

CITY OF MERCED
Engineering Department

TO: Bicycle Advisory Commission
FROM: Ashley McComb Thanadabouth, PE, Associate Engineer
DATE: February 28, 2017
SUBJECT: Highway 59 Multi-Use Pathway Crossing Project Update

BACKGROUND

The City of Merced was awarded \$945,000.00 from the Active Transportation Program Fund in 2014 to construct a multi-use pathway and widen State Highway 59 at the BNSF railroad crossing between Olive Avenue and Cooper Avenue (ATP Grant Project 5085-045).

DISCUSSION

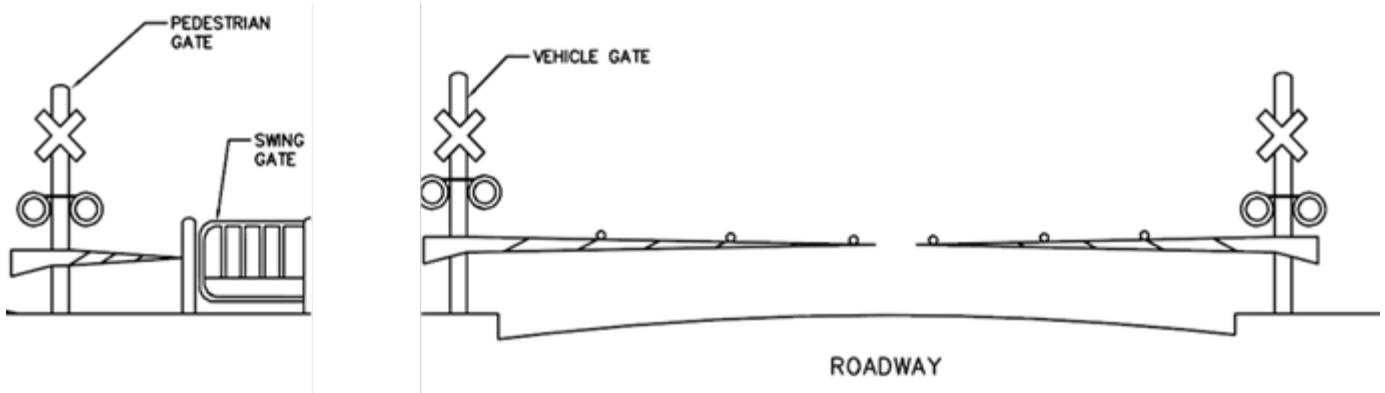
Here is a current update of the project (future dates are proposed) as follows:

- 1/17/17 - Council approved Grade Crossing Signal Installation Agreement with BNSF.
- 3/1/17 - CPUC General Order 88-B Request for Authorization to Alter Highway-Rail Crossing.
- 5/28/17 - Multiuse Pathway Crossing Design Plans to be completed.
- 6/30/17 - Construction funding allocation will be requested and available.
- Estimated cost of construction and engineering administration is \$945,000.00

City staff is nearing completion of the design of the proposed 200-foot long multi-use pathway. Where the path crosses the railroad, it was proposed to install pedestrian railroad gates to shut access when a train was present.

Caltrans and the BNSF Railroad had approved this configuration. However, this project is subject to review and approval by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC). During the review by the CPUC Engineer, the originally proposed pedestrian crossing arms are now not being recommended. Railroad flashers and bells are still proposed at the multi-use pathway crossing. It should be noted that from a safety perspective the CPUC Engineer stated that the pedestrian crossing arms are not needed.

The reason for this change is the concern that a pedestrian or bicyclists could become trapped in the rail area when the crossing arms are down. If pedestrian crossing arms are proposed, CPUC standards require the installation of swing gates within the pathway. Please refer to the exhibit below:



Pedestrian Gate and Swing Gate installation at Multiuse Path

If installed, the swing gates will permanently constrict the width of the multi-use path for the vast majority of the pathways use (i.e. time when a train is not present). Staff believes that the swing gates pose an increased risk to pathway users, particularly bicyclists at a higher speed, and diminishes the intent and purpose for constructing the multiuse pathway.

Staff invites comments and discussion of the items above.

ACTION

No Action Necessary.

ATTACHMENTS

Exhibit A – Location Map



LOCATION MAP
NOT TO SCALE



City of Merced
"Gateway to Yosemite"
DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
ENGINEERING PROJECTS AND STANDARDS
678 W. 18th Street (209) 385-6846

PROJECT NO. 115047
ATPL (045) STATE HIGHWAY 59
MULTI-USE PATH CROSSING

DR. BY: KGE
DATE: 12/2/16
CH. BY: JS
DATE: 12/2/16
File No. 0907
SCALE: NONE