use in the study.

Recommendations

- The study recommended that the city continue to implement Las Vegas Downtown Centennial Plan streetscape requirements, including widened sidewalks, planters and landscaping themes. While streetscape improvements would be largely paid for by developers, federal surface transportation allocations (SAFETEA-LU or its successor), the Southern Nevada Public Land Management Act (SNPLMA), Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), Tax Increment Financing (TIFs) and Special Improvement Districts (SIDs) were suggested as funding mechanisms to bring existing unimproved streetscape facilities into compliance with the Centennial Plan standards.
- Pedestrian bridges were proposed as a way to reduce conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians and to increase the level of service at intersections where they are constructed. Currently, the Cultural Corridor Bridge across Las Vegas Boulevard is completing the final design stage. Pedestrian bridges were also proposed at various intersections downtown, most notably at Sahara Avenue and Las Vegas Boulevard, which currently has a level of service of F. Traffic volumes are expected to stay the same or increase over the next 10 years.
- The study used a city-initiated streetlight inventory to evaluate safety and mobility along downtown streets. Inconsistent street lighting was noted, especially in the Arts District south of Charleston, contributing to the perception that the area is unsafe. It was recommended that streetlights be added as part of any future redevelopment plans in this area. The Complete Streets Act, passed by Congress in 2008, now requires the RTC to consider the safety and convenience of pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users, including children, the elderly and the disabled when designing and implementing transportation projects. RTC will incorporate these policies into its next Regional Transportation Plan update.
- The study recognized that major downtown transportation corridors, namely I-15, I-515/U.S. 95, and the Union Pacific Railroad are major barriers to pedestrian mobility to and from the study area. It was recommended that planners coordinate with NDOT to address undercrossings and entry points so as to increase pedestrian access to the downtown.

Next Steps

The study has been accepted by the RTCs Metropolitan Planning Subcommittee, Transportation Access Advisory Committee and Executive Advisory Committee. Sources of funding for proposed pedestrian improvements now need to be explored. Wide community support for the studys recommendations will then be sought.

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATIONS NOTIFIED N/A

ASSEMBLY DISTRICT N/A

SENATE DISTRICT N/A

NOTICES MAILED N/A

APPROVALS 0

PROTESTS 0