



**TRAFFIC AND SAFETY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

**EDITH STONE ROOM—RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
1249 MARIN AVENUE
September 24, 2009**

- 1. Call to Order** Meeting was called to order at 7:05 pm by Chair Anderson.
- 2. Roll call**
Members present: Lubov Mazur, Ray Anderson, and Marsha Atkinson. West was excused. Madson was absent.
Staff present: Ann Chaney and Aleida Andrino-Chavez.
- 3. Approval of Minutes**
Minutes were approved
- 4. Public Comment** – Anderson reminded commissioners and the public about the protocol to follow at meetings.

Amy Smolens of Albany Strollers and Rollers said that her organization had a booth for the first time at the Solano Stroll this year. She reminded that Wednesday, October 7 would be the International Walk and Roll to school Day and that on Saturday, October 17, there would be the Albany Police Bike Rodeo.

Chavez said that she had drafted a letter with comments about the Whole Foods project Environmental Impact Report, and that she had not included the letter in the packet because she wrote the draft letter after she had mailed out the packets since the date to receive comments was October 5. She said the letter was based on the Commission members' comments at the last meeting. The letter could be read during the Announcements and Communications Sections.

5 Presentation

5-1 Police Reports

Anderson said that Lt. Geissberger was not present to give the report.

6. Discussion and Possible Action on matters related to the following items:

6-3 AC Transit Service Adjustments—Review Comment Letter from the September 3 meeting. Chair Anderson asked the Commission if it was ok with them to discuss Item 6-3 AC Transit Service Adjustments, approve it for the Mayor to sign. They agreed and the Commission members approved the letter.

6-1 Pierce Street Rehabilitation and Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Environmental Document—Presentation by LSA and Associates

Chaney introduced the item and said that no decision was expected at this meeting. Theresa Bravo of LSA and Associates, the firm that is conducting the environmental work said that the purpose of the meeting was to receive oral and written comments. Bravo explained what a Mitigated Negative Declaration was conducted because it was determined that the project was not going to have a significant impact on the environment and that all the impacts could be mitigated at less than significant level. She mentioned that LSA would provide written responses to any written comments, including those comments that would be received at this meeting. Topics for which known environmental impacts were identified include parking, traffic safety hazard and noise.

Parking: The project reduces parking on the west side of the 500 block of Pierce Street by a total of three diagonal parking spaces. Because these parking spaces are not designated to any residential development in particular, their removal is not considered to have a significant environmental impact.

Traffic safety hazard: The project would not increase safety hazards. On the contrary, the introduction of raised crosswalks and reduced travel lanes would encourage the reduction of traffic speeds.

Noise: The initial study did not identify any noise impacts resulting from the project.

She continued with the environmental process schedule stating that according to CEQA guidelines, a 30-day comment period is mandated, which would end on Monday, September 28. She encouraged members of the public who wished to comment to do so by writing to the City of Albany attention to Ann Chaney or Aleida Andrino-Chavez. Comments received and responses to the comments would be published as part of the final Initial Study Mitigated Negative Declaration (ISMND).

The final ISMND would be brought to the commission for consideration on October 22, when a recommendation to the Council would be expected. The City Council is scheduled to consider this item at its November 2nd meeting. Bravo concluded her report.

Anderson asked if there were clarifying questions from the Commission. Being none he opened the discussion to the public.

Bob Uhrhammer resident of the 700 block of Pierce Street said that he was concerned about light pollution in the sense that the path illumination would pollute the vision of the drivers on the freeway. He asked if there had been consideration to implement lighting that is not visible above the horizontal to avoid light pollution.

Mazur said that looking at the list of trees, it seemed as if they were planted with a plan in mind. Occasionally there is a native tree like the Coastal Oak and the Sequoia, which would grow relatively fast. One of them has a diameter of 2 inches. In that stretch there are 75 trees including eucalyptus and almost none of them is a native species. She wondered if those trees could be replaced elsewhere if they were to be removed. She is also concerned about light pollution, but because the freeway is elevated, she did not think that the bicyclists would get any glare from the freeway. She suggested that the lights be kept low to the ground and not very bright because the brighter the light the more it encourages crime due to more contrast between bright light and darker shadows.

Anderson said that he was concerned about this project because if the park were not going to materialize, it would be difficult to implement the path. Mazur said that it was not impossible for the path to continue along Pierce up to Calhoun Street and then to Cleveland St.

Chaney said that currently, Pierce Street is a Class III bike path, which is a "Share the Road" facility. In 2004, Alta Planning Consulting recommended that one way to close the gap between Ohlone Greenway and the Bay Trail was to implement a Class I bike facility along the west side of the 500 block of Pierce Street and through the Caltrans property and along Cleveland Avenue. Caltrans in turn, said it was fine to explore the possibility of the bike path through its property, but to align it to the west of the parcel of land as much as possible. Anderson said that he remembered when the relocation of the ramp project came about, Caltrans agreed to give the surplus land to the City in order to develop a park. Chaney said that when the issue was discussed with the Right of Way Department staff at Caltrans, the focus of the discussions changed to developing the land and selling it at market value. The City is still in conversation with Caltrans, and while they have not opposed the idea of the bike path, they have not committed to anything yet.

Mazur commended the work of the consultants in regard to their ability to preserve most of the parking along the 500 block of Pierce by only eliminating 3 parking spaces. She also asked about the improvements to the access ramps at 555 Pierce Street and whether the City would be working on private property. Chaney said the according to the City Engineer, the City had a slope easement in that area. David Clore of LSA said that the project involved trimming down some trees and shrubbery because they block visibility.

Mazur asked if the removal of the trees would impact the insulation that the butterflies on Albany Hill get from the wind and noise.

To close the discussion, Chaney added that the Parks and Recreation Commission would be looking at the impacts on the trees located along the segment of Cleveland Avenue. Chaney asked the Commission to be prepared to make a recommendation at the next meeting.

6-2 Proposed Directional Signage and Street Name Change

Chavez summarized the memorandum included in the agenda packet. She said that the Economic Development Ad-Hoc Committee identified the issue of implementing a good signage system as a priority. In addition, they suggested improving signage from the freeway indicating where the commercial district in Albany is located and where the truck routes are located. They also suggested to change the name of Cleveland Avenue to Jacuzzi Avenue because having two names for Cleveland Avenue, one in Albany and another in Richmond, leads to confusion for non-local drivers.

Mazur asked if staff could find out how many businesses were located on Cleveland and how many residents were rentals. Chaney said that it could be found out through the Assessor's Map.

The Commission thought it was a good idea to entertain the issue of having one name for Cleveland Avenue.

Chavez mentioned the pending grant application made in coordination with the Western Contra Costa Transportation Authority Committee to develop a bicycle and pedestrian signage plan. The grant award would be announced in December and if granted, the City would have an opportunity to piggy bag and perhaps work with the consultants on the signage recommended by the Economic Development Committee. The City would have to find additional funding for this effort. Chavez mentioned that the City might be able to find an intern who would be assisting staff on this project.

Mazur said that it was important to implement the bicycle signage because the City needed to bring attention to drivers that bicycles are in fact on Albany streets. Chaney said that it was her understanding that there was no funding to do this project. This was an idea that the Economic Development Plan recommended. Mazur said that it is important to have a plan for when funding become available.

Atkinson said that it was more important to implement bicycle signage than changing the name of Jacuzzi. She also supported the suggestion of directing vehicles to the Solano and San Pablo Commercial District.

Anderson said that he had spoken to Judy Lieberman, City staff person leading the Economic Development Plan about this issue. He said that the City needed signage to direct drivers from the freeway to Solano and San Pablo Avenue and that he supports changing the sign at San Pablo and Marin to one similar to that of El Cerrito Plaza Shopping Center, which indicates the beginning of the Commercial District. Anderson also suggested to install a sign at the intersection of Central Avenue and Jacuzzi Street in Richmond indicating that Cleveland Avenue continues from Jacuzzi St. He believes that the name of Cleveland should be kept because those roadways in Albany were named after U.S. Presidents.

Chaney summarized the recommendations:

Install signage at the off ramps of I-80 and I-580 indicating direction to Solano and San Pablo Avenues.

Bicycle signage is priority

Install signage on service organizations that would be visible from I-80.

Install a sign at Central Avenue in Richmond to indicate direction to Cleveland Avenue.

Mazur suggested a truck route traveling westbound that would require trucks trying to access Cleveland to go on the overpass and take I-580 north, exit on Central, turn right and turn right on Jacuzzi. This suggestion would need more discussion.

7. Reports

7-1. Marin Elementary School-Grant Award

Chavez reported that the City had been granted \$576,000 for safety improvements around Marin Elementary School, which includes \$24,000 for educational programs. Chavez said that she would like to bring the San Jose Street Smarts program.

7-2 Buchanan-Jackson signal

Chavez said that the Council had approved the four-way protected left turn for that signal, which was not the recommendation the Traffic and Safety Commission. She added that the Council would like to explore the possibility of a parking permit program.

Anderson said that such a program was labor-intensive. He would like to discuss this issue in a couple of months.

7-3 Curb Ramp Project-Construction Contract

Chaney said that the City had favorable bids back. It looked like the City would be able to pick up virtually all of the curb ramps.

8. Announcements and Communications.

8-1 Letter from Mary Neilsen at 555 Pierce Street.

8-2 Email from Bill Burton regarding crosswalks on Buchanan Street.

8-3 Schedule meeting for November and December.

The Commission agreed on having the meetings for November and December on the suggested dates, 11/19 and 12/17.

Chavez asked if it was fine with the Commission to review the draft letter regarding comments of the Traffic and Safety Commission on the Whole Foods Project Environmental Report.

Anderson announced the street closure on October 11.

9. Future agenda items

Mazur suggested including amending Albany's Billboard Ordinance if there is one, prohibiting mobile billboards.

Anderson suggested including limited parking hours for the parking spot located at the south side of Solano (in front to Subway). He suggested "No Parking from 7:00 to 9:00 am and from 4:00 to 6:00 pm."

9. Meeting Adjourned at 8:55 pm