



TRAFFIC AND SAFETY COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

City Hall - Council Chambers
1000 San Pablo Avenue
March 26, 2015—7:00 PM

1. **CALL TO ORDER** Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm by Chair Chomsky.
2. **ROLL CALL. Members present:** Javandel, Del Rosario, Chomsky, Reeves, and McCroskey. Staff present: Sgt Bellman, Bond, Chen, and Chavez.
3. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES for February 26, 2015.** Minutes were approved with no change.
Motion JavandelReeves: Moved to approve the February 26, 2015 minutes. Vote in favor: Javandel, McCroskey, Chomsky, Del Rosario and Reeves. Opposed: None. Abstained: None. Motion passed unanimously.

4. **PUBLIC COMMENT**—Bob Uhrhammer commented on the fast speeds on Pierce Avenue in excess of the posted 25 mph. He counted groups of one hundred vehicles during 25 minutes in the evening using a radar gun and found that 78% of vehicles were traveling in excess of 30 miles, 37% traveled in excess of 35 mph, 14% were in excess of 40 mph, and 2% over 24 mph. In the morning hours before the peak hour, he observed speeds of over 50 mph. He was concerned about the implementation of the Pierce Street Park.

Caryl O’Keefe of the 600 block of Jackson asked the Commission to address the problem of sidewalk parking on various streets in the City, particularly on Washington and Pierce. She said that this was against state law and it was inconsistent with the City’s Active Transportation Plan.

Amy Smolens announced the following events: Saturday April 25 is the APAL Bike Rodeo at the Cornell Elementary Campus; Sunday May 3 is the Arts and Green Festival at Veterans Park. She specifically called for volunteers and encouraged persons interested to contact her by email or by Facebook.

5 PRESENTATION

5-A **Police Report:** There were 17 collisions in March, 11 non-injury, 6 injury, 8 collisions were hit and run, 1 collision occurred on Marin, one near a school, 1 pedestrian collision. There were no auto/bicycle collisions last month. The APD issued 93 citations and conducted 7 DUI arrests.

6.0 DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ON MATTERS RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING ITEMS:

6-A **Traffic Calming Concept for the Streets Adjacent to the El Cerrito Plaza Shopping Center and Language for Street Closures in the General Plans** Chavez explained the details of the recommended traffic calming and suggested implementing the traffic circles in one phase because traffic circles are more effective if implemented in tandem. Bond explained the changes in the language of the General Plan to allow for the closure of any street in the City. He said that the Draft General Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Report for the General Plan would be available this summer.

The Commission had the following questions:

- What type of mini circles is being considered? The mini circles that were cost out were rolled curbs without major landscape, similar to those proposed by the ATP for Dartmouth. Painted mini circles would be cheaper.
- The Commission must determine how effectiveness would be measured. Is it by volume and speed surveys? What are the thresholds that the Commission would like to achieve? This must be included in the revised language.
- Remove the last phrase from Policy 5.4 of the Draft language of the General Plan, starting at “in the event...effective.”
- Is the yield sign at mini circles for vehicles to yield to pedestrians? Chavez confirmed.

- How is the contra flow lane on Brighton between Masonic and the Middle School gate going to work? It is more likely to be a cycle track. Chavez said she measured 15 feet from the face of curb to the backflow preventer in that area. She would bring a schematic in April.

Discussion was open to the public. Alan Riffer, Eleanor Moses, Preston Jordan, Michael O'Donnell spoke. Comments were:

- What is the dimension of the mini circles? 8 feet.
- Policy 5C: replace “undertake” with “utilize”
- The policy does not really speak about the concerns that residents raised in terms of not feeling that the area was a safe place to walk or bike.
- It is also important that we have some timelines associated with the plan and the thresholds or goals that need to be achieved.
- Red curb all the sides of the intersections. For instance, red curb the near side of Brighton at Masonic in the eastbound direction and at Kains and Brighton.
- Include language in the policy that reflects residents concerns about lowering traffic volumes that are consistent with streets of the scale existing in this neighborhood.

The Commission had the following recommendations on the General Plan language:

- Policy 5-C, first sentence, add “as appropriate” before “undertake”. Complete Streets principles may mean different things to different people. More explanation could be added in terms of pedestrian scale, lowering traffic volume, and creating a friendly environment to pedestrians and other users of the street. Perhaps, adding the phrase: “creating a welcoming environment for bicycle, pedestrians, and other users of the streets” instead of using the term “Complete Streets Principles.”
- Add threshold measures to 5-C: Volume of traffic must be decreased, volumes of pedestrians and bicyclists must increase, speeds must be reduced, and yielding rate to pedestrians must increase. In the language, monitoring goals must be mentioned: Reduced speeds, reduced volumes and improve the vehicular yielding rate for pedestrians. Bond said he would work on adding these thresholds, but clarified that the intent of the General Plan is a higher level direction. The design would specify the details.
- In 5-4, eliminate the last phrase “in the event... effective.” Bond said it would be removed.

The Commission had the following comments on the traffic calming design:

- In terms of design for circles, choose low height vegetation.
- The speed hump on Talbot must go all the way through the contra-flow lane or include a barrier because some motorists may drift into the bike lane, which is dangerous.
- Include crosswalks at the south side of Kains and Brighton.
- Include crosswalks on the side streets. Two yellow lines for side streets and high visibility for the four sides at Cornell and at Kains.
- The Commission would like to see engineering plans when these are prepared.
- What would the impact of including this project in the CIP be on the existing traffic calming program? Chavez said that it would be a separate intersection improvement project with its own funding and it would not affect the existing program.

Motion Javandel/McCroskey: Moved to recommend inclusion of the prepared plan in the Capital Improvement Program. Vote in favor: Chomsky, Del Rosario, McCroskey, Javandel, and Reeves. Vote against: None. Abstained: None. Motion passed unanimously.

6-B Brighton Avenue Green Street Project.

Bond introduced Wen Chen, Senior Engineer with the City. Chen presented a proposal for the implementation of a green street project. Chen explained that the purpose of the project was the improvement of storm water draining on to Cerrito Creek. The Project also includes pedestrian safety features for the students at the Middle School. He said he had initial concerns regarding turning radius for the fire engine.

The Commission had the following questions:

- Concerns about the Fire Department engines
- What impacts does this project have on existing parking spaces?

- Parents usually double park in the area
- Would the amount of blue zone parking and drop off space remain the same? The regular parking would be decreased
- The fire hydrant on the north side of Brighton must be relocated.
- What is the purpose of the chain bollard? Chen said that it would be required to protect the vegetation for the first two years in order to get established
- What is the maintenance required for the rain garden? The contractor will stay for the first two years to provide maintenance to the plants. There is no further maintenance plans after the initial two years for this project.
- Would the push button on the stop signs flash all the stop signs? Yes.

Public Comment. Charlie Blanchard and Preston Jordan spoke. Their comments were as follows:

- Create a straight path for wheelchair and pedestrians.
- Reconsider the use of the flashing stop signs as this feature seems unnecessary. Consider implementing them in a second phase.
- Brighton is a bicycle facility. If the design stays as is, it would require a sign for cyclists to indicate that bicyclists may take the lane.
- Curb cuts that let the water into the basins should not be sloped. Albany has a good example on 6th Street along the Codornices Creek.
- Consult with the Superintendent about what her expectations for this project are.

Comments from the Commission:

- The way the crosswalk is drawn on San Gabriel is not appropriate because crosswalks must be centered across the middle of the curb ramp in order to provide a straight path of travel. If the angled curb ramp stays, the crosswalk needs to be moved into the intersection. If the parallel curb ramps are suitable, the intersection would somewhat open up, which is a good thing at this location.
- There were some issues with widening the curb ramps on the southeast corner. If there were physical barriers to implementing two crosswalks on this side, widening the curb ramp is a consideration as long as cues were provided for the vision impaired. One way is to place the truncated dome pads in the direction of travel.
- The flashing stop signs should be given further consideration. They may not be necessary in this project.
- The push button is far away from the path of travel. This may not be a good idea at this location, particularly because children would feel attracted to push the button without the need to cross.
- The concern is that we may be training motorists to stop only when the stop signs are flashing
- Is it expected that the parents driving behavior be the same as it is now? Likely, yes.

6-C IN City Design Concept Presentation for Solano/San Pablo Bus Stop Relocation

Chavez presented the project that was developed by students of the University of California, Berkeley InCity program during the summer of 2014. This was a multidisciplinary team of professionals working on several projects in the Bay Area. Albany proposed the development of design concepts for the relocation of the northbound AC Transit bus stop at the intersection of Solano and San Pablo as recommended in the Complete Streets Plan. The Albany team developed three bus stop conceptual design alternatives. They did research, field visits, interviews with business owners and staff from the City and from AC Transit, and collected pertinent data from the City and from AC Transit. She walked the Commission through each of the conceptual options developed for the site. The Commission had the following questions:

- Is the planning process spelled out in the Complete Streets Plan for this intersection still planned to happen? Yes. These illustrations can facilitate initial discussions for the public process.
- Do the three plans presented here have the same length for the bulb out? Yes. The options differ in design and materials.
- Is the intent to work with the business community still in place? Yes. This presentation is not intended to be the engagement process.

Discussion was open to the public. The following people spoke: A resident of the 800 block of Stannage who also works at AC Transit in a different capacity than planning, Preston Jordan, Amy Smolens. Comments were:

- The relocation of the bus stop would also decrease congestion. It is important to not let a few private interests undo the benefits to the greater community that this project would bring.

- In support of looking at the greater benefit for the greater community from this project
- Support the big Albany sign to indicate that this is the most important bus stop in the City.
- If the third floor plan can be combined with the roof idea of the first design, it would result in a better design
- The idea of the charging station of Option 2 is interesting. Maintenance may be an issue
- The bicycle parking in Option 1 offers some promise, but it has to be underneath the roof overhang to provide protection for the bikes parked there.

Chavez said that during the Complete Streets Planning process, she and AC Transit staff counted how many times the buses stopped at the near side stop and caused congestion. It was found out that 50% of the time, the buses encroached their tails into the travel lane when the traffic signal was green.

The Commission had the following comments:

- This may be a prime stop for a bike share station.
- Support for the idea of creating a place for the Albany community
- During the Complete Streets Plan, we did not hear much from AC Transit and the transit riders. It was not really brought forward during the planning process.
- It may seem a small improvement for transit riders, but it represents a great benefit for the community. The transit riders were not strongly represented during the planning process for the Complete Streets Plan.

The Commission thanked staff for bringing this presentation to the meeting and for making it happen. They said that they would be looking forward to continuing the planning process for relocating the bus stop at the intersection of Solano and San Pablo.

6-D. Designation of the Traffic and Safety Commission as the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Body (BPAC) for TDA, Article 3 purposes.

Bond introduced the item saying that it was a requirement from MTC to designate a local BPAC to review candidate projects proposed to receive TDA Article 3 funding. The Commission meets the established requirements of MTC Resolution 4108 in terms of member composition and appointment. The alternative to not assigning the Traffic & Safety Commission as the local BPAC is to have the County BPAC review the local candidate projects for TDA funds. The candidate project this year is the Marin Curtis SR2S improvements, a project that has been widely reviewed by the Commission in the past year.

The Commission had the following questions:

- How is it going to be guaranteed in the future that the composition of the T&S Commission meets the MTC requirements for this purpose? Chavez said that the Commission may decide to change the composition of the BPAC in the future, but a new resolution must be brought forward to MTC and Council has to appoint the members of the new body.

The discussion was open to the public. Preston Jordan, Amy Smolens, and Alan Riffer spoke. Comments were the following:

- Support in designating the current T&S Commission as BPAC, but there is no way to guarantee that the Commission would meet the MTC criteria in the future unless its membership is expanded in order to ensure that its members walk and bike as regular part of their lives
- Another way to achieve the composition of the BPAC requirement is to have one member of the Planning and Zoning Commission, one from the T&S, and another member from the Sustainability Committee form the BPAC in order to ensure wide representation.
- The City has taken strides in reducing VMT and increase bicycle use, but if there is not adequate space to keep the bikes or no safe place to park bikes, the efforts of implementing active transportation projects would not be as effective as they should as some people may be prevented from keeping bikes in their apartments or near their homes due to lack of adequate and safe parking space. This is more an issue for the Planning and Zoning Commission.
- Support for creating a separate Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory body that would be tasked with looking at improving facilities and forward active transportation projects.
- If the community does not trust the Council to appoint members that meet those requirements, how does the community trust Council to appoint the right members to a separate body?

The Commission had the following comments:

- In creating another body, we have to be careful in not overburden staff. In being the BPAC, we are not limiting the T&S Commission in its purview. The Commission easily refers any item to the Planning and Zoning Commission or to any other pertinent commission or committee.
- If the future composition of the Commission is of concern, there are ways to ensure that Council appoints representatives that meet MTC requirements.
- Berkeley and Richmond have separate BPACs. How do we compare with other cities of similar size to ours?
- Currently, we review bicycle and pedestrian projects, having another layer of revision does not seem necessary. We need to have some guidelines set to make sure that we have the right composition in the Commission.

Motion McCroskey/Javandel: Moved to recommend that Council assign the Traffic and Safety Commission as the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Body for TDA Article 3 review projects and to remind the Council that it is incumbent upon them to appoint members of this Commission that would reflect the broad spectrum of all users of the streets. Vote in favor: Chomsky, Del Rosario, McCroskey, Javandel, and Reeves. Vote against: None. Abstained: None. Motion passed unanimously.

7. Announcements and Communications-None.

7-A Albany Film Festival on March 28

7-B Bike to Work Day on MAY 14, 2015 and Bike to School Day on Wednesday, May 13

7-C Albany Arts and Green Festival

8. Future Agenda Items

A. Washington Avenue Traffic Calming—April, 2015

B. School Zones—April, 2015

C. Solano Avenue Hillside Traffic Calming—May, 2015

D. Electric Vehicle Charging Stations—June/July 2015

E. Sidewalk Parking—May, 2015

F. Pierce Street Speeding—May, 2015

G. Sidewalk Policy—Public Works is leading this policy development. Staff will keep the Commission informed of future developments and will bring back the policy for revision to the T&S Commission.

9. Adjournment—Meeting was adjourned at 10:02 pm. Next meeting: April 23, 2015 at 7:00 pm