

PROJECT BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

Niles Street Complete Streets Improvements

The proposed project will involve streetscape and safety improvements along Niles Street between Virginia Street and Baker Street (±0.9 miles). This project was started in FY 2022-2023 as part of an ongoing effort by the City of Bakersfield to promote active transportation and create safer corridors for its most vulnerable users.

The Niles and Monterey Complete Streets (NiMo) Project is a community-led initiative aimed at improving safety and mobility along two vital corridors in East Bakersfield, California. This area is recognized as a disadvantaged community by the USDOT Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer. The corridors have been identified as local and regional priorities in the City's Bicycle & Pedestrian Safety Plan, aligned with the Kern Region Active Transportation Plan (ATP), Bicycle Master Plan, and Complete Streets Recommendations. Extensive public outreach conducted during the development of these plans revealed community concerns about excessive vehicle speeds, a lack of bicycle infrastructure, and unsafe pedestrian crossings. The City of Bakersfield has partnered with Kimley-Horn to reimagine the entire length of the corridor in a way that encourages multi-modal transportation and protects all users.

The project will improve safety conditions through a number of traffic calming measures: protected crossings through the use of curb extensions, increased pedestrian/cyclist visibility through high-visibility crosswalks, rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFB's), advanced stop markings, turn lane markings, and striping, raised medians, accessibility upgrades, and dedicated, Class IV bike lanes.

This project looks to leverage the proposed safety improvements, with proven track records all over the country, into a reduction in vehicle miles traveled by creating more opportunities for residents to engage in active modes of transportation.

PROJECT LIVABILITY BENEFITS

Livability Benefit #1

Will enhance or reduce the average cost of user mobility through the creation of more convenient transportation options for travelers.

This project aims to reduce user mobility costs primarily through the addition of Class II and Class IV bike lanes along the project corridor. Currently there are no dedicated bike facilities along Niles Street. The addition of said bike lanes, in conjunction with other safety improvements, will incentivize non-motorized transportation as both a means of reaching a destination, or reaching a transit connection, such as the multiple Golden Empire Transit (GET) routes that run along Niles Street.

Livability Benefit #2

Will improve existing transportation choices by enhancing points of modal connectivity, increasing the number of modes accommodated on existing assets, or reducing congestion on existing modal assets.

With its wide travel lanes, lack of any dedicated bike facilities, and narrow sidewalks, Niles Street is not currently an appealing corridor for non-motorized transportation. To increase the number of modes accommodated along the corridor, a separated, Class IV cycle track will provide additional safety to road users looking to utilize bicycles and other non-motorized means of transportation. Protected intersections and additional mid-block crossings will help to remove existing safety barriers for pedestrians as well. Incentivizing active modes of transportation will look to replace vehicle trips and decrease congestion, especially during peak hours.

Livability Benefit #3

Will improve travel between residential areas and commercial centers and jobs.

While the area directly adjacent to Niles Street is primarily commercial/mixed use, within a one (1) mile radius of the project limits are many commercial and community centers. These include schools, places of worship, grocery stores, various retail centers, and other community hubs like the Boys and Girls Club. By providing additional protected crossings, strategically placed near existing GET bus stops, and protected bike facilities, this project looks to provide additional, safe alternatives to vehicular travel, whether that be by replacing entire vehicle trips or encouraging users to utilize non-vehicular travel for the “last mile.” The City of Bakersfield, alongside our design consultant, has been in constant

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communication with GET in an effort to ensure that GET is not only onboard with the proposed design, but so that their input and experience can be incorporated for the benefit of the community.

Livability Benefit #4

Will improve accessibility and transportation services for economically disadvantaged populations, non-drivers, senior citizens, and persons with disabilities, or make goods, commodities, and services more readily available to these groups.

The area surrounding the project corridor is recognized as a disadvantaged community by the USDOT Equitable Transportation Community (ETC) Explorer. Community engagement has been a large part of the design process and improvement selection. Working with local community partners and holding community engagement meetings to interface directly with residents, it was made clear to the City that a lack of lighting, mid-block crosswalks, and dedicated bike-facilities contribute greatly to a lack of desire to utilize the existing non-vehicular facilities along the corridor. By providing those elements as a part of the design, along with rapid rectangular flashing beacons (RRFB's), raised medians, and intersection protection treatments, this project looks to cater to the needs of the most disadvantaged community members and provide them direct access, not only to facilities along the corridor, but the numerous community centers within a 1 mile radius with increased safety and confidence that the corridor is there to serve them, not just motorized travel.

Safety Benefit #1

Is the existing Accident rate higher than the average rate for a similar facility, and does the project reduce the Accident rate to the average rate or lower?

The current collision rate of 16.7 is higher than the statewide collision rate of 0.61 (2022) for a similar activity. The proposed project will lower the accident rate to 1.855 (Crash Modification Factor of 0.45). See attachment

Safety Benefit #2

Is the existing Fatality Rate higher than the average rate for a similar facility, and does the project reduce the Fatality Rate to the average rate or lower?

The recorded fatality rate in the area is 0.5. The proposed project aims to improve the fatality rate in the project vicinity to 0.2. See attachment

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said incidents when they do occur. FHWA's Crash Modification Factor Clearinghouse was used to analyze the projects potential effect on accident/fatality rates.