

INTRODUCTION

Imperial Beach is “Classic Southern California”: A beach-oriented community with a safe, small town, family atmosphere. The namesake Imperial Beach Boulevard serves as a primary transportation corridor from the I-5 Freeway and the City of San Diego on the east of town to the Pacific Ocean at the westerly terminus. In addition to providing access to the beach and the myriad commercial offerings located along the coast, Imperial Beach Boulevard also provides access to City Hall, multiple schools, Public parks, a Public Library and numerous residential areas, as well as to the Tijuana Estuary National Wildlife Refuge. The Imperial Beach Boulevard Enhancement Project was initiated by the City of Imperial Beach to pay homage to the City’s Southern California culture while improving mobility, accessibility, landscaping, and water quality, while addressing infrastructure deficiencies on Imperial Beach Boulevard.

COMPLETE GREEN STREETS

The project leveraged three (3) different grants and five (5) funding sources to create complete, livable green streets along the entire 1.6-mile long corridor. The results provide better quality connections between residences, schools, transit, community attractors and businesses while incorporating needed utility improvements. This project enhances multimodal mobility and develops Imperial Beach Boulevard into a desirable corridor for pedestrians, bicyclists and motorists.

A mobility assessment was conducted for each mode of travel—pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and autos—the results of which were used to determine locations and improvement types for the final design. Ultimately, existing vehicle lanes were adjusted to make room for new bike facilities, wider sidewalks, additional parking, and landscaped water quality areas. Lanes were reallocated to recast it as a three-lane cross section with new enhanced green Class II bike lanes to visually narrow the space available for vehicles. Curb bulb-outs, enhanced crosswalks, and new, ADA compliant ramps were also incorporated to update and improve the pedestrian experience. Updated transit stops and amenities were added, and landscaped “pop-outs” added aesthetic and water quality benefits along with storm drain improvements to capture refuse before continuing to the ocean.



The project increased walking, biking, transit usage, and available parking while also encouraging commercial development. The reimagined corridor space included enhancements that were made to calm traffic and increase access to destinations, with minimized negative effects on vehicular traffic. The addition of green bike lanes where none previously existed directs attention to the dedicated bike space, improving cyclist safety. Previously, there were limited crossing opportunities for pedestrians, requiring them to cross a 4-lane roadway. As such, the project includes three additional midblock crossings and high visibility crosswalks at existing intersections. Wider sidewalks are included at several locations and pop-outs/bulb-outs are included at most cross-streets, reducing crossing distance and improving visibility of pedestrians crossing the street. These crossing features contribute greatly toward an improved pedestrian environment, enhancing comfort and safety while improving the overall walkable connectivity of several important community features.



REGIONAL BIKEWAY CONNECTIONS TO AN ECO-TOURISM DESTINATION

This new bikeway provides a vital connection for safe bicycle use across the entire City from east to west. The addition of bicycle facilities where none previously existed serves to promote alternative, active transportation along this community arterial. Class II bike lanes were painted a highly visible shade of green and, where possible, provide buffer space away from driving traffic. One segment features a cycle track with angled parking. This intersects SANDAG's planned regional facility, Border to Bayshore Bikeway, along 13th Street and overlaps the City's own Eco Bikeway that loops from the Bayshore Bikeway to the Tijuana Estuary, and the Imperial Beach pier.

A unique project feature is the "boardwalk" that draws visitors to the Tijuana Estuary National Wildlife Refuge, one of the few remaining salt estuaries in Southern California. The City seized the opportunity to turn this into an eco-tourism destination and enhancements along the frontage of the estuary were incorporated as a critical project objective. The original 5' sidewalk was transformed into a 23'-wide all weather path that allows for infiltration of runoff and provides unique wayfinding signs, interpretive panels for visitors and eco-tourists, custom street furnishings, and special pathway lighting with engraved City logos. The "boardwalk" allows for an enhanced walking and biking experience with vistas of the estuary nature and the hills of nearby Mexico.

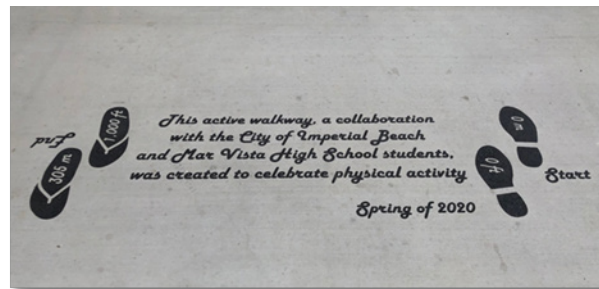


INFRASTRUCTURE AND UTILITIES

Capitalizing on the construction activities on the roadway, the City corrected capacity issues by replacing a sewer force main, adding of storm water inlets, strengthening bus stop pads, and repairing / resurfacing the entire road. Applying innovative and unique concepts to the project site, landscape areas were designed as water quality features with bioswale filters to allow for stormwater infiltration. Partnering with the Port of San Diego, the project added city-wide fiber optics that connect all major public facilities, including the City Hall, Public Works Building, Sheriff Station, Fire Station, major pump stations and all traffic signals in the city. The fiber optic network not only serves the city, but also connects regionally for secure, high-speed communications around San Diego. Through coordination with the Port of San Diego and MTS, communication systems were added for future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) stops planned on this corridor.

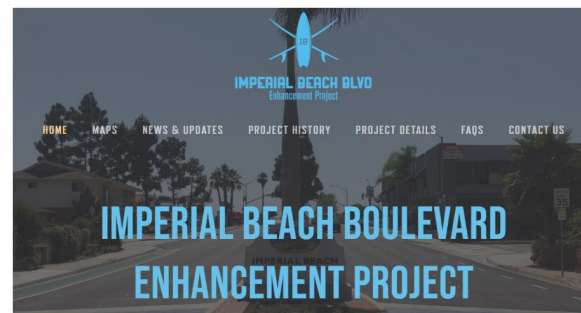
STAKEHOLDER AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The City constructed this project with support from several key stakeholders, including the Port of San Diego, Metropolitan Transit Service (MTS), local school districts, Department of Natural Resources and the Tijuana Estuary staff. In total, over 20 outreach events were conducted between February 2018 and February 2019.



Involving the community was important throughout the project. To foster involvement, the team created a contest for local schools that would feature student artwork conveying the project's message of active transportation and healthy living. Three pieces of student art were etched into the sidewalk as part of an "Active Walkway": a 1000' portion of sidewalk with distance markers to show students how much exercise they get just by walking to and from school.

Additionally, a project website was created and regularly updated to keep community members engaged and informed (<https://www.ibblvd-2020.com/>). This gave the public access to project history, goals, FAQ list, and allowed for a transparent process. As phases of the project were completed or when construction moved to different locations within the corridor, the website was updated. The final use of the website will be for a community-wide survey to learn about user experiences pertaining to the project.



A SUCCESSFUL PROJECT

To complete the project, the gateway into the City was updated to display the culture of the community as a beach city. The improvements include a roadway median with improved landscaping and enriched paving to welcome those visiting the City of Imperial Beach.

An all-encompassing infrastructure project, this is Imperial Beach's largest undertaking. Completed in June 2020, this project reflects modern engineering standards, encourages alternative and active transportation modalities, and creates a place and sense of location to feature several amenities along the City's namesake boulevard.

