



**TRAFFIC AND SAFETY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

**CITY OF ALBANY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
1000 SAN PABLO AVENUE
CITY OF ALBANY
May 22, 2008**

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Lubov Mazur, Chair.

2. Roll Call

Members present: Ray Anderson, Lubov Mazur, Marsha Atkinson. Treat was absent (Richard Treat called Chavez to let her know that he would be absent, however she arrived late to the meeting and could not mention this at this time) and Mazur asked the members present to wait a few minutes as the meeting was at a different place for the first time. Madson arrived at 7:10 pm. Mazur proceeded with item 4.

4. Public Comment

Nick Pilch commended the Police Department for their increased presence around the City and for enforcing traffic laws. He also reported on the Bike To Work Day stating that there was a 60% increase of people cycling by the Albany table this year. He urged the Commission that the Measure F prioritization be put on the agenda as soon as possible because a number of the projects are relevant to pedestrian and bike safety. Finally, he expressed disappointment that the Albany Rollers and Strollers' suggestion for an ex-officio bicycling/pedestrian advocacy position on the Traffic and Safety Commission was voted down. He asked the Commission to keep considering this issue as the AS&R would continue pursuing this position.

3. Consent Calendar

Mazur said that at the last meeting she had asked Mr. Tabibnia if by leaving Kains St. open and other streets being close, it would preserve the LOS on San Pablo Avenue and she recalls that he said "no." Chaney said that Chavez had spoken with Sam Tabibnia and that basically he had agreed with the Kimley-Horn report that leaving Kains St. open was a mitigation measure to prevent the LOS on San Pablo Avenue from further deteriorating. Chaney said that she would clarify with Chavez.

Mazur said that she overlooked mentioning during the public comment section the issue of parking along Marin Avenue, between Masonic and Key Route. She would like to request changing the parking limit requirement from unrestricted to 4 hour parking in the area because now that the public meetings will be hosted in the Library and Community Services building, there is increased need for availability of parking spaces. The item will be agendized for a future meeting.

Anderson moved that the minutes be approved upon clarifying Mazur's question. Atkinson seconded.

5. Discussion and possible action on matters related to the following items:

5-1 Traffic Calming Policy (attached)

Chaney provided background on the traffic calming policy that the Commission examined some time ago. Bill Burton of DMJM Harris reviewed the policy and provided comments on the draft document.

Bill Burton said that the first step is to determine if the street is suitable for the implementation of traffic calming measures and the second step is to collect speed and volume data. He said that the draft policy is within industry standards and that he had three of recommendations: First, dropping the lower boundary on Criterion 8 because the fact that a street has lower volume should not necessarily preclude it from being eligible for traffic calming implementation. The other recommendation is keeping the 85th percentile in compliance with the California Speed Law and stipulating speeding as the 85th percentile being 5 miles over the posted or street speed limit. His last recommendation was monitoring adjacent streets whenever a traffic calming implementation takes place in order to make sure the problem is not diverted to other areas.

Mazur asked if there were questions from the Commission members. Being none, she opened the discussion to the public.

Rhoda of 950 Cornell said she had one concern regarding long streets. Her experience is that long streets encourage faster driving. Burton said that the policy states that the street should be at least 300 feet in length.

Dave Fields of Kains Avenue asked a question about qualifying for traffic calming measures based on the 85th percentile. Burton clarified the concept.

Atkinson asked if speeding is considered five miles over the posted speed limit because Albany does not have many streets where the speed is posted.

Mazur asked if a street qualifies by volume and speed or by volume or speed alone. Burton said that usually the criterion is speed, because street calming is not a solution for volume reduction. Mazur asked for examples in town where the street grade is more than 8 percent. Burton said that without measuring, Solano Avenue west of San Pablo would be an example. Chaney said that perhaps, Peralta was another street with a grade greater than 8 percent.

Madson moved to approve the policy with the changes proposed by Mr. Burton in his memo of January 16, 2008 and with the removal of the word "posted." Atkinson seconded. Vote was 4/0. The item will be forwarded to the City Council in the near future.

5-2 Marin Avenue Red Curb Plan

Chaney explained that staff field review of the red curb and striping plan for Marin Avenue suggested adding red curb on additional sides of the intersection in order to provide better visibility of pedestrians crossing the intersections in the east-west direction. The red curb plan also affects existing parking, as it would require removal of some stalls at all the unsignalized intersections. The plan proposes red curbs for 25' where the driver looks to the left and 15' where the driver looks to the right. Mr. Bill Burton explained that there are additional changes in addition to the red curb recommendations that were derived from the One Year Monitoring Report. These are minimum sight distances. The other changes that were recommended and reflected in the plan are:

- On the westbound approach to San Pablo Avenue, most of the excess width is in the middle lane, while there is heavy congestion along the right lane. The plan proposes changing the excess width from the middle lane to the right lane.
- Another recommended change was to provide zebra crosswalk striping at intersections without any markings.
- Installation of “Keep Clear” pavement markings at selected intersections. DMJM Harris conducted detailed observations at am and pm peak hours and recommended locations for the installation of this marking.
- Better-defined transition at Kains Avenue.

Mazur said that there is not left turn lane at Kains or Stannage and at those intersections is where she sees the conflicts during peak hours. Burton said that as part of the Buchanan Bicycle/Pedestrian Path project, the City got a grant from MTC (Traffic Engineering Technical Assistance, TETAP) that is looking into reconfiguring the San Pablo/Marin intersection in order to accommodate the bicycle lanes. If that proves true, it would be possible to reconfigure those intersections.

Atkinson and Mazur asked the question about the problem at Marin and Santa Fe Avenues and the idea of the No-Right Turn on Red restriction. Burton said that although he is not a proponent of this restriction, he thinks that the intersection of Marin and Santa Fe is a good location for this restriction.

Atkinson also asked about the intersection of Masonic and Marin for the implementation of the No Right on Red restriction for the vehicles turning east or west from Masonic onto Marin. Burton said that the restriction would make the intersection work less efficiently. Atkinson said that she would like to look at solutions to make Marin Avenue work better, particularly during commute hours. Mazur asked if the signal had loop detection at Marin and Masonic. Burton said that it is fully operating.

Mazur opened the discussion to the public.

Rhoda commented that some people have mobile homes and if they park them on Marin, they will always obstruct vision. Then she talked about Solano and Cornell and parents not using the crosswalk. Mazur said that this latter issue would be discussed when traffic problems around schools are addressed.

Chaney said that the Council already approved the red curb proposal last year, but staff thought that it was important for the Commission to know what was approved. She said that staff would probably send a notice to the neighborhood informing them of the change. Mazur gave direction to staff to proceed with the plan as proposed with the addition of the No Right turn on Red restriction at the intersection of Marin Avenue and Santa Fe Avenue.

5-3 Discussion and possible action on feasibility of a paid parking program in commercial areas

Chaney introduced the item and said that the question is whether or not to have a parking meter program in Albany. Some people wonder if this program would encourage people to get out of their cars, or whether people would use residential streets instead of paying for parking. Chaney also mentioned that the City gets about \$400,000 annually from parking time limit violations, but there is cost associated with the administration of the citations. According to the City of Berkeley,

the meter program is easier to enforce. Police officers just drive by and check if the meter is expired, whereas in Albany, they have to mark the tires. It is more labor intensive. She said that with tight economic times, this could be a new source of funding.

Anderson said that the Albany Chamber of Commerce opposes this type of programs. Primarily, the meters get vandalized or break down easily and the cost of replacing them is high. In addition, merchants are afraid of losing customers.

Madson asked that if this is not a problem what the City would be trying to fix with this program. Mazur said that this would be an additional revenue source. The parking problems were solved by the implementation of the 90-minute time limit. She opened the discussion to the public.

A member of the public suggested conducting a study to assess the advantages, disadvantages, and financial impacts of the parking meter program.

Sol Strand said that in upper Solano, he had seen Berkeley business' customers park in the Albany area when there is virtually no parking in the Berkeley section. He sees this as Berkeley business taking advantage of the free parking in Albany. He suggested implementing parking meters on Solano Avenue in the three blocks west of the Berkeley City Limit.

Rhoda said that in the past, the City Council held a meeting at the High School in order to discuss this item. People rejected it. The example included in the packet is very different from the Albany grid system. She also mentioned the parking permit program and she said that they are costly and that she would be paying for the many people who park in front of her house every two hours.

Mazur said that there were many things to do before considering the paid parking program. Anderson moved not to have a paid parking program in the City of Albany. Atkinson seconded. The vote was 3 against 1 undecided.

5-4 Draft resolution on the Commission action regarding streets leading to the El Cerrito Plaza shopping center

Chaney read the draft resolution out loud and explained the reasoning behind each "whereas." Madson suggested having another "whereas" acknowledging that there are two additional entrances along San Pablo Avenue and stating that El Cerrito Plaza has not maximized the use of those entrances.

Chaney suggested adding language related to the fact that no action has proceeded so far in relation to improving the internal circulation at El Cerrito Plaza, so shoppers feel more incline to utilize alternative entrances to the Plaza. Madson suggested adding language about El Cerrito failing to maximize existing entrances to the Plaza.

Rhoda from the public said that she works at Trader Joe's. If this happens, she would like to use her bike to commute. Chaney said that the access to pedestrians and bicyclists would be available under the total closure. Rhoda suggested a bicycle bridge at Stannage Ave.

It was recommended adding the two "whereas" suggested before. Mazur asked the public if they had further questions.

A member of the audience asked if a "whereas" or reference was considered regarding the tripling of the accident rate on some of the streets. She also asked considering adding language regarding the fact that 65% of traffic coming from the east and its impacts on the school zone.

Chaney said she would look into the accident data, but staff needed to make sure the parameters were comparable.

Anderson moved for the Commission to approve the draft resolution with the recommended changes and with the accident data if readily available. Madson seconded. Vote was Yes/No 3/1.

5-5 Memorandum from Chief McQuiston in relation to “red light” photo enforcement at Buchanan and Jackson

Lt. Geissberger explained that it is an informational issue and that Lt. Adams would be reporting on this to the Commission at a later date. Chavez explained that the goal is to complete the implementation of photo enforcement with the new traffic signal project for which the City obtained funds through the Safe Routes to School program.

A member of the audience commented that the photo enforcement is really needed and should be implemented as soon as possible.

5-6 Request by resident at 907 Madison Street to remove one 90-minute parking space

Chavez explained that the City had received a request to remove one 90-minute parking space in front of the residence at 907 Madison Street.

Atkinson moved, Madson seconded approving the removal of the southernmost 90-minute parking sign and the T markings on the street, and the relocation of the northernmost 90-minute parking sign to the corner at the intersection of Madison St. and Solano Ave.

5-7 Street Smarts Educational Program—Summary of the presentation made by City of San Jose during earlier Traffic and Safety Commission meeting

Chavez provided a summary of the earlier presentation by Linda Byrne of the City of San Jose about this program. She said that she believes it is important to have an educational program that targets all the users of the road: Pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles. Some of the program messages could be broadcast in the local cable TV.

Mazur said that she finds it very affordable to have all of the materials for \$3,000. The City would have a ready-to-go packet for presentations at schools and other forums. Funding could come from the Safe Routes to School program and the Office of Traffic Safety.

Chavez commented that last year she visited the City of Davis and she was amazed by the driving behavior of motorists there. She asked one of the traffic engineers at Davis how they achieved this and the traffic engineer attributed to the implementation of the Street Smarts program. Chavez also said that one has to consider the fact that bicyclists are everywhere in the City of Davis.

Mazur asked how the City of Albany could implement this program. Chaney said that staff had discussed this issue before. This was the third E in the list of the three E’s: Engineering, Enforcement, and Education. Staff will discuss how we can finance this program in the City. She also mentioned that the Environmental Resources in the Community Development Department has someone who goes to the Middle School and talks about recycling. She suggested having something like this at the schools in relation to transportation issues. Staff will come back to the Commission with ideas on how to implement this program.

Mazur said that when she was in school, the Police Department offered bicycle training for children during the summer and she thinks this is beneficial because all the kids who ride bicycles today would be driving in the future. She said that there was no bicycle training in the City.

Lt. Geissberger mentioned the bicycle rodeo the Police Department offers every year in the fall. Mazur asked if this type of training could be incorporated into the PE program, even at the elementary school level.

Nick Pilch said that the Albany Strollers and Rollers wholeheartedly support educational programs such as the Street Smarts, particularly when they target schools. In the U.S. there is no mandatory driver's education before obtaining a driver's license. Mazur asked Pilch if he would be willing to approach the School Board with the suggestion of adding bicycle education to the PE curriculum. Pilch said he would do it.

Madson commended the program and asked about the next steps. Chaney said that staff will comeback with a list of priorities to target under this program.

6. Reports

6-1 Police Reports

Lt. John Geissberger reported that he would like to change the time limits of the reports to month to month, instead of meeting to meeting because of how the data was compiled. The Commission agreed to his request. For the month of April there were 17 collisions and 262 moving violations. The "Click it or Ticket" campaign started on May 14 thanks to a grant received by the Police Department. Since the start of the campaign to June 2, police officers issued 265 seat belt violations. Lt. Geissberger said he would bring the totals for the month at the next meeting. Madson asked how much was the ticket for a seat belt violation. Lt. Geissberger said the range is from \$75 to \$91. The revenues are divided by several agencies and the Albany Police Department only gets a portion of it.

Mazur asked if this citation applies only to the adults in the vehicle or to the children as well. Lt. Geissberger said that the Police Department does not track it down, but according to conversations with police officers they are finding that elderly drivers and young males are the ones being cited for not wearing their seatbelts. Madson asked if the data was broken down by race. Lt. Geissberger said that they did not track race.

Mazur asked if there had been hit and runs. Lt. Geissberger asked the Commission about what kind of information they would like to see in the report, so he can focus on that. The Commission members said that they want to know about hit and runs, pedestrians and bicyclist injuries, and particularly accidents on Marin Avenue. The Commission would like to see if there are trends in the City or particular intersections that show a high incidence of collisions.

Lt. Geissberger said that he would bring the report about the accidents at the next meeting

6-2 Buchanan Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Project

Chavez reported that on May 21, a second meeting was held with the USDA and the other agencies that share the facility, the US Department of Forestry and Gene Expression. The purpose of this meeting was to familiarize the two agencies with the two alternatives being considered for the bike/ped path: Alternative One, with a path crossing at Taylor and Alternative Two, with a crossing at Pierce. Both alternatives include most of the path alignment on the south side of Buchanan St. She said that the project was well received. She also reported that staff would have a meeting with the residents of the north side of Buchanan St. Chaney added that a meeting with the residents of the north side of Buchanan is important because the consultant team has to design

the north side segment of the path. Luckily, most of the homes have driveways that face the side streets and not Buchanan St.

Nick Pilch asked Chavez to briefly state the two alternatives being considered and to explain why the third alternative was not considered. Chavez provided details about the two alternatives and explained that the third alternative was suggested by John Ciccarella during the kick off meeting. This alternative aligns the path along the south side of Buchanan and runs it adjacent to the USDA property and around the redwood trees. It will then loop adjacent to the gate and the storage area. Chavez said that for security reasons, USDA did not agree to this alternative because the path would bring more people to their property and in addition, they have more strict security measures due to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2002.

Pilch said that the Homeland Security concerns are absolutely ludicrous and that USDA, as a representative of our federal government should be serving the needs of the community of Albany. The third alternative represents the higher level of safety for bicycle users. He urged the Commission to push the safest alternative before the USDA.

Mazur said that it had always been her consideration that if someone wants to have a safer street, the more bicyclists they have through the path, the safer it would be because more people would be around.

Pilch said that he agreed with that statement, but that he agrees with the fact that if someone would like to plant a bomb there now, they would easily do it.

Chavez said she had corresponded with USDA and tried to ask them to consider the third alternative. Chaney said that they have shown support for the two alternatives that the City included in the grant application.

Sol Strand commented that the Taylor traffic signal proposal would only benefit the USDA employees. Mazur said that the school and the park users would also benefit from the signal as well. Strand said that it would be difficult to divert traffic from Solano onto Taylor because of the steep hill. He does not see any benefit of having a signal at Taylor for the residents of Albany, unless they are paying for the signal.

Mazur asked if USDA was participating in the cost of the signal. Chavez said that they were not participating.

6 Announcements-Communications

Chaney shared the ACTIA's brochure regarding their projects and expenses. She also asked if everybody had responded to the Volunteer dinner invitation.

8 Future Agenda Items.

8-1 Measure F funding status and revised list of projects

Chaney said that she is reviewing the budget with the Finance Department and she would get back to the Commission in the near future

9 Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 pm. Next meeting is June 26, 2008.