**To:** Members of the County Disability Advisory Commission, Physical Access Subcommittee

**Subject:** Re-Imagine North Watt Corridor Plan

**Location/District:** North Watt Avenue (Antelope Road to Peacekeeper Way)

**Recommendation:** Review and Comment

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**Summary:** The purpose of this project is to build on the efforts of the 2012 North Watt Avenue Corridor Plan (NWCAP), Green Means Go (GMG) program, and Placer-Sacramento Gateway Corridor Plan (PSGC) to re-imagine North Watt Avenue as a multimodal, sustainable, and safe corridor to better serve jobs, housing, redevelopment opportunities, and disadvantaged communities. There are several existing constraints and challenges, which include the inconsistent right-of-way and frontage, high vehicular volumes, and speeds, to be considered during this process.

The Purpose and Need Statement for the study has been identified as the following:

North Watt Avenue is currently a high speed and high traffic volume corridor through North Highlands, which is an Environmental Justice Community. North Watt serves local access for the surrounding residential, commercial, and employment centers while also acting as a commuter corridor for through traffic. The corridor is currently characterized by:

* Inconsistent sidewalk and bicycle facilities: Several sections of the corridor are missing these facilities. Bike lanes and sidewalks which do exist are inconsistent in horizontal clearance, width, and alignment, creating a challenging environment to navigate for vulnerable road users.
* Lack of access to key locations and services: Several locations throughout the corridor do not meet current design standards for access by users of all abilities. Transit stops lack shade, shelter, benches, and other amenities that make them accessible for the travelling public.
* Growing vehicular demand: While the corridor does not currently incur excessive delays or queueing for vehicle traffic, demand is expected to grow significantly in the next 20 years. This growth is tied to both redevelopment in the local area, as well as regional growth.
* High collision rates at key intersections: North Watt Avenue and Elkhorn Boulevard was identified in the County’s Local Roadway Safety Plan as a high collision location.

This project seeks to re-imagine North Watt Avenue between the intersections of Peacekeeper Way and Antelope Road as a multimodal, sustainable, and safe corridor that meets the needs of all users today and in the future. A successful project will do the following:

* Improve access for pedestrians and bicyclists, which will allow for connectivity along the entire corridor for all users and create a more comfortable and safer traveling environment for vulnerable road users.
* These facilities will meet current ADA requirements and County design standards, informed by State (AB 1358) and Caltrans (DP-37) complete street guidance and best practices.
* Support transit services by providing infrastructure which improves the transit user experience.
* Accommodate future growth without excessive traffic congestion.
* Improve safety for all road users, particularly at locations identified as higher collision risk.

The project has currently completed its review for existing conditions and alternative identification, screening, and evaluation. The project has completed two rounds of public outreach and engagement and has begun on the final round of public review for two remaining alternatives. These two alternatives are:

1. **Minimal Impact** – The current cross section will be maintained for most of the corridor with the focus of the project on filling in gaps in sidewalks and bike lanes, meeting current accessibility requirements, and meeting current County design standards. The sidewalk will be separated from the roadway with a planting strip where possible with minimal impacts to local residences and businesses.
2. **Hybrid Urban Boulevard**- Widen Watt Avenue to accommodate six lanes for most of the study corridor and incorporate the existing frontage road on the residential east side of Watt into a consistent one-way frontage road. The outside travel lanes could be converted to bus only lanes, if supported by a future bus rapid transit (BRT) study or plan. Add Class IV protected bike lanes on both sides of Watt Avenue, except in select locations on the east side where bikes will be encouraged to use a Class III shared facility on the frontage road. Fill gaps in sidewalks, meeting current accessibility requirements and current County design standards. The sidewalk will be separated from the roadway with a planting strip where possible.

These alternatives were moved forward and refined based on the public comments and survey responses received by the team. The most common requests from the community were to improve safety along the corridor and to improve pedestrian, transit, and bicycle facilities. The most common requests in the comments received online were:

* Address pavement quality
* Close gaps in the pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure
* Improve accessibility
* Add lanes (either direct requests or requests to reduce vehicle congestion)
* Improve lighting conditions

Additionally, we heard from stakeholder outreach and at the public workshops that there is a desire to minimize the right of way and parking impacts to adjacent parcels along the corridor.

Attached to this report are concept plans for the two options shown on corridor aerials. These are not design plans and will undergo significant refinement through later study and design phases before one is implemented on the corridor. These plans do not reflect full details of the corridor plan, many aspects of which will come through as policies that will be applied at the project design stage.

**Funding Source(s):** Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant

**Background Information:** The project is approximately 3.0 miles long and is a well-traveled corridor, with commercial shopping centers, residential developments, and institutional facilities which include churches, schools, and community centers. Historically, the North Watt Avenue corridor has high traffic volumes, speeds, and a lack of complete streets and traffic calming features. Additionally, safety is a key issue for the project corridor and was identified in the Active Transportation Plan as a high injury corridor. North Watt Avenue generally has four and six travel lanes with a striped or landscaped median. Posted speed limits within the project corridor ranges from 35 to 45 mph. The right-of-way (ROW) of the North Watt Avenue corridor varies from 70 to 90 feet, putting forth challenges and opportunities for better street design.