

**CITY OF MERCED  
Development Services**

TO: Martin Luther King Jr. Way Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee  
FROM: Julie Sterling, Associate Planner  
DATE: September 20, 2011  
SUBJECT: Martin Luther King Jr. Way Revitalization Strategy – Objective 2

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ACTION REQUIRED: Study, Discussion, and Feedback Requested

DISCUSSION

We will be reviewing the fourth and final Objective to the Martin Luther King Jr. Way (Highway 59) Revitalization Strategy and discussing transportation needs, priorities, and phasing. Given what we've covered thus far, staff feels that Objective #2 brings up at least three questions for the Committee to consider:

- 1) Given strains on overall efficiency, where are projects needed to enhance the performance of the current State Highway (Martin Luther King Jr. Way) that allows for safe multi-modal use?
- 2) In addition to identifying where improvements are needed, what do you feel is the logical phasing plan for the needed improvements?
- 3) With the misaligned intersections and lack of pedestrian and bicycle features, how the highway functions is limited. What are some ideas to address these needs?

According to the *Merced Vision 2030 General Plan*, circulation is concerned with the movement of people and goods through and around the City. Transportation is concerned with the means by which these movements are made. The goal is to identify the most effective ways to plan for circulation while enhancing the community and protecting the environment.

The Focus Area has an established roadway grid system that is owned by the City, with a State Highway going through it (Martin Luther King Jr. Way). Transportation improvements can affect all users, and we can't design a street for just one user. When we look at options, we need to weigh several things. For example, an activated pedestrian crossing from a safety perspective could be considered a positive thing, but from how it affects other traffic (e.g., slowing it down), could be considered a negative thing.

### Pedestrians

There was considerable discussion at our Committee meeting in July regarding widening the sidewalk area along Martin Luther King Jr. Way for pedestrians and those with special needs. There have also been discussions to enhance pedestrian safety while crossing Martin Luther King Jr. Way, whether it be providing a pedestrian-activated crosswalk, handicap ramps, a stop sign, a traffic signal, or merely repainting the existing crosswalks.

### Bicyclists

The Committee has discussed bicycle lanes on Martin Luther King Jr. Way versus re-directing bicyclists to G and Canal Streets due to safety conflicts. One enhancement option would be to consider Canal Street as a predominant pedestrian/bicycle/transit road given the “future” improvements to one of our South Merced landmarks – McNamara Park.

### Vehicles (co-mingled with truck traffic)

You were asked to look at potential options in July that could affect how the Corridor functions including a solid median, breaks in a median, possible traffic signal(s), bulb-outs on side streets, bus turn-outs, and obstacles in diverting truck traffic to other locations. Any improvements would require Caltrans approval.

### Streets and alleys

We are looking for guidance and need the Committee’s opinion on which streets and alleys within the Focus Area would be the most beneficial to improve if funding resources became available. Considering that most of the streets and alleys are in pretty bad shape, there may be things that can be done over time if we had a priority list and a funding mechanism whether it be grants, capital improvement projects, or other funding opportunities. Please take some time between now and the meeting to walk or drive the Focus Area and make note of the top four streets or alleys that you feel should be considered for improvements and why.

### Lighting

From a safety perspective, there has been a lot of discussion from the Committee on increasing the lighting within the corridor area as well as identifying strategic locations for lighting within the Focus Area.

We now need to prioritize and look at a logical phasing plan. Anything proposed for Martin Luther King Jr. Way will require Caltrans action. As such, the Committee would need to recommend its preferences to Caltrans. Anything within the City’s right-of-way would need to be further explored with regard to timing, funding resources, and priority

of needs. Please identify where you feel additional lighting should be located if there was a funding mechanism to provide it. We will discuss some options at the meeting.

The objective is listed below:

**2. Enhance the Safety Performance of the State Highway for all Travelers/  
Support Economic Growth Through Enhancing the Movement of Goods  
and People**

The highway is a heavily traversed truck route throughout the year. In addition, Highway 59 currently serves as the primary north-south arterial through this community. Throughout the day, this heavy use causes severe strains on its overall efficiency. The study will identify where projects are needed to enhance the performance of the current state highway. Specifically, many of these improvement projects will allow for safe multimodal use. In addition to identifying where improvements are needed, the study will develop a logical phasing plan for the needed improvements. The misaligned intersections and lack of pedestrian and bicycle features limit the full functionality of the highway. Currently, there is no plan to address these needs. A thorough study will provide clear objectives and priorities, allowing progress to be made in highway system issues.