

CitSupporting Documentation

Folsom Boulevard is a corridor with special historical significance to the Sacramento area. Folsom Boulevard was originally a wagon and stagecoach route to and from Sutter's Fort and the town of Coloma. The corridor was also used by Pony Express riders on their way to and from Sacramento. In 1856, the Sacramento Valley Railroad completed a rail corridor connecting Sacramento to Placerville, and shortly thereafter Folsom Boulevard was constructed parallel to the railroad tracks. Over the next 50 years, Folsom Boulevard slowly developed as an agricultural corridor but remained sparsely populated.

This changed during World War I with the construction of Mather Field Air Force Base near what is now Rancho Cordova. Mather Field provided a large employment center directly adjacent to Folsom Boulevard, and the corridor developed with residential and commercial businesses to support servicemen and their families. Folsom Boulevard became the "Main Street" for the growing community and served as part of the original Lincoln Highway.

In the 1970's, the Lincoln Highway was bypassed by the US 50 freeway. This changed the character of Folsom Boulevard from an active "Main Street" to a local arterial and the corridor began to change character. Because of these changes to traffic patterns, and economic factors, the Folsom Boulevard Corridor had lost its original vibrant luster. However, the corridor began to repurpose itself with the extension of Sacramento Regional Transit District's (SacRT) Gold Line to the Mather Field Station in 1998. This kick-started a significant amount of transit-oriented development (TOD) to capitalize on this new transit asset.

The City of Rancho Cordova (City), in partnership with Sacramento County, desired to update Folsom Boulevard to a "Complete Street". The *Folsom Boulevard and Mather Field Road Streetscape Enhancement Master Plan* was completed in 2005 to provide a roadmap for the 4.5 miles of Folsom Boulevard. The Master Plan identified a path to design an attractive, functional, and safe "Complete Street". The Master Plan identified necessary enhancements to multimodal facilities to provide better connectivity between residents, businesses, civic and recreation land uses, and SacRT bus and light rail transit; as well as improving access to the nearby Kinney High School. Project-specific objectives identified included providing a pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly corridor, improving safety at SacRT light rail crossings, and calming traffic while improving connectivity and beautification to enhance the City's identity and development opportunities.

The City was dedicated to the 17-year vision, \$42 Million commitment and investment of transforming the corridor. The City phased the work to take advantage of funding opportunities as monies became available. Phase I, constructed in 2007, installed a raised median between Mather Field Road and Zinfandel Drive. Phase II, constructed in 2010, added sidewalks, bike lanes, lighting, and additional landscaped medians between Mather Field Road and Sunrise Boulevard. Phases III, constructed in 2013, extended Phase II improvements from Rod Beaudry Drive and Sunrise Boulevard. Phase IV constructed improvements between Horn Road and Rod Beaudry Drive and construction completed in 2019. The final phase, Phase V, constructed improvements between Bradshaw Road and Horn Road and Kilgore Road and Sunrise Boulevard completed construction in 2020.

Overall, the 4.5-mile Folsom Boulevard Streetscape Enhancements project focused on the following key concepts:

- Pedestrian and bicycle friendly corridor
- Improved safety for existing roadway rail crossings
- Traffic calming to enhance safety
- Pleasant streetscapes to attract development opportunities
- Improved connectivity between retail and transit facilities
- Streetscape elements to enhance Rancho Cordova's identity

Traffic calming and safety improvements included:

- Tree-lined streets and medians
- Intersections with enhanced crosswalks
- Continuous Class II bicycle lanes
- Predictable sequence of driveways and intersections
- Highly-visible mid-block pedestrian crossings
- Concentrations of pedestrian traffic
- Pedestrian-friendly median landings
- Special median and sidewalk enhancements
- Well-lighted streets and sidewalks

Safe Routes to School and Transit

An integral part of the overall project was providing better connectivity between housing, commercial businesses, education, civic facilities, recreation, and bus and light rail transit. During the design phase large groups of students, other pedestrians and pedestrians in wheelchairs were regularly observed on site visits walking in the roadway along the south edge of Folsom Boulevard on their way to the nearby light rail station. This was due, in large part, to the lack of sidewalks along the south side of Folsom Boulevard that could provide connectivity to nearby SacRT light rail stations. This project closed the gaps in both the bicycle and pedestrian network throughout the entire corridor. This is a key component to the project, since it facilitates strategic connections to high schools, neighborhood elementary schools, Sacramento RT stations, Class I and IV Bike Routes, Los Rios Community College and the future Youth Center and Rancho Cordova Civic Center. The project achieved these connections through the creation of Class II bike lanes, multi-use paths, enhanced crosswalks, upgraded ADA ramps, at-grade crossings at the light rail tracks, installation of street lighting and optimizing traffic signals along the entire corridor.

Active Transportation Network Backbone

The installation of Class II bike lanes and sidewalks on both sides of the street, and a multi-use path throughout the entire corridor filled in missing segments and ultimately created a complete active transportation network backbone along Folsom Boulevard. The project provides a 4.5-mile bicycle and pedestrian facility that serves as the east-west backbone of the network. From Folsom Boulevard, cyclists and pedestrians can use various on- and off-street bicycle facilities and sidewalks to connect to regionally significant land uses including the American River Parkway, multiple neighborhood and regional parks, commercial shopping centers, employment centers, K-12 and higher education schools, and bus and light rail transit stops.

Signal Equipment Upgrades and ITS

As part of the project, the City updated 16 traffic signals along Folsom Boulevard. The updates included replacing signal equipment, modernizing the signal interconnect, installing pedestrian push buttons, installing bicycle detection, installing traffic monitoring cameras, and providing emergency vehicle pre-emption. The traffic signals were connected to the City's Traffic Management System to allow the City to actively monitor traffic flow along the corridor and make signal timing changes as needed. The project also required coordination with SacRT's crossing signals and gates as well as accessing the 50 FIG regional fiber line.

Oak Tree Preservation

One of the key existing amenities on the Folsom Boulevard corridor was the mature oak trees lining the south side of the roadway. The design not only preserved these protected trees, but also made them a focal point of the design. Low impact grading plans, limited augmentation of landscaping and irrigation, and creative retaining curbs were used to preserve several heritage oak trees along the south side of Folsom Boulevard. In addition, based on the recommendations of a licensed arborist, existing oak trees were pruned and clusters thinned to create the best opportunity for these premier trees along the corridor to flourish, highlighting the heritage oaks along the route.

Community Outreach

An extensive public outreach effort took place throughout the course of the project. During the planning and design phase a number of public meetings informed residents, business owners and property owners on the project development process. In addition to public meetings, individual stakeholder meetings were held to address specific concerns. Outreach was also conducted through “Boulevard Walks” where project team members walked the corridor, knocking on doors to talk to individuals on a one-on-one basis. In addition, project updates were posted on the City’s website. These updates provided information on project progress, construction activities and key milestones.

Construction Scheduling

Because Folsom Boulevard is a busy thoroughfare, measures were taken to limit the impact to the traveling public. Traffic lanes could only be closed for construction after 9:00 a.m. and had to be re-opened by 3:00 p.m. These requirements helped avoid and mitigate the impacts of the construction effort on adjacent businesses and residences.

Construction Site Conditions

Folsom Boulevard has been a key east west transportation corridor since the Pony Express Days. Prior to the current US 50 freeway being built in the 1970’s, Folsom Boulevard was the designated and primary state route. This original road was built out of concrete and is buried underneath the current roadway. Site conditions during construction proved to be very challenging because of this buried concrete and the numerous underground utilities that had accumulated over the long history of the corridor.

In addition to the site conditions and utility challenges during construction, ongoing dialogue with property owners resulted in design changes during construction to preserve and/or improve property access. Teamwork between the community, contractor, construction manager, designer and the City was necessary to accomplish these changes during the fast-paced timing of construction.

The entire south side of the project contains an active light rail corridor. While one of the main goals of the project was to improve access to transit, it was also necessary to maintain transit service during construction. Special care was taken to coordinate work around the active transit lines, including upgrades to pedestrian access and improved pedestrian safety features at each of the eight existing at-grade crossings.

Catalyst for Economic Development

In addition to proving for much need transportation improvements, the Folsom Boulevard Streetscape Enhancements project is seen as a catalyst for economic development. In particular, this project has been a “case study” on how to attract infill development around transit stations. The access and aesthetic enhancements of the project were the first step in creating a more livable community. Throughout project implementation, several significant land uses have been constructed along the corridor, including:

- **Folsom Lake College, Rancho Cordova Campus:** Los Rios Community College District constructed the Rancho Cordova Center in October 2015 near the Folsom Boulevard intersection with Mather Field Road. This facility includes more than 24,000 square feet of instructional space, eight classrooms, and a “student learning center” with an open-access computer lab.
- **Rancho Cordova Civic Center:** The City is currently redeveloping a 9.8-acre parcel adjacent to the Folsom Lake College, Rancho Cordova Campus. The City signed an agreement with a development in 2020 to create a place where businesses, residents and visitors can be inspired by local cuisine and art, enjoy recreational facilities, and host meetings, events and celebrations.
- **Kassis Property:** A developer has an approved tentative map for the development of this 40-acre residential mixed used development on Folsom Boulevard near Tiffany Way. The project will construct 245 high density residential lots.
- **Mills Station Arts & Culture Center:** The Mills Station Arts & Culture Center (MACC) opened in 2018 near the Mather/Mills Light Rail Station at the corner of Folsom Boulevard and Mather Field Road. The MACC exhibits works by local artists and history displays, holds workshops, has cultural demonstrations.



Sidewalk and Decorative Fence Approach US-50 Undercrossing



Preserved Oak Trees and Landscaping



SacRT Gold Line Parallel to Folsom Boulevard



Landscaped Medians that Enhance Safety and Aesthetics



Landscaped Medians and Pedestrian/Bicycle Facilities that Enhance Safety and Aesthetics



Pedestrian/Bicycle Facilities that Enhance Safety, Aesthetics and connects to SacRT Light Rail