



**TRAFFIC AND SAFETY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

**CITY OF ALBANY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
1000 SAN PABLO AVENUE
CITY OF ALBANY
June 26, 2008**

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:08 p.m. by Lubov Mazur, Chair.

2. Roll Call

Members present: Ray Anderson, Lubov Mazur and Marsha Atkinson. David Madson alerted the Commission that he would not arrive until about 8:30 p.m.

Absent: Richard Treat

3. Consent

Anderson moved/Atkinson seconded approval of the May 22, 2008 minutes as written. The motion passed. At the end of the meeting, Commissioner Madson called attention to the fact that he was present at the May meeting, but arrived late. He asked for the minutes to be corrected.

4. Public Comment

Anderson moved/Atkinson seconded to agendize the issue of cones obstructing parking in front of residential homes. Mazur moved/Anderson seconded to agendize a discussion about the commercial trucks that are parking on Buchanan Street and cause the bus to swerve onto the next lane. They park for extended periods of time, particularly over the weekend.

5. Discussions and Possible Action on matters related to the following items:

5-1 Field test results for the bus stop relocation from the near side to the far side at the intersection of Jackson and Buchanan

Puja Sarna with AC Transit summarized the request they had received to relocate an existing bus stop at the northeast corner of Jackson and Buchanan to the northwest corner of that same intersection. The purpose of the proposal is because this single new stop could serve two separate bus lines (52L and Z).

The Commission discussed this issue at a previous meeting and AC Transit had agreed to conduct an on-site field test using their longest articulated bus. Ms. Sarna presented photos of the bus pulling into stop. AC Transit staff concluded that the bus stop was able to maneuver into the proposed space without unduly sticking out into the travel lane and enabling pedestrians to cross safely behind the bus. Atkinson asked at what time this test was conducted? The answer was 9:00 a.m. because no bus was available earlier.

In response to a question from Mazur, Ms. Sarna said the current schedule would mean this proposed stop would be visited by a bus every 15 minutes. In the fall, it would be visited every 10 minutes during peak commute hours. In addition she said that for the test they

had used the longest accordion type bus because those buses will be used at certain times of the day due to increased demand.

Anderson expressed concern about the large buses sticking out onto the traffic flow lane. Chavez observed that southbound Jackson Street traffic slowed when the bus was present, thereby acting as a traffic calming measure. She also noted that a measure on the school's wish list was a bulbout at the northwest corner of this intersection.

Anderson asked if a bus shelter was envisioned for that stop. Ms. Sarna said that it was generally felt that there would be no room for a shelter, and Mazur noted that people do not tend to wait for the bus anymore because they can go online for arrival times. Mazur said that the Commission needed to learn if the bus fit and it was found that it does. Chavez also commented about the city engineer's observation that this intersection might warrant a four-way left turn movement.

Ms. Sarna said AC Transit had been asked to create a better connection between the 18 and the 52. She said that AC Transit is also studying the location where there was formerly a bus stop at the southeast side of the intersection on Jackson St.

Barbara Williamson, 919 Buchanan, lives at the northwest corner of Jackson and Buchanan. Because her home is currently so close to the street, she is concerned that there is little protection between her home physically and visually from where the bus would stop and passengers would wait. If she were to install a wall, there is only 42" between the house and existing fence.

Mazur asked if through the Planning and Zoning Commission, Ms. Williamson could apply to a special variance for a taller fence.

Anderson said that on San Pablo Avenue, at the Subway location, the bus sticks out all the time, blocking traffic.

Mazur said that this was the transit agency's problem and residents should complain. Atkinson commented on the problem of the left turns on Jackson and Buchanan. Mazur asked whether this issue was going to be addressed with the Safe Routes to School grant.

Chavez said that the grant improvements would address these problems. In addition, the City is initiating the process to underground its utilities on Buchanan St.

The Commission expressed concerns about how busy the intersection is and the fact that they are adding a bus into the mix complicated the situation.

Nick Pilch, Pierce Street, expressed opposition to the proposed bus stop for a number of reasons including a potential future bulbout at this intersection for pedestrian safety reasons and because a bicycle path is being considered for this part of Buchanan.

Sol Strand, Pierce Street, suggested that motorists should be provided alternate opportunities to turn before they reach Jackson and Buchanan, such as at Solano and Polk, Fillmore, etc.

Anderson reminded the Commission that Jackson St. is a truck route. If there were a bulb out, it would be difficult for the trucks to make the right turn onto Buchanan. Chaney said that this would be addressed when the bulb out is discussed in the future.

Ms. Sarna also noted that buses would not stop if there is no one to pick-up or drop off at the stop.

Atkinson believed that the logical place to locate the stop is at the southeast corner of Jackson and Buchanan.

Mazur moved that the Commission request that the City and AC Transit enter into a conversation with University of California to entertain the idea of locating a bus stop at the southeast corner of Buchanan and Jackson for the reasons discussed above. Atkinson seconded the motion and the vote passed unanimously.

Chavez asked the Commission to move report item No. 7-1 forward given that AC Transit staff was present.

7-1 AC Transit's proposal for a fare structure change

Puja Sarna distributed a handout for a public hearing that was held in May regarding four options for a fare structure change. The AC Transit Board decided to defer this proposal and instead asked staff to draft language to propose a ballot measure that places a parcel tax on the November ballot so that fares would not need to be increased. The proposed tax is a \$4.00 a month assessment on property tax for ten years.

Mazur asked if this would be a good time to request that the Traffic and Safety Commission request AC Transit to include an ECO Pass with the property tax proposal. It was suggested that staff from AC Transit who is managing this program be invited to describe the options.

Chavez explained that she and Councilwoman Wile had approach Berkeley and AC Transit with the idea of implementing a transit pass. She said that this type of program requires a referendum. In addition, there were questions as to how the program would be administered and what type of card is needed.

Mazur said that this is a good example of the economies of scale since a property tax is there regardless of how many people live in the house and obviously, not everybody would use the pass.

Sol Strand suggested talking to DMV to explore the possibility of adding the ECO Pass program to the driver's license process.

Chaney suggested inviting the AC Transit staff person to one of the meetings in order to present the details of the ECO Pass program. The Commission members agreed.

5-2 Presentation of the Traffic Engineering Technical Assistance Program (TETAP) Draft Report of the Buchanan Path Traffic Impact Analysis

Chavez summarized this report, which is a component of the Buchanan Bicycle and Pedestrian path project. Staff asked that the report analyze the intersection of San Pablo and

Marin turning movements, and analyze the possibility of installing a traffic light at either Pierce or Taylor. She said the report found that a right turn only lane would not be appropriate on westbound and eastbound Marin at San Pablo because it would result in more traffic queuing/backup. However, the report suggested that when redevelopment opportunities arise, the City should look at acquiring right of way on Marin Ave. at the approaches to San Pablo Ave. in order to provide the right turn lane, which would greatly benefit the intersection. The report also found that a traffic signal is not “warranted” at Taylor because of current conditions unless the bike/ped path crossed here. Pierce Street was found to warrant a light under current conditions. It appears that USDA would support a light at either Taylor or Pierce.

Mazur opened the discussion to the public.

Nick Pilch, Pierce Street, understands there were three options considered for the bike route and that USDA does not support review of option three that evolved during the kick off meeting with the consultants. The Rollers and Strollers urged the Commission to write a letter to USDA asking them to remove their objections and enable option three to be evaluated.

Sol Strand, Pierce Street, supported a light at Pierce but was concerned about the narrowness of Pierce and the number of cars that currently park on the sidewalk plus the ones that would be diverted if the signal is implemented at Pierce. He said that Pierce is a bus route. He recommended having a traffic signal configuration that does not encourage turning left onto Solano and then right onto Pierce to get to the signal at Buchanan. His suggestion to encourage Cleveland traffic merge onto Buchanan via the undercrossing was to prohibit parking on Cleveland under the overcrossing, at least on one side. He also thought that the landscaped island on Buchanan west of Pierce could be sacrificed to assist the efficiency of the intersection.

Dennis Foster, Polk Street, had attended the neighborhood meeting on Tuesday to discuss the Buchanan bike/ped path. He raised concerns about the number of trees that would be removed as a result of the proposed bike/ped path. He also noted the short driveways on the north side of Buchanan. He recommended that the City extend the Marin bicycle lane (striped on street) on the north and south side of Buchanan. He proposed that Buchanan remain two lanes east bound and that it become one lane west bound and a bike lane be added. The existing sidewalk on the south lane would serve eastbound bicyclists and pedestrians.

Nick Pilch was opposed to the destruction of any tree but he said that trees could be replanted, but capital projects like bicycle paths happen once every 10 years or so.

Mazur said that some of the redwood trees were planted too close to the utility lines and might be removed.

Chaney said that all of these issues would be assessed by the consultants when working on the design.

Carl Potroski, Adams Street, recommended that data be provided on Buchanan traffic volumes to determine if there is much of a differential between the east and west bound traffic volume.

Mazur asked if the Commission members had any questions. Being none she said that her only concern was the extension of the bicycle lanes to the intersection of San Pablo and Marin and that the study found out that it is not possible. Chavez added that it would only be possible if the City negotiated right of way eastbound and westbound Marin Ave.

5-3 Consideration of changing the parking designation on Marin Avenue between Masonic and Key Route

Mazur said that her concern was that people park their cars for sale on that segment, and now that the City meetings take place at the Library, parking on that area is at premium. She suggested implementing 4-hours parking on that segment, so the parking enforcement officer could check parking twice a day, at noon and at 4:00pm.

Anderson said he would like to do more research on the issue.

Mazur moved/Atkinson seconded to direct staff to write a staff report and resolution to the City Council recommending installing 4-hour parking limit on Marin Avenue between Masonic and Key Route from Monday through Saturday. 2 in favor and 1 abstention (Anderson).

5-4 Continue discussions of a paid parking program in commercial areas

Chaney summarized the memorandum sent by the City Administrator to all the Committees and Commissions asking for a recommendation to the City Council. She said that the reason this was back on the agenda was that the Commission needed to assess the different issues thoroughly so that a formal report could be presented to the Council. Since the Planning and Zoning Commission would evaluate a series of questions presented in the attached memorandum, Chaney would like to go through the same questions one by one with the Traffic and Safety Commission.

Mazur said that at the last meeting the Commission recommended continuing discussion of this issue in the following meeting due to lack of information at the time. She asked if there were public comments.

Carl Potroski suggested that the parking turnover be evaluated around the mixed-use development. Mazur found that in Berkeley a person cannot park in a particular block, leave, come back and park in the same block because the Police Department scans the license plates and if they scan a vehicle that was parked there in the morning, they might ticket the vehicle even if it was not parked there the whole time.

Anderson said that he is opposed to this program because the Chamber of Commerce does not support it. Mazur asked him if he was a member of this organization and if he was, he should recuse himself because of conflict of interest. Anderson left the room.

Madson assumed that motivation for implementing the paid parking program was revenue generation for the City. Parking meters could be positive depending on the type of business. He asked if the merchants on Solano had an opinion on this proposal. Chaney responded that the Solano Business Association's opinion is being sought in regard to this proposal.

Chaney said there were several reasons for wanting to implement a paid parking program, including revenue generation, but also the City's desire to manage parking demand. She said that studies have found that paid parking is a way to manage parking in a busy area. Mazur went through the questions and asked the Commission members to state their opinion:

1. Should parking meters be installed on both Solano and San Pablo Avenues?
Madson suggested a more general question: Should we have parking meters in Albany?
Atkinson – No
Madson – He did not think there was a compelling case; government always needs revenue – No
Mazur – yes, metered parking, not necessary parking meters is a good idea; easier citation; does raise revenues; many cities have the program. Berkeley has kiosks, San Francisco has meters you cannot feed; so you have to wait for the meter to expire in order to put your money. She prefers the kiosks that give you a receipt to put on the dashboard.

If paid parking is going to be implemented, should it be installed on both Solano and San Pablo?

Atkinson: If they are going to be installed, they should be on both streets.

2. Should parking enforcement hours be into the evenings and on Sundays?
Mazur said that it is not the general practice.
Madson said that people usually go to dinner after 6:00 pm. The Commission recommended leaving the regulation period the way it currently is.
3. Should paid parking be implemented on side streets in areas directly adjacent to the commercial areas? The Commission members recommended implementing paid parking on side streets.
4. Should parking meters have variable rates? The Commission recommended that rate be the same at all times.
5. Should parking meters have a time limit? The Commission agreed to have limited time for the paid parking system.
6. Should funding go back into the area or to the general fund? Mazur suggested that the funding generated from the paid parking program should go partially to fund San Pablo and Solano Avenue improvements and to pay for the administration of the system; revenue from the citation should go to the general fund. She also suggested that part of the revenues go to fund a shuttle service to link commercial districts, transit centers and the like, so people would not have to drive if they wanted to get somewhere in town.
7. Should the process be reviewed for the provision of shared parking? No.
8. Should specific locations be reserved for low emission vehicles or shared vehicles? The Commission members said “no” to this question.

The memorandum also asked if Permit Parking should be implemented as a mitigation measure to prevent parking spillover onto residential streets. The Commission members recommended that if a Paid Parking Program is implemented, a Permit Parking Program should be considered. They also agreed to obtain information from the City of Berkeley

They also recommended that if the City Council decides to pursue this program, the issue should return to the Traffic and Safety Commission to work through the details.

Commissioner Anderson returned to the meeting. He challenged the Chair's decision to recuse him from the discussion due to conflict of interest because he does not live in that area. Mazur said that he is a member of organizations that have relationships on Solano or San Pablo Avenue. Mazur asked Chaney to find out if he had a conflict of interest during this discussion.

6.0 Reports

6-1 Police reports

Lt. Geissberger gave the collisions report for the month of May: 18 collisions, 12 non-injury, 6 injury (3 hit and run, 3 on Marin Avenue). Of the 6 injury collisions, one involved a pedestrian on Solano Avenue in which the driver was blinded by lights. Another involved a bicyclist, and the other occurred near Marin School. Lt. Geissberger reported that there had been 682 moving violation citations, and 505 citations on seat belt violations during the Click it or Ticket campaign from May to June 2. He also reported that the Police Department had received a grant in the amount of \$24,106 for additional DUI enforcement as well as for the acquisition of DUI units.

Mazur said that she had observed many vehicles with children sitting on the window. She was wondering if the PD had received calls reporting this issue. Lt. Geissberger said that he was not aware of any report in that regard.

Anderson said that he hoped APD continued the Night Out Program at Memorial Park. The Traffic and Safety Commission supports this event and complimented the Police on putting this together.

Barbara Williamson asked if there was data available for the collisions on Buchanan and Jackson. Lt. Geissberger said that from Jan 1 2002 to Jan 1 2007 – there had been a total of 3 collisions at that intersection. Chavez said that there is a collisions map available in the City's website.

6-2 Buchanan Bicycle/Pedestrian Path –Report on the neighborhood meeting of Monday, June 23

Chavez summarized the community meeting staff and consultant held with the residents of the north side of Buchanan Street. She said that Dennis Foster, Preston Jordan, and Jody Zeitler were present. She mentioned that Foster was representing his neighbors and that one of his main concerns was the trees on Buchanan St. He had the opportunity to address the Commission when item 5-2 was discussed. She also mentioned that the Albany Strollers and Rollers in a letter addressed to the Commission and to the Council would like to request that the Traffic and Safety Commission initiate dialogue with USDA to ask that the third alternative be evaluated. Chaney said that USDA's position is that it would be unnecessary to spend public funds in an alternative that they would not support, because it is not a local decision. The USDA's position is coming from Washington. On the other hand, Chaney said that the third alternative had only been presented verbally and in order for the public to fully understand how this alternative would look like, a preliminary drafting might be necessary.

Mazur said that she would like to agendize this item and invite USDA to the meeting, so they can explain the reasoning behind their position. Nick Pilch said that he did not think there was a violation of the Brown's Act by recommending staff to write a letter to USDA requesting they allow evaluation of the third alternative.

Sol Strand asked clarification about which areas were the City's jurisdiction and where USDA's property began. Mazur asked about who controls the land under the overcrossing. Chaney said that USDA got an encroachment permit from Caltrans.

Mazur moved Anderson seconded that staff place this item in the next agenda and invite USDA to the meeting so they can explain the reasoning behind their position.

7.0 Announcements and Communications

7-1 This item was moved forward after 5-1

7-2 Status of the Street Closure presentation to City Council

Chaney said that it was scheduled for the City Council meeting of July 7.

7-3 Email from Javandel to Mazur regarding a new traffic-calming device.

8. Future agenda items

8-1 Measure F funding status

Chaney said that staff is working on the budget and that she would have an amount of available Measure F funds soon.

9 Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 10:00 p.m. Next meeting July 24, 2008 at 7:00 pm.