



CITY OF PALM DESERT
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE
INTEROFFICE MEMORANDUM

Date: April 24, 2025
To: Honorable Mayor and Councilmembers
From: Anthony J. Mejia, City Clerk
Subject: City Council Study Session of April 24, 2025

Below you will find questions received from the Mayor or Councilmembers and answers provided by City staff regarding tonight's Study Session meeting:

ITEM 2a: PALM DESERT VISION ZERO STRATEGY

Q1: Will areas with private schools, such as Sacred Heart, be included in the study?

A1: The Safe Routes to School Plan and funding sources typically prioritize public schools, as they are developed in partnership with public school districts and designed to benefit the broader student population. Consistent with this framework, the scope of work previously approved by Council focused specifically on public schools. This focus also reflected the parameters and limitations of the grant funding awarded for these planning efforts.

Q2: What is the source of the climate statistics presented, and over what time period were the averages calculated? Given the frequency of temperatures exceeding 110 degrees—and occasionally 120 degrees—in recent years, these figures seem worth examining. Additionally, each school follows a different early release schedule, and students often walk home during peak heat periods.

A2: The climate data was sourced from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) using averages from the years 1991 - 2020. The data source will be added to the final draft.

Q3: In the sidewalk gap analysis, which schools are located in areas with the most significant sidewalk coverage gaps?

A3: The highest sidewalk gaps appear around the George Washington Charter Elementary School, Abraham Lincoln Elementary School and Palm Desert Charter Middle School. There is also a substantial amount of sidewalk widening recommended around Palm Desert High School.

Q4: What types of speed deterrents are available for use on streets like Rutledge, especially when they serve as alternative routes to Portola during high-traffic periods?

A4: The Safe Routes to School Plan outlines a range of strategies to deter speeding on local streets like Rutledge, which are often used as cut-through routes during peak hours. These include infrastructure treatments such as curb extensions, traffic calming medians, high-visibility crosswalks, and intersection daylighting – all aimed at reducing speeds and improving safety. The plan also recommends non-infrastructure strategies like education and enforcement to support safer driver behavior in residential areas near schools.

Q5: On average, how many hours per week do motorcycle officers patrol school zones?

A5: Motorcycle officers dedicate an estimated 40 hours per week to enforcement in school zones. Each motor deputy is assigned to patrol a school during morning drop-off and afternoon pick-up times. While coverage may vary based on court obligations or response to high-priority calls, this presence generally aligns with the City's busiest morning commute periods to help ensure student and traffic safety.

Q6: Some parents have noted inconsistent Crossing Guard coverage. Are these positions staffed by paid personnel or volunteers? Is it possible to allocate Citizen On Patrol (COP) resources to support this need?

A6: The crossing guards are paid positions. The City provides financial assistance (\$60,000 annually) to DSUSD to manage the School Crossing Guard Program. As well, the COPS program is structured to support occasional, non-routine assignments and is not recommended for daily crossing guard responsibilities.

Q7: In what ways can Measure G funds be used to improve safety infrastructure? Specifically, can these funds be used for sidewalk construction?

A7: The City recently used Measure G funds to hire additional motor officers to enhance safety. This funding source can be used for sidewalk improvements as well.

Q8: What has been the general response from homeowners regarding the construction of sidewalks on their property?

A8: Parents who participated in outreach activities expressed support for additional sidewalks around schools. At this time, the City has not received direct feedback from homeowners whose properties fall within areas recommended for sidewalk improvements. Please note these plans include conceptual recommendations, and exact right-of-way limits will be confirmed through future engineering analysis. Finally, the City would anticipate using a similar homeowner coordination process that has been recently used on a comparable project.

ITEM 2c: EL PASEO COURTESY CART PROGRAM**Q1: Has El Paseo Parking and Business Improvement District Board (EPPBID) previously contributed to the funding of the shuttle service, either partially or in full?**

A1: The EPPBID has not paid for the shuttle service itself, but it annually allocates funds specifically to promote the service as part of its larger marketing campaign. In addition to including the Courtesy Carts in its ads, this includes elements such as rack cards, street decals, and other collateral.

Q2: As the reference section has been redacted, could you please provide information regarding the cities' similarities to Palm Desert in terms of:

A2: **a. Geographical location:** Huntington Beach, Oceanside, and Chula Vista

b. Climate: Coastal

c. Population: 192,129 (2023), 170,020 (2023), and 274,333 (2023)

Q3: Could you provide ridership statistics broken down by day of the week for each year?

A3:

FY 22-23'	
Sun	1067
Mon	710
Tue	705
Wed	756
Thurs	602
Fri	832
Sat	1287

FY 23-24'	
Sun	1629
Mon	1212
Tue	1415
Wed	1332
Thurs	1273
Fri	1478
Sat	1521

FY 24-25'	
Sun	1448
Mon	1004
Tue	1066
Wed	963
Thurs	824
Fri	1116
Sat	1546

Q4: Besides The Living Desert, which other destinations within the designated radius are currently being considered?

A4: No additional destinations are currently under consideration. The Living Desert was brought up because it was referenced in prior discussions by former City Councilmembers.

If an additional route is approved:

Q5: Will there be a fee for riders using the cart service beyond the El Paseo area?

A5: Any decision regarding fare structure for an additional route would be determined by the City Council.

Q6: Is The Living Desert open to contributing to the cost of a separate route for guest transportation?

A6: The Living Desert has not requested shuttle service from El Paseo. Because the addition of this service is still hypothetical, no discussions have been had with the zoo regarding shared costs for a separate route.

Q7: Will advanced scheduling be required for riders, and if so, what would that process entail?

A7: City Council has not yet provided direction on this matter, so the scheduling process has not been determined.

Q8: If the shuttle designated for the additional route is not transporting guests, will it be used to circulate within El Paseo?

A8: City Council has not yet provided direction on this matter, so the operational details remain undetermined.