

Upgrade from A1

ment, the five identified routes are: East Harrison Avenue from south River Road to south Third Street; south Fourth Street from Central Pacific Railroad to Grant Avenue; Grant Avenue from south Fourth Street to south Sixth Street; Fillmore Avenue from south Fourth Street to south Sixth Street; and Taylor Avenue from south Fourth Street to south Eighth Street.

Over the past two years, these locations had been identified as areas of concern in street analyses by city staff. Initial concerns about the safety of routes to Lincoln Middle School were raised in public testimony in October 2015 by a city police officer who advised the city to pay attention to the corner of south Fourth Street and Fillmore Avenue, a high-traffic area next to the middle school with no crosswalk.

In a subsequent public hearing last fall regarding the project, a resident mentioned seeing a student hit by a car at that very intersection, though the student reportedly continued walking from the incident, which was not reported.

Once the project is complete, the identified routes of concern will provide safer walking and biking to and from both Lincoln Middle School and Harrison Elementary School.

"What we'll do is bring all the sidewalks up to city standards in all those work areas," Stewart said, "which is a five-foot wide sidewalk."

Trees in the area have lifted up some sidewalk panels and caused tripping hazards which need to be addressed as others have simply fallen into disrepair.

Crossing ramps for the sidewalks will also have to be brought to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards.

"There are also driveways that are not to these accessibility standards," said Stewart. "So, any driveways at the homes that don't meet current ADA standards or city standards, we're going to bring all those areas up."

Crosswalks are also to be painted in, possibly accompanied with flashing signs to alert drivers that children are crossing.

"We'll look at areas that may have higher traffic," Stewart said.

Intersections like that at South 10th Street and Taylor Avenue in front of the elementary school are a model for such safety upgrades.

It was also determined that some aged water, sewer and storm lines will need upgrading first as they run underneath the planned sidewalk sites. Most of these run the length of south Fourth Street and in front of the middle school.

As any future problems with the aged lines would mean digging up the new sidewalks, the city is including the line upgrades in the larger scheme of the project.

Because the grant does not cover infrastructure upgrades or street paving, though, it is budgeted separately as a capital improvement project.

The SRTS grant came at fortuitous time for the city. After lacking dedicated funding in Oregon for many years, the SRTS program was revitalized in 2017 with the passage of the state's landmark transportation funding package. Among 112 applications for the SRTS grant, 24 were selected for funding.

ODOT'S primary focus was elementary schools, then middle schools and finally high schools. Because Cottage Grove had already assessed and made plans to improve the area between its elementary and middle schools, it was an easy case to make.

While the grant covers most of the estimated cost, bid requests have yet to be released and a trend of contractor shortages may mean the current \$404,369 difference will rise. If so, covering a large discrepancy might mean some hair pulling for the city as it struggles to come up with funds.

The city may also derive some funding from landowners. A municipal ordinance in place since 1999 holds Cottage Grove landowners responsible for improving adjacent streets and sidewalks that have fallen into disrepair "and to fairly apportion the cost of such improvements to the abutting properties."

Before the SRTS program's revitalization, plans had been in motion to execute this ordinance on the targeted roads, meaning adjacent landowners would have had to pay for all sidewalk improvements.

When the grant entered their radar, city officials jumped on the opportunity.

"Because of the success of getting this grant from the State of Oregon for this project, it drastically reduces the amount that each adjoining property owner is going to have to pay," Stewart said.

Total costs have yet to be assessed, so no estimates exist on what landowners can expect. However, the city has set a milestone in its grant agreement to engage in community outreach twenty weeks from the agree-



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A solar-powered stop sign in front of Harrison Elementary School lights up to warn drivers of pedestrians.

ment's Feb. 13 execution, putting that deadline around July 3.

In terms of project completion, another deadline in the grant agreement stipulates that a construction contract must be awarded 24 weeks from the agreement's execution. The city

is looking to solicit bids late spring or early summer.

"My personal goal is to have all the work that impacts the middle school and the delivery of students to and from school to be done before school starts in September," Stewart said. "And

then we can work on some of the side streets and some of the other areas that will still be able to allow traffic to go through."

Though it can be amended, the project has a stated completion date of Jan. 31, 2020.

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