

EMERYVILLE PLANNING COMMISSION

STAFF REPORT

Agenda Date: March 27, 2008

Report Date: March 20, 2008

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Planning and Building Department

SUBJECT: **South Bayfront Pedestrian-Bicycle Bridge – Study Session**

LOCATION: Over the main railroad tracks at Temescal Creek between Bay Street Center (near Ohlone Way and Bay Street) and the site of the future Horton Landing Park and Emeryville Greenway (near Horton Street)

BACKGROUND

Emeryville's Capital Improvement Program includes a pedestrian-bicycle bridge connecting Bay Street to the future southern portion of the Emeryville Greenway (PB-02-South Bayfront Pedestrian/Bicycle Overcrossing). This bridge is shown in the Emeryville Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan and the existing (1987) General Plan. The Redevelopment Agency, South Bayfront Pedestrian-Bicycle Bridge Committee and design team have been working since spring of 2007 to develop bridge and ramp alignments and bridge type options. Illustrations of the bridge alignment and options, along with ideas for the park on the east side, are attached. After a meeting with the Bicycle/Pedestrian Advisory Subcommittee in September 2007 and the first public workshop in December 2007, the Redevelopment Agency approved bridge and ramp alignments. A second community workshop was held on March 8, 2008; comments are summarized below. The South Bayfront Pedestrian-Bicycle Bridge Committee will meet on March 24, 2008 to discuss workshop comments and recommend options. The outcome of that discussion will be reported at the Planning Commission meeting on March 27, 2008.

CONCEPTS FOR DISCUSSION

At this point, the design team is looking for direction on four topics: bridge type, replacement of the garage bridge, elevator(s), and the concept design for Horton Landing Park. These issues are discussed below.

Bridge type. The design team has identified five bridge options: truss, basket-handle tied arch, butterfly tied arch, single tied arch, and cable stay. All are within the project budget. The truss is most similar to the existing bridge between the garages, and could be built with a curved or boxy structure; it would probably be slightly less expensive than the other options. The basket-handle tied arch is the type that was used on Berkeley's bicycle-pedestrian bridge over I-80. The

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butterfly tied arch could provide a more expansive experience from the bridge deck than the basket-handle tied arch. The single tied arch is uniquely simple, and could be designed with a straight or curved deck. The cable stay is the tallest bridge type, and would be visible east and west of the nearest buildings, but would not be visible from Ohlone Way in Bay Street Center.

Replacement of garage bridge. The western ramp would cross the vehicular bridge between the Bay Street garages (which has significantly less traffic than ground-level alignments that were explored). The existing bridge is a truss bridge. It could be kept with the addition of columns, but the truss would have to remain. The truss would obscure views of the new bridge, restrict options for pedestrian landings, and constrain equipment access for construction of the new bridge. Demolition and replacement of the garage bridge would add cost, but would be within the budget for the new bridge. Temporary false work would be used to provide vehicular access during bridge replacement.

Elevator(s). The west landing would connect to a path through the Bay Street garage to an elevator. Initially, the South Bayfront Pedestrian-Bicycle Committee and the City Council were not contemplating an elevator on either side, due to cost and experience with maintenance of the Amtrak bridge elevator. After the committee saw the ramp lengths marked with cones, they asked the City Council for permission to consider elevator(s), and the City Council agreed. The design consultants informed the committee that pedestrian bridge elevators with open designs are easier to maintain. Cyclists prefer to use ramps so they do not have to dismount. Keeping the ramps and adding an elevator would increase the cost. The City Council agreed that if elevators are added, the bridge budget should be increased accordingly.

Horton Landing Park. Novartis (formerly Chiron) is obligated to remediate, design and build Horton Landing Park between the railroad tracks and Horton Street, as a condition of approval for the parking garage on Horton Street. Chiron prepared a preliminary site cleanup plan and developed a concept plan for the park, but the City asked them to wait until bridge design is underway to design the park in detail. The idea at the time was that the bridge should be constructed before the park, to ensure proper sequencing of work.

The landscape architect on the bridge design team was asked to develop a park concept plan that would accommodate the current alignment thinking, minimize structural ramp length, provide a graceful connection to the Greenway, and extend references to the Ohlone people and the native habitat eastward from Bay Street Center. The concept is to create a gentle hill in the park so the ramp can touch down closer to the bridge than it would at the current ground-level elevations. Accordingly, it appears that it would make logistical sense for Novartis to proceed with the site remediation, while consolidating the design and construction of Horton Landing Park with the design and construction of the bridge. City staff and Novartis representatives have yet to formally discuss these issues, but will do so in the coming weeks.

The park concept includes opening the old creek alignment (which is not a major flood control channel), possibly in phases, to create a wetland at the south end of the park. Comments at the public workshop included reference to play areas in the earlier Chiron plan. The final park

design could include elements of both concepts. The key questions at this point are slopes and paths relative to the bridge, stairs and ramps.

PUBLIC WORKSHOP COMMENTS

At the public workshop on March 8, strong support was expressed for the cable stay and single arch bridges, some for the butterfly and basket bridges, and almost none for the truss bridge. Replacing the garage bridge was supported. The elevator had four opponents and one supporter. General bridge comments were to consider maintenance cost, make the east ramp transparent, use green materials or the least materials, plan for visibility and safety, and be creative. Frequent park comments included making the paths wider (the drawings showed 8 feet), integrating the park with the bridge, and connecting to the greenway to the south.

NEXT STEPS

The Redevelopment Agency will consider bridge and park concept options on April 15, 2008. A preliminary design will be completed over the summer. At meetings in the fall of this year, the community, South Bayfront Pedestrian-Bicycle Bridge Committee, Bicycle-Pedestrian Subcommittee, Planning Commission and Redevelopment Agency will be asked to comment on design details such as railings and public art. The final design of the bridge and ramps should be completed and the project put out for receipt of public bids by spring of 2009; construction should be completed in the spring of 2010. The Horton Land Park design and construction process will need to be coordinated with the South Bayfront Pedestrian /Bicycle Bridge process.

RECOMMENDED COMMISSION ACTION

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission provide comments on bridge type, replacement of the existing bridge between the two Bay Street garages, elevators, and the Horton Landing Park concept.

Attachments: Schematic site plan with bridge and ramp alignments
Renderings of bridge types
Existing garage bridge and potential replacement
Horton Landing Park concept