

Jackson Hand
1972 Locke St.
Manila, CA 95521

Sept. 19, 2021

Re: PLN-2021-17402

To Whom It May Concern:

First of all, I would like to wholeheartedly endorse the proposal for light standards at Pacific Ave., and especially the much-needed crosswalks at Lupin Ave. and Pacific. I genuinely believe - and have often said - that the several times in my 67 years that I have been closest to death have been crossing 255 at Lupin. These are sorely needed. The reason for a crosswalk at Carlson Dr., however, would seem a bit nebulous, as there are only two private residences, with a total of three occupants, on the west side of 255 there, with no beach access.

However, I have a number of concerns regarding the proposed trail past my home along Rt. 255, including flooding, loss of privacy, loss of the sound buffer provided by the willow trees between my home and the highway, and allowing ease of entry onto my and my neighbors' yards from the highway in a neighborhood already plagued by property crimes.

When I moved here in 2000, the owner of the property I live on, Shar Boekee, had a drainage ditch which collected water from the marsh north of her property, as well as runoff on her property in heavy rains, and runoff from our neighbor's horse paddock. This was then emptied into the wetlands along 255. The first few winters I was here in the early 2000's, it flowed regularly and effectively, but then eventually started backing up where it flowed into the Caltrans right-of-way, and flooding our shared yard. As the years went by, and less water emptied out of her property, we experienced increasingly severe flooding during the winter months. In 2009, the property on the other side of the horse paddock was purchased by a private nonprofit, which removed all of the vegetation from the steep dune slope above the paddock, greatly increasing the runoff across the paddock into Ms. Boekee's orchard. (In the meantime, that dune has been overtaken by thick European beachgrass, which has mitigated the problem for now, but the stated intention of the property owners is to eventually remove the beachgrass as well.)

As the years went by, the flow from the drainage ditch from our property slowed consistently, as the end on Caltrans' right-of-way became increasingly clogged. The horse paddock on the adjacent property had originally been graded in such a way as to cause the runoff to flow onto the property Ms. Boekee now owns. The winter of 2014-2015 saw her orchard and our yard underwater for months. Her garden, which was always very important to her and into which she put a tremendous amount of energy and love, was underwater until mid-June - obviously much too late to plant. (In addition, the flooding killed her fig tree.) The following year, it was under water until mid-May. If the trail goes in as planned, there will be a berm between our drainage ditch and the wetland it currently feeds into. Absent a culvert, this will not only mean that the property I live on will become a lake every normal rainy season, but it will deprive the wetland of the water that currently feeds into it (however slowly). In addition, water from the west side of the berm will flow back down into our yard, further exacerbating the flooding. It will also greatly diminish Ms. Boekee's property value.

When I first moved here, the mills at either end of the peninsula were both still open, and we had chip trucks passing through all day and night. I never ceased to be amazed in the fall, when the foliage fell from the willows and their effectiveness as a sound buffer was therefore diminished, just how effective they were in blocking the highway noise. We currently have maybe 45- 50 feet of willows between our homes and the highway, and the plan is to remove 40 feet of them. That will mean the noise from the 18-wheelers and other vehicles will be only minimally reduced. It will mean that our homes will be visible from the road. It will mean that it will become easy to cut into our yard on foot from Rt. 255 (or, rather, from the trail), which is currently not possible due to the density of the trees. And it will mean folks walking past on the trail will be walking past our windows.

All of these issues - loss of the sound buffer, loss of the visual barrier, and ease of entry onto the property - will also diminish Ms. Boekee's property value.

I am certainly not in any way opposed to bike and walking trails, to say the least. I am in favor of anything that gets people out of their automobiles - so long as it does not cause harm. But this project will cause harm. And its benefits seem small, especially at the cost. \$1.5 million in public money for a trail from the Carlsons' driveway to Pacific Ave sounds to me like the very definition of the phrase "government boondoggle." Even before I knew the details and realized

how much it would impact me, I thought that was a lot of public funds for what seems to me to be a vanity project. (If someone wanted to improve transportation alternatives in Manila, they could take a look at the abysmal bus service on the peninsula, which has a 5 hour gap between buses between midday and late afternoon on weekdays. Obviously not a planning issue, but - a bus schedule that conformed to folks' work schedules might get a few cars off the road.)

It's worth pointing out that Peninsula Drive is a quiet residential street paralleling 255 just a few dozen feet to the east (just a few feet, at certain points). People in the neighborhood who walk or bike tend to use Peninsula, even if it means a longer walk or ride, to avoid the noise and exhaust fumes on 255. Of course, safety is also a major factor, and that would be addressed by the trail. But it would still leave users with cars whizzing past at highway speed, spewing exhaust fumes. I would prefer biking or walking on Peninsula to being a few feet from the roadway on 255 just on the grounds of ambience alone.

My concerns about the planned trail are as follows:

1. Removal of the trees will result in loss of the sound barrier between our homes and the highway, invasion of privacy, and easier egress for criminal behavior. These in turn will result in loss of property values. When residents of Locke St. were first contacted about this project in 2019, we were told a fence might be erected if needed. That concept seems to have fallen by the wayside, as current plans only address the planting of willows or wax myrtles to replace the willows taken out. This, of course, will only be on a small sliver of the land that currently holds the willows, and will provide greatly reduced protection of privacy, and from highway noise. It does not seriously address concerns of increasing the vulnerability of our properties to intrusion from the highway side.

2. Flooding. This is a very serious concern. Unless a culvert is put in to connect the drainage ditch to the wetlands along 255, the property on which I live may be doomed to be under water a good portion of any year in which we receive normal or above-normal rainfall. This is also very much dependent on the whims of the non-profit and whether they continue to remove vegetation from the steep slope above the adjacent paddock.

3. It does not appear that the plan was submitted for review to the California State Water Resources Control Board. It is my understanding that California law requires their approval for any project that impacts wetlands.

4. Potential conflict of interest. This project was initiated by the leadership of a private nonprofit (many feel as a means of funneling people to their location). The Senior Planner to whom this project is assigned is a former member of that organization's Board of Directors, and is married to a current member of its Board of Advisors (and its original Restoration Manager). The Planning Department already has an image problem in Manila, with many in the community expressing frustration that the Department often acts as if it works for this nonprofit rather than for the citizens of the County. One might think they would be especially cautious to avoid even the appearance of a conflict of interest, given these already existing perceptions amongst much of the community.

5. When this project came up in 2020, there was considerable public comment, and even a petition filed by Locke St. residents. It does not appear to me that those comments are all included or taken into consideration in the current proposal.

In summary, while I am entirely in favor of projects to decrease our dependence on the automobile, and generally enthusiastic about walking and biking trails, it seems a 0.6 mile trail with no real terminus on either end does not seem that helpful, and definitely not worth the invasion of privacy, increased noise, and potential for flooding. And potential loss of property values. These are serious concerns, which do not seem to have been taken seriously by those who planned this project. I would hope that these issues would be given due consideration, and the weight of their potential impacts taken as seriously as we in the neighborhood take them.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jackson Hand