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Final Project Assessment

Pima County/Tucson Safe Routes to School and
Bicycle/Pedestrian Education Program

Safe Routes to School Improvement Projects for Pilot
Elementary Schools, Tucson, AZ

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Project Assessment – Phase II Safe Routes to School Improvements

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Project Assessment – Phase II Safe Routes to School Improvements

SECTION 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Scoping Letter has been prepared to present project improvement information for the pilot schools of the Pima County-Tucson Safe Routes to School and Bicycle/Pedestrian Education Program. The program is a community-based initiative at eight pilot elementary schools in unincorporated Pima County and within the City of Tucson to develop safer routes for children to walk and bike to school and to teach children the most effective and safe methods of travel.

The Safe Routes program is divided into two phases: Phase I focuses on the Safe Routes to School planning process and bike/pedestrian education component. Phase I includes the identification of proposed minor improvement projects as well as major bicycle and pedestrian capital projects to improve bicycle and pedestrian safety and access to the schools.

The Safe Routes to Schools planning process involves the bringing together of children, parents, teachers, principals, and staff to identify traffic problem areas and barriers, security concerns, and solutions. The ongoing bike/pedestrian education component of Phase I provides pedestrian safety education to 2nd grade students and bike safety education to 4th grade students within the pilot elementary schools. Implementation of Phase I began in 2006 and further information on this phase is summarized in section 2.

Phase II includes design and construction of a limited number of near-term minor improvement projects. Additional funding has also been secured for the pilot schools from the Transportation Enhancements program and from the Pima Association of Governments Regional Transportation Authority in order to design and construct major Safe Routes capital improvement projects that were identified in the planning process.

The purpose of this Scoping Letter is to describe Phase II minor infrastructure improvement at the schools. These improvements have been identified through activities of Phase I of the Safe Routes program, including a walkabout with the school, neighborhood residents, and project staff and an assessment of routes and walking conditions for the students.

The Safe Routes to Schools project location map is presented in Exhibit 1 on the following page. The selected pilot elementary schools include: Butterfield (3400 W. Massingale), Homer Davis (4250 N. Romero), Laguna (5001 N. Shannon), Brichta (2110 W. Brichta), Agua Caliente (11420 E. Limberlost), Howell (401 N. Irving), Hughes (700 N. Wilson), and Santa Clara (6910 S. Santa Clara Ave).

The total estimated cost of the Pima County-Tucson Safe Routes to School and Bicycle/Pedestrian Education Program is \$505,100. Approximately \$270,000 of the estimated cost is for the implementation of Phase I. The Phase II improvements are estimated at \$222,737. Federal TE funds cover 94.3% of

project costs and Pima County and City of Tucson are providing 5.7% in matching funds.

It is anticipated that detailed design of the project will begin in the late spring of 2008. Construction is planned to begin in October 2008 and be complete by June 2009.

SECTION 2.0 BACKGROUND DATA

The Safe Routes Program is modeled after current programs in the U.S. and internationally that focus on the "Four E's" of pedestrian and bicycle safety: The Encouragement approach uses promotional material and special events and contests to attract students to try walking and biking; the Education approach teaches students important traffic safety skills and launches driver safety campaigns; the Engineering approach focuses on creating necessary bicycle and pedestrian facilities; and the Enforcement approach targets driver, bicyclist and pedestrian behavior to reduce motorist traffic speeds and traffic violations by all roadway users.

The original grant was written to include eight pilot elementary schools from around the Tucson-Pima County Region. Of the original eight schools, three chose not to participate (Roskrige, Mission Manor and Craycroft Elementary Schools). These three schools were replaced by schools that showed a desire to participate (Hughes, Santa Clara and Homer Davis Elementary Schools). The eight schools shown in Exhibit 1 have participated in the Phase I activities outlined below and will therefore be the eight schools included in Phase II demonstration projects.

Major aspects of Phase I of the Safe Routes Program have been implemented, including:

- Working with children, parents, PTA's, teachers, principals, planners, engineers, police, school districts, and others to identify traffic problem areas and barriers, security concerns, and solutions.
- Setting up "Walking School Buses" to travel in parent-led small groups between home and school.
- Working with school staff and volunteers to teach bicycle and walking safety to children.
- Documenting "before" conditions of the number of children walking, bicycling, using the bus, and being driven to school.
- Providing promotional material and newsletters on the program to the pilot schools, the media, public, and other schools interested in starting their own programs.

- Supporting school participation in special events such as the annual International Walk to School Day held in the fall and the annual Walk n' Roll to School Day held in the spring.

It is also important to note that in partnership with the Tucson Unified School District, the Pima County-Tucson Safe Routes to School Program provided local funding to support construction by TUSD of new sidewalks on both the north and west sides of Peter Howell Elementary School. The opportunity was identified as part of the Phase I process and construction was completed in 2006.

Larger improvement projects have also been identified at Homer Davis, Laguna, Agua Caliente and Hughes Elementary Schools. The projects at Homer Davis and Laguna Elementary Schools are being funded with Transportation Enhancement Funds. Regional Transportation Authority funds will be used for the projects at Agua Caliente and Hughes Elementary School. Additionally the neighborhoods around Santa Clara and Brichta Elementary School have privately funded traffic calming projects around the schools to enhance the safety of students traveling to and from school.

SECTION 3.0 PROJECT SCOPE

The Safe Routes Program is being developed as a community and family-based initiative to provide improved and low-cost transportation options to and from schools. This is achieved through enhanced traffic safety education, development of better route connections and facilities between neighborhoods and schools, improved neighborhood and school-area security, promotional materials and activities, and other methods to allow children to more safely walk and bicycle to school. This section focuses on the proposed minor improvement projects identified for Phase II implementation.

Phase II Project Development

Minor Improvement projects are proposed for each of the eight pilot elementary schools. Key tasks in the development process are:

- Coordination with neighbors, school officials, city and county engineers for implementation of proposed improvements.
- Finalizing the locations of speed humps and tables on design documents
- Administration of the construction contract by Pima County

Improvements for the pilot schools were selected through walkabouts at the schools and further study of available engineering treatments to enhance and encourage bicycling and walking to school. The improvements include construction of pedestrian and bicycle safety speed humps and tables on local streets surrounding the school where the principle bicycle and walking routes are

focused. Speed control on both major streets and minor streets was a main concern of the schools' walkabout participants, especially for the schoolchildren.

Due to lack of sidewalks in many of the neighborhoods within the enrollment area of the schools, children often must walk and bicycle directly on the local streets serving the school. The implementation of sidewalks in the neighborhoods would be a multi-million dollar investment that is not considered as part of the minor improvement projects. Installation of the pedestrian and bicycle safety speed humps and tables will be within the roadway cross section and will not involve disturbing the existing pavement.

SECTION 9.0 PROJECT DESIGN SCHEDULE

The final determination of location for devices and collection of neighbor signatures (60% approval required by City of Tucson and Pima County) will begin in late spring 2008. Construction will begin in October 2008, with completion within Pima County fiscal year 2009 (July 2008 – June 2009).