



City of Culver City

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Staff Report

File #: 24-720, **Version:** 1

Item #: A-3.

CC - ACTION ITEM: (1) Discussion of Options to Pave Unpaved Alleyways Citywide as Recommended by the Mobility, Parking & Traffic Subcommittee; and (2) Direction to the City Manager as Deemed Appropriate

Meeting Date: March 18, 2024

Contact Person: Mate Gaspar, Engineering Services Manager, Public Works

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Attachments: Yes ☒ No ☐

Fiscal Impact: Yes ☒ No ☐ **General Fund:** Yes ☒ No ☐

Public Notification: (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas - City Council (03/13/2024)

Department Approval: Yanni Demitri, Director of Public Works/City Engineer (02/28/2024)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the City Council (1) discuss the Mobility, Parking & Traffic Subcommittee's recommendations regarding various options for paving the City's unpaved alleyways citywide; and (2) provide direction to the City Manager as deemed appropriate.

BACKGROUND

At the City Council meeting on February 13, 2023, the City Council directed staff to place an item on the agenda to discuss the status, ongoing maintenance, and possible options for paving unpaved alleyways throughout the City. At the June 12, 2023 City Council meeting, staff provided a brief background of this long-standing issue and proposed three options for paying for such improvements. The City Council discussed the topic and referred the discussion to the Mobility, Traffic, and Parking Subcommittee comprised of Council Members Eriksson and Puza (Subcommittee). At its August 24, 2023 meeting, the Subcommittee discussed paving options, funding options including cost-sharing, and requested that staff return with a prioritized list.

Culver City has approximately 2.4 miles of unpaved alleys. Unpaved alleys are alleyways that use compacted gravel and/or dirt as a driving surface.

Adjacent residents are regularly impacted by blowing dust and the uneven driving/biking surfaces of these unpaved alleyways. The winter storms in 2022/2023 and 2023/2024 further drew attention to this issue, as the unpaved alleys can flood during heavy rains and become inaccessible to vehicles or pedestrians. The Public Works Department Maintenance Operations Division regrades the unpaved alleys once annually to allow for positive drainage and pumps stormwater from these unpaved alleyways as needed when resources are available.

The City has historically prioritized spending City general and gas tax funds for arterial and residential street paving projects. As a result, unpaved alleyways have not been funded for new asphalt construction through the annual capital improvement program. Although, a few alleyways have been paved as part of development projects.

When property owners or residents adjacent to unpaved alleys have requested the City pave the dirt alleys, the Public Works Department's practice has been to instruct the property owners to form an assessment district to fund the cost of the design and construction of a new asphalt alleyway. A majority of the adjacent property owners have to agree to the assessment levy at a City Council public hearing in order to form a district. Once approved and formed, the property owners reimburse the City for the cost to pave the alleyway over 10 years at a fixed market interest rate through their property tax bill. To date, no property owners adjacent to unpaved alleyways have proceeded to form such assessment districts.

Unpaved alleys are common across the United States. Agencies have struggled to find ways to fund the paving of dirt alleys. The highest priority for agencies is to use general and gas tax funds to repave arterial and residential streets. There are no county, state, or federal grants earmarked to pave alleyways.

DISCUSSION

For discussion, staff requested the Subcommittee consider the following options and considerations regarding unpaved alleyways in the City.

- Should City continue the practice of requiring property owners to form an assessment district to fund the entire cost of alleyway paving.
- Should City instead offer a cost share option in which the adjacent property owners would pay a percentage of the alleyway paving cost, and the City would pay the remaining cost, predicated on the condition that the property owners form an assessment district to pay back their portion of the cost.
- Discuss other funding options
- Determine if unpaved alleys should be prioritized for new paving and which alleys should be prioritized.

Staff recommended that unpaved alleys be prioritized for paving based on:

- Volume of complaints/requests from the adjacent residents (over many years), and
- Public Works Engineering and Maintenance Operations staff's knowledge of alley dust levels due to drought conditions and the frequent flooding due to storms.

Based on these two criteria, staff recommended the following unpaved alleys be prioritized for paving:

- Alleys between Sawtelle Blvd and Globe Ave (estimated cost: \$1,000,000);
- Alley between Glencoe Ave and Walgrove Ave (estimated cost: \$450,000); and
- Alley between Sepulveda Blvd and Bentley Ave (estimated cost: \$1,350,000).

At its October 23, 2023 meeting, the Subcommittee recommended the City Council consider offering City General Funds be used to cover 10% of the cost to pave the adjacent unpaved alley. The City Council would need to appropriate the funds with a four-fifths majority. If appropriated, the City's share could be made available immediately if the adjacent property owners provide the remaining 90% of funds. If an assessment district were formed, bonds could be sold to generate the 90%, and property owners would pay their share through the property tax bill over 10 years at current market interest rates.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

The Engineers' estimate to design and pave the aforementioned three alleys is \$2.8 million.

The Engineers' estimate to design and pave the 2.4 miles of unpaved alleys in the City is approximately \$11.5 million.

No funds were included in the Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2023-2024 for this purpose. As of February 26, 2024, the General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance is \$4.1 million.

ATTACHMENTS

1. 2024-03-18-ATT MTP-Mtg-List_of_Unpaved Alleys.pdf
2. 2024-03-18-ATT-MTP-Mtg-Cost_Estimate_to_Pave_Unpaved_Alleyways.pdf

MOTIONS

That the City Council:

1. Discuss options to pave unpaved alleyways citywide as recommended by the Mobility, Parking & Traffic Subcommittee; and

2. Provide direction to the City Manager as deemed appropriate.