

# Fehr & Peers Palm Desert Mobility Element Update

City Council Study Session



Jason Pack, P.E. and Brian Wolfe | September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2025

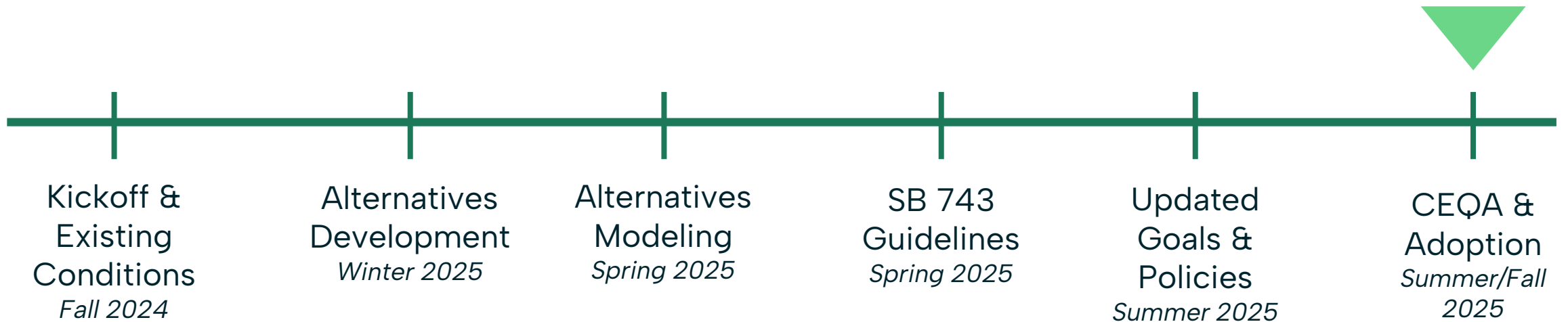
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# Agenda

- 01 Background
- 02 Updates to Goals & Policies
- 03 Proposed Transportation Network
- 04 Truck Routes
- 05 VMT & LOS Policy
- 06 VMT & LOS Results

# Background

- City initiated the Mobility Element Update in Summer 2024 (updating the current version from 2016)
- Why Update the Mobility Element?
  - Clean up roadway cross sections
  - Consistency with other City plans (ATP, Vision Zero, etc.)
  - Address new legislative requirements



SECTION 02

# Updates to Goals & Policies

# Why Include New Goals & Policies?



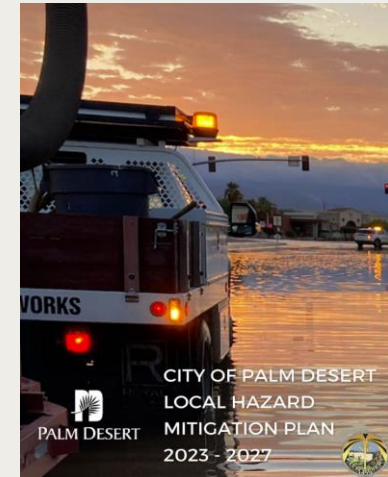
## Safety – SB 932

- Adopt a Vision Zero goal and Safe System Approach
- Prioritize safety improvements on high injury roadways
- Safe roadway design standards
- Safety education programs



## Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) – SB 743

- Promote multimodal travel
- Low-VMT development patterns (e.g., mixed use)



## Emergency Evacuation & Resilience

- Ensure evacuation routes are posted and well maintained
- Build and maintain climate-resilient transportation infrastructure



SECTION 03

# Proposed Transportation Network

# Why Update the Transportation Network?

- Align the plan with on-the-ground conditions
- “Right-sizing” infrastructure
- Update transportation improvement priorities and funding needs
- Address growth in North Palm Desert
- Consistency with state laws and policy goals



# Portola Interchange

## Current Status:

- Awaiting additional funding for construction (~\$88M in 2018 dollars)
- Council provided direction in June to incorporate interchange as a long-term transportation priority
- Next Steps:
  - Review potential cost escalation and design changes
  - Engage with regional/state/federal partners for financing and grant opportunities

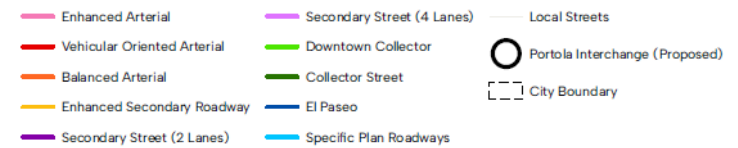
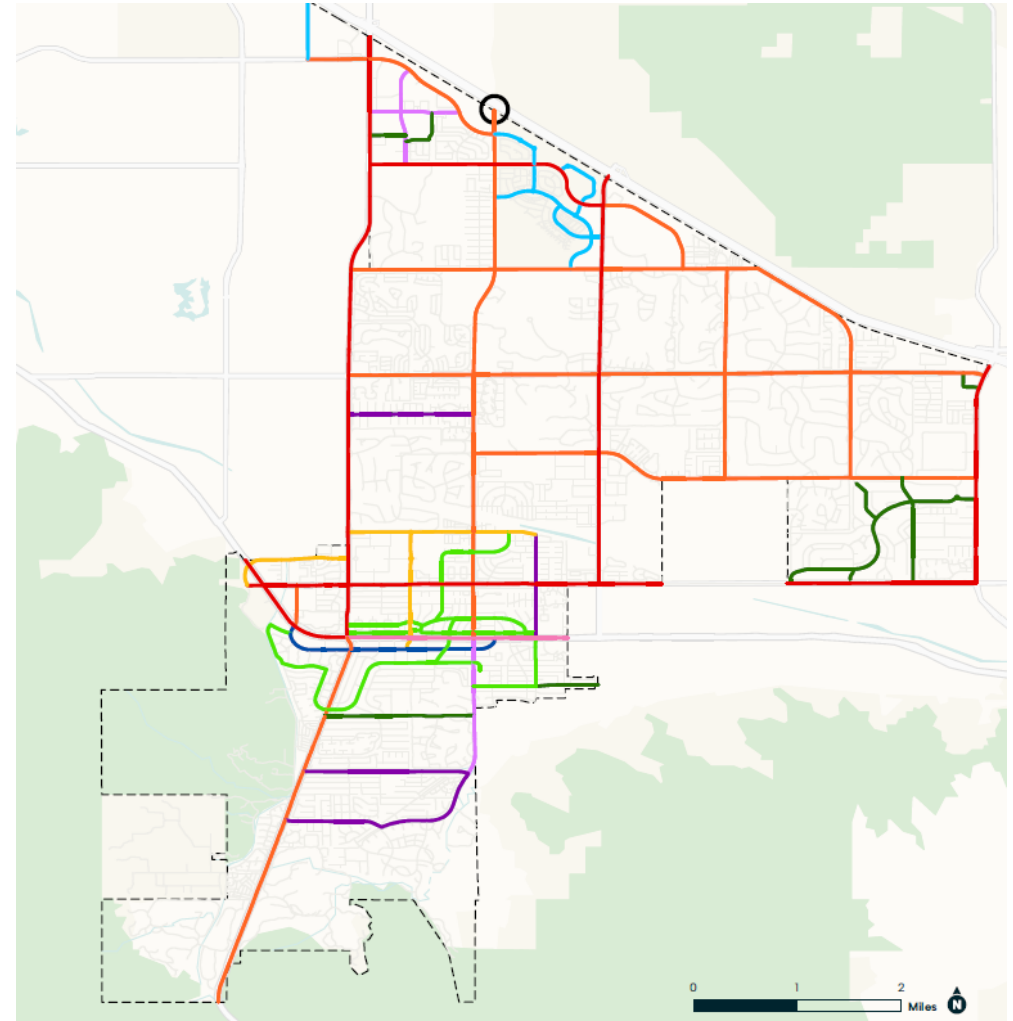
## Why We Plan to Include It?

- Relieves congestion at Monterey and Cook interchanges
- Provides more direct path of travel (reduce VMT)
- Accommodates development in North Palm Desert
- More likely to secure funding from the state vs. expanding existing interchanges

# Proposed Changes

## Roadway Network & Cross Sections

- Reclassify Country Club Drive to a balanced arterial
- Update with latest bike lane design standards (e.g. buffered bike lanes)
- Add maximum right-of-way dimensions (SB 330)
- Introduce new classification categories:
  - Secondary Roadway (2 lanes)
  - Specific Plan Roadway



# Proposed Changes

## Highway 111 Vision

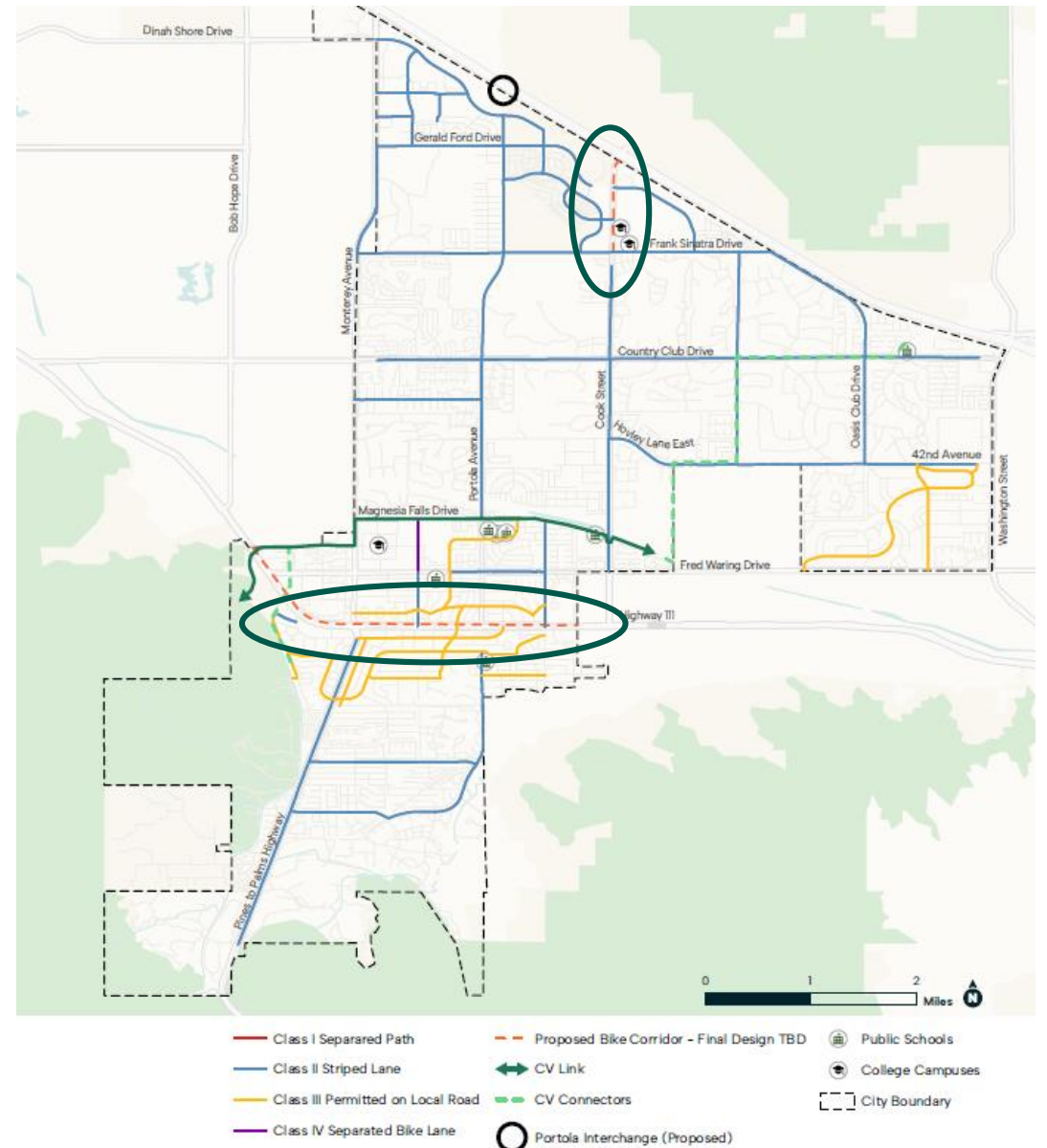
- General Plan will prioritize complete street design along Highway 111
  - Safety improvements
  - Enhanced bicycle facility (final design TBD)
  - Transit-supportive infrastructure
  - Frontage road activation
- City will continue to refine the Highway 111 design with a focused corridor study



# Proposed Changes

## Bike & Golf Cart Network

- Incorporate latest bike/pedestrian improvements (Walk & Roll, CV Link)
- Close gaps in the bicycle network:
  - Highway 111
  - Cook Street N. of Frank Sinatra Drive
- Coordinate with adjacent cities to close gaps
- Bicycle facility design standards



SECTION 04

# Truck Routes

# Why Update Truck Routes?

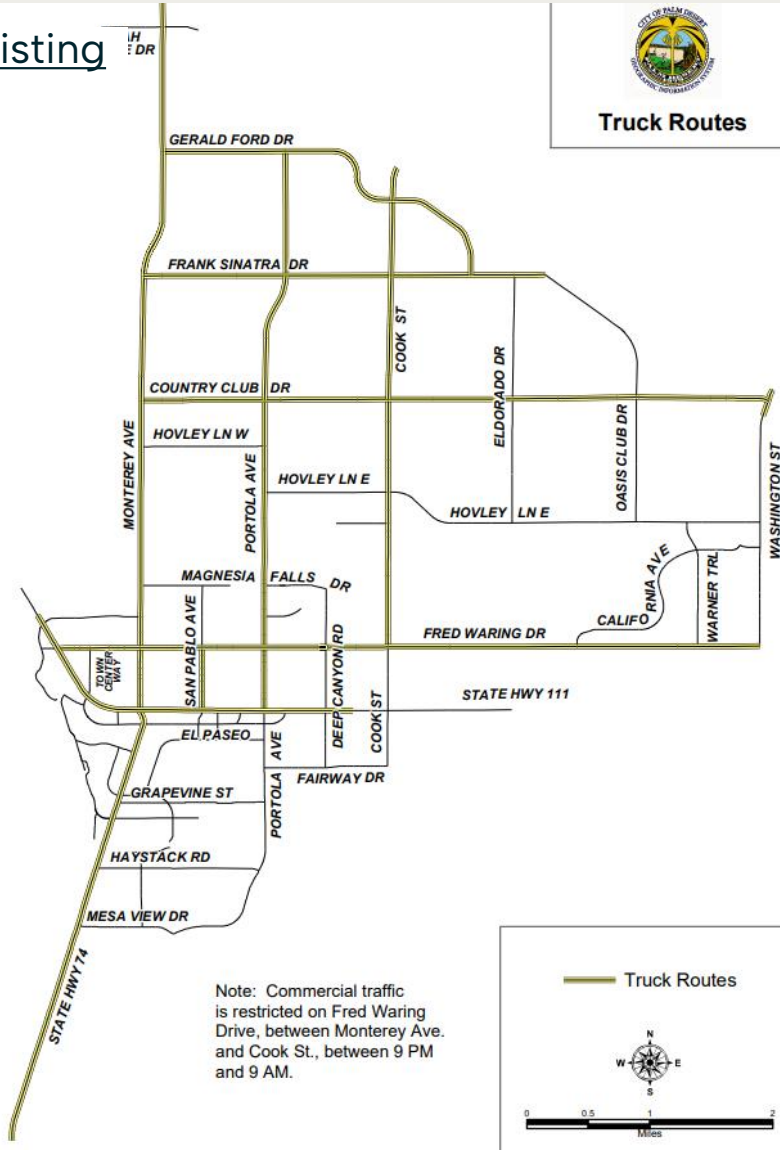
- Consistency with AB 98 legislation
  - Requires all agencies include truck routes in the circulation elements by January 2028
  - Routes should avoid “sensitive receptors” wherever feasible (schools, parks, housing)
  - Routes should provide direct access to industrial areas
- Address safety concerns



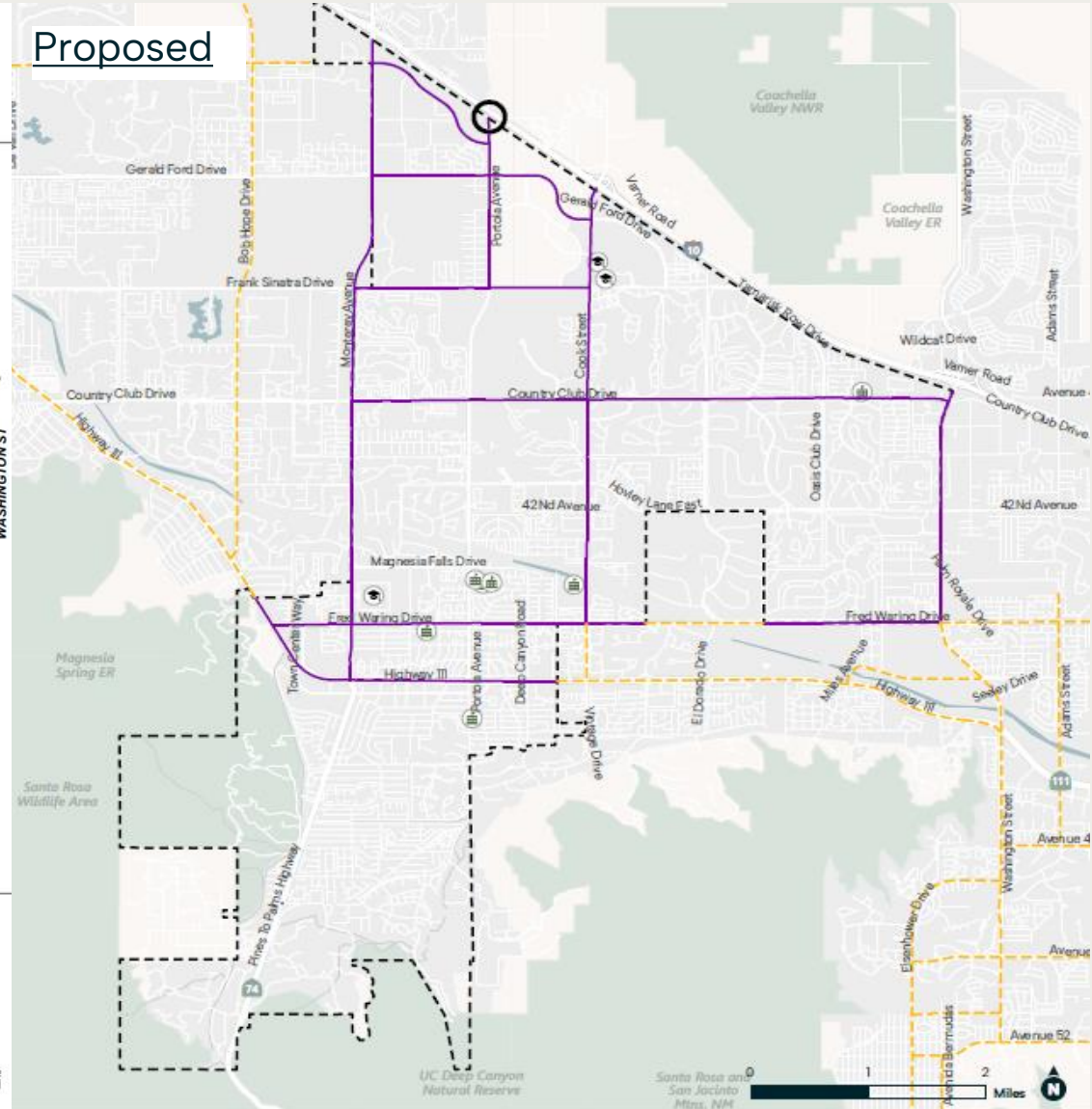
# Truck Routes

- Proposed Changes:
  - Remove San Pablo Avenue (previously adopted)
  - Remove SR-74 south of Highway 111
  - Remove Portola Avenue south of Frank Sinatra
  - Remove Frank Sinatra Drive and Gerald Ford Drive East of Cook Street
  - Add Dinah Shore Drive from Monterey Avenue to Portola Avenue
  - Extend Portola Avenue to I-10 (proposed)
- Trucks may use any roadway to complete deliveries/pick-ups

# Existing



# Proposed



SECTION 05

# VMT & LOS

# Why Address VMT and LOS?

## Level of Service (LOS)

- **Describes traffic conditions and helps identify congestion hot spots**
- Letter grade (A–F) that measures congestion at a specific point
- Based on the average delay/wait times at intersection
- Used for local planning decisions



## Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT)

- **Measures the overall efficiency of driving**
- The total number of miles traveled by vehicles
- Can be analyzed as:
  - Total VMT (in a city, by a project, etc.)
  - VMT per resident and/or employee
  - VMT by trip purpose (e.g. commute VMT, residential VMT)
- Used for CEQA transportation impacts

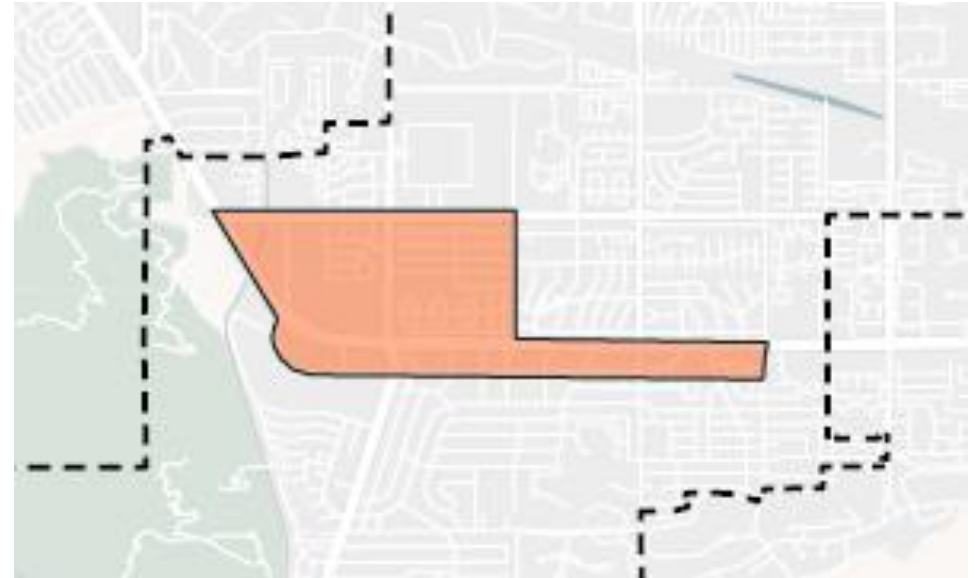
# VMT Thresholds of Significance

- Why Adopt Local Guidelines?
  - CEQA defensibility
  - Compare development projects to local conditions
  - Account for unique land uses (e.g. tourism)
- Proposed thresholds build off the county thresholds
- State law and the City's guidelines allow certain projects to screen from VMT assessment

Project Type	Metric	VMT Threshold
Residential	Home Based VMT per Resident	Below General Plan Buildout <u>county-average</u> VMT per resident
Non-Residential	VMT per Service Population OR Commute VMT per Employee	Below General Plan Buildout <u>county-average</u> VMT per service population
Mixed Use Developments	VMT per Service Population	Below General Plan Buildout <u>county-average</u> VMT per service population
Transportation Project	Total VMT	Consistent with the SCAG RTP/SCS and/or City General Plan.  If not consistent with the SCAG RTP/SCS and or City General Plan, no net change in <u>city-wide</u> VMT compared to the General Plan Buildout condition

# LOS Thresholds

- Why Update LOS Thresholds?
  - LOS is now a local planning decision
  - Recognizing widening is not feasible or desired in some areas
  - Align with goals to maximize use of existing infrastructure first
- Maintain peak-hour LOS D threshold at intersections
- Allow for LOS E in the City Center area
- Ensure analysis is during the peak season (November–April)



# Transportation Impact Assessment Guidelines

- Additional policies for evaluating safety and multimodal access for developments
- Evaluate if a project will increase safety hazards at a high-crash location
  - Contribute towards safety improvements if safety deficiency noted
- Multimodal “checklist” for projects to consider in the planning and design phase

# VMT and LOS Results

## General Plan VMT

- Proposed improvements reduce the amount of driving per person
  - Shorter trip lengths
  - More direct path of travel

Metric	Adopted Mobility Element	Proposed Mobility Element
Total Palm Desert VMT	1,195,039	1,080,929
VMT/Service Population	9.1	8.2

## General Plan LOS

- Proposed improvements reduce congestion in North Palm Desert
  - More options to connect to/from I-10
  - Accommodate planned development
- Congestion is forecasted to be similar near the City Center gateways
  - Widening is not feasible or practical
  - Operational improvements can address spot congestion

# Next Steps

## CEQA Process

- Addendum to the existing General Plan EIR
- SB-18 Tribal Consultation (currently underway)

## Council Adoption

- Adoption of Updated Mobility Element
  - Goals & Policies
  - Circulation Network Changes
  - Truck Routes
- Adoption of Transportation Study Guidelines:
  - VMT Thresholds
  - LOS Thresholds
  - Safety & Multi-modal Assessment

## Implementation

- Council and city will implement policies over the next several years
- Implementation matrix can support this effort



**Thank You!  
Questions?**