TO: HONORABLE CITY COUNCIL

FROM: CITY MANAGER

DEPARTMENT: PLANNING AND COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

DATE: APRIL 16, 2007

CMR:207:07

SUBJECT: APPROVAL OF A BUDGET AMENDMENT ORDINANCE TO CREATE NEW CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (CIP) FOR THE EL CAMINO REAL/STANFORD AVENUE STREETSCAPE AND INTERSECTION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT AND ACCEPTANCE OF A COMMUNITY DESIGN AND TRANSPORTATION GRANT (CDT) FROM THE SANTA CLARA VALLEY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY (VTA) IN THE AMOUNT OF $1,334,400

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that Council:

1. Approve the attached Budget Amendment Ordinance (BAO) in the amount of $155,000 that amends the 2006-07 budget to create a new Capital Improvement Program project PL-07002 for the El Camino Real/Stanford Avenue Streetscape and Intersection Improvement Project.

2. Accept the award of $1,334,400 in federal transportation grant funds for the El Camino Real/Stanford Avenue Streetscape and Intersection Improvement Project PL-07002, to be paid on a reimbursement basis from the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority (VTA) Community Design and Transportation (CDT) capital grant program. Local match funds totaling $333,600 will be provided by the City’s CIP projects PL-98013 (School Commute Safety Improvements), PL-04010 (Bicycle Boulevards Implementation Project), and from staff time in-kind services.

3. Adopt the attached resolution authorizing the assurance of the City of Palo Alto to complete the El Camino Real/Stanford Avenue Streetscape and Intersection improvements under the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority’s Community Design for Transportation (CDT) Program and committing the necessary local match for the project.

BACKGROUND

In 2002-2003, the City of Palo Alto and the Caltrans Sacramento Headquarters Office jointly participated in a master planning study of Route 82, El Camino Real, in the City of Palo Alto. The project was funded with a $270,000 planning grant from the Caltrans Office of Community Planning. The study laid out a detailed conceptual plan for including Context Sensitive Solutions and multi-modal transportation planning throughout El Camino Real, a state highway which also
functions as a community “main street” in Palo Alto. The defined goal of the El Camino Real Master Planning Study was to use context sensitive design principles to change the character of El Camino Real from a highway designed primarily for motor vehicle mobility to:

- a fully multi-modal urban thoroughfare that maintains mobility and improves safety for transit, trucks, and autos, while improving safety and convenience for pedestrians and bicyclists
- a center of community activity rather than a barrier between activities on either side of the street
- an aesthetically attractive corridor that projects a positive image of Palo Alto
- improve quality of life along El Camino Real while protecting its adjacent neighborhoods and districts, create economic benefits for both businesses and property owners along El Camino Real
- make positive change soon with full development occurring along the length of El Camino Real incrementally over time

The Implementation and Phasing section of the study recommends construction and restriping of model intersection improvements as a Phase 1 project. A demonstration project was proposed for two locations, the El Camino Real/Stanford Avenue intersection and the El Camino/Page Mill intersection, to implement the model improvements of the corridor plan. In 2004, Caltrans confirmed its support for the project by submitting a federal Transportation Equity Act (TEA) grant application for this demonstration project, but the grant was not approved because the proposed project did not qualify as an “inter-regional project.”

In May 2006, the VTA issued a call for projects for the CDT Capital Grant Program. Approximately $8.8 million was available for eligible projects. El Camino Real is one of the defined “corridors” in the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority’s Community Design and Transportation (CDT) program. In July 2006, staff submitted two projects to the VTA for consideration under the CDT capital grant program: the California Avenue Streetscape Improvements and the El Camino Real/Stanford Avenue Streetscape and Intersection improvements. In October, the CDT scoring committee recommended funding for the El Camino Real/Stanford Avenue project and four other projects. The California Avenue Streetscape project was not recommended for funding in this cycle of grants. On December 14, 2006, the VTA Board of Directors officially approved $1,334,400 in CDT grant funding for the El Camino/Stanford Avenue project. (See Attachment D).

**DISCUSSION**

This project includes the design and construction of model improvements to implement the demonstration phase of the El Camino Real Master Design Plan developed by Caltrans and the City of Palo Alto. The project area includes the intersection of El Camino Real and Stanford Avenue and extends approximately 100 feet beyond the intersection along all four approaches to the intersection. The existing intersection conditions are shown on Exhibits E and F.

The proposed project, as shown on Exhibit G, includes installation of new corner bulbouts, realignment and enhanced/textured paving of pedestrian crosswalks, new pedestrian refuges with bollards and in-ground lighting, new storm drain outlets, widened landscape medians with plantings.
and street trees; widened sidewalks with street trees, transit amenities and street furniture. The project also includes new ornamental street and sidewalk lights, relocation of traffic signal poles and restriping of El Camino Real to narrow the traffic lanes from 12 to 11 feet wide to provide space within the roadway for the installation of new bike lanes on El Camino Real. These amenities will transform the project area into a multi-modal main-street and provide visual cues to drivers that they are in an area of increased pedestrian, bicycle, and transit activity.

Of particular importance at this intersection will be the enhanced crosswalks and median refuges, and reduced crossing distances for pedestrians and bicyclists. Stanford Avenue at El Camino is a primary route to school for three schools in the area: Jordan Middle School, Palo Alto High School and Escondido Elementary School. It is identified as a critical school crossing on the City’s adopted School Commute Corridors network map and Palo Alto Bicycle Transportation Plan bikeways network.

The CDT grant and federal funding require the City to move expeditiously on this project. The grant funds must be obligated and construction documents approved by Caltrans Office of Local Assistance by May 31, 2009. In order to meet this accelerated timeline, staff has already assembled an interdepartmental and interagency working group to further this project expeditiously, including VTA and Caltrans Office of Transit and Community Planning staff.

Consultant Services
This project will include consultant services to provide complete design services to construct the El Camino Real/Stanford Avenue streetscape project. Services will include urban design, civil and traffic engineering as required. The consultant will prepare construction drawings at the 30%, 60%, 90% and 100% stages and will finalize the construction documents and cost estimates for the project. The consultant team may also be required to participate in community meetings and/or meetings of the Architectural Review Board as needed. The budget for the engineering design phase of the project is $155,000. In addition to the engineering design consultant, the City will retain a consultant to prepare the environmental assessment for the project. Normally the scopes of work for consultant services greater than $85,000 are referred to the Finance Committee in May to review and provide input for the Council approval in June during the annual budget process. Due to the need to accelerate this project to meet the timeline for the CDT grant, staff plans to request that Council review and approve the consultant scope of services at a meeting in May in lieu of referring it to the Finance Committee.

RESOURCE IMPACT

Budget: Staff recommends that Council approve the attached budget amendment ordinance to create a new El Camino Real/Stanford Avenue Streetscape and Intersection Improvement CIP Project and to appropriate $155,000 for the design and environmental phases of the project in FY 2006/07. The remaining budget of $1,513,000 for construction is tentatively programmed for FY 2009/10.

The CDT grant requires a 20% local match of $333,600, of which $191,820 (11.5%) must be in cash and up to $141,780 (8.5%) can be in-kind staff hours. Staff has identified the following sources for the cash local match: $111,149 from CIP project PL-98013 (School Commute Safety Improvements), and $80,671 PL-04010 (Bicycle Boulevards Implementation Project). Staff plans to
request that the City’s annual guaranteed amount of Transportation Development Act (TDA) grant funds in FY 2007/08 (approximately $40,000) be used to supplement the other existing local match funds for the project and reduce the potential in-kind contribution to $96,130, if the full 8.5% local in-kind is not allowed.

Workload: The Planning Department developed this project to the feasibility study stage. Design and construction of the project will be managed by the Planning and Transportation Division, with support from the Public Works Engineering (PWE) Division.

To meet the accelerated timeline for committing the grant funds, the City must commit the necessary staff resources, and reassign or reschedule existing projects as necessary. Consequently, staff may need to reprioritize work assignments and project schedules for existing transportation projects in the Planning and Transportation Division. This will result in the following adjustments to the existing approved transportation projects. The Planning and Transportation Division will continue implementation and evaluation of the Charleston/Arastradero Corridor, completion of the College Terrace Traffic Calming trial project and completion of the Maybell/Donald bicycle boulevard project. New Safe Routes to School projects will be initiated as staff resources are available, but the Park Boulevard bicycle boulevard project will be postponed for one year.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS
This project is consistent with existing policy, including Comprehensive Plan Transportation Policy T-25: When constructing or modifying roadways, plan for usage of the roadway space by all users, including motor vehicles, transit vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians; Policy T-28: Make effective use of the traffic-carrying ability of Palo Alto’s major street network without compromising the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists also using this network; and Land Use Program L-32: improve pedestrian connections across El Camino Real.

In addition, the El Camino Real/Stanford Avenue intersection is identified as a critical intersection on the city’s adopted School Commute Corridors network as well as in the Palo Alto Bicycle Transportation Plan.

TIMELINE
This project will need to be implemented on an accelerated timeline in order to safeguard the substantial amount of committed grant funding. The STP/CMAQ grant funds must be obligated in a construction contract no later than May 31, 2009. In order to meet this deadline, staff has identified the following milestone dates:

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<tr>
<th>Milestone</th>
<th>Timeline (Qtr/FY)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Council approval of New CIP project</td>
<td>4th 2006/07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Caltrans field review</td>
<td>4th 2006/07</td>
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<tr>
<td>Environmental certification</td>
<td>3rd 2007/08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Right-of-Way certification</td>
<td>2nd 2008/09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Complete plans and specifications</td>
<td>2nd 2008/09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Caltrans certification of project plans</td>
<td>4th 2008/09</td>
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<tr>
<td>Award of construction contract</td>
<td>1st 2009/10</td>
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ENVIROMENTAL REVIEW
The environmental review for the project will be conducted prior to obligating the grant funds for this project.

ATTACHMENTS
A. Budget Amendment Ordinance
B. Resolution
C. New CIP page for Project PL-07002
D. Grant Award Notification email
E. Project Location map
F. Existing Conditions Photo Simulation
G. Project Improvements Photo Simulation
H. El Camino Real Master Planning Study (Council members only; copy of document is available at www.cityofpaloalto.org/planning-community/El-index.html or at the Planning and Community Environment offices, 5th floor City Hall)

PREPARED BY: Gayle Likens, Transportation Manager

REVIEWED BY: Julie Caporgno, Chief Planning and Transportation Official
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                        Assistant City Manager

cc: Palo Alto Bicycle Advisory Committee
    City/School Traffic Safety Committee
    Jerry Matranga, PAUSD
    Gary Prein, Escondido School
    Greg Tanaka, College Terrace Residents Association
    David Schrom, Evergreen Park Neighborhood Association
    Charles Carter, Stanford University Planning Office