



**TRAFFIC AND SAFETY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

**EDITH STONE ROOM—RECREATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES
1249 MARIN AVENUE
July 24, 2008**

1 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 p.m. by Lubov Mazur, Chair.

2 Roll Call

Members present: Ray Anderson, Lubov Mazur and Marsha Atkinson.

Absent: David Madson

3 Consent

The minutes were approved as written

4 Public Comment

Scott Rowe, an employee with USDA, raised concern with the lack of a crosswalk at Taylor and Buchanan.

Sadaf Kahn an employee with USDA said that motorists are confused whenever she starts crossing Buchanan at Taylor to go to her workplace.

The Commission asked that this issue be placed on the agenda for its meeting in September.

Anderson appreciated the professionalism of staff. Anderson asked that staff summarize the decision at the last meeting regarding his dismissal for conflict of interest.

5 Discussions and Possible Action

5-1 Item placed later on the agenda for a member of Barbara Lee's office to arrive.

5-2 Commercial vehicles on Buchanan

Mazur had asked that this item be placed on the agenda. Lt. Geissberger said that vehicles over 8,000 lbs. are not allowed in residential areas, but that residential area is not clearly defined in the code. Atkinson said that UC Village is residential. Mazur asked if the PD could ticket if the vehicle is outside the T-bars. Geissberger said he believes that PD could but would check to confirm. The Commission recommended that PD start ticketing vehicles parked outside the T-bars, if it is found that this could be done under code. Atkinson said that a similar situation exists in the 500 block of Pierce Street because of the parking of motor homes.

Preston Jordan of the Albany Strollers and Rollers (AS&R) said the bicycling group had a concept of turning Cleveland Ave. into a bikeway and that parking might be eliminated.

Mazur asked if there was an ordinance that prevented RV's to park overnight. Lt. Geissberger said that there was no such ordinance in Albany.

Sherie Reineman said that large vehicles parked on the street pose a hazard to bicyclists.

5-3 Cones on residential street

Anderson said that he proposed this item because some time ago it was brought up to his attention that some residents on Cornell had placed cones in front of their driveways and used it as a private parking. He mentioned that three incidents had occurred in the last few months.

Mazur asked if there was a provision in the code to prevent this. Lt. Geissberger said that there was a code that prevents use of a non-official device to define parking, so people can be cited.

5-4 Ohlone Greenway design concept

Chaney said that City Council already took action on this proposal. BART is going to be retrofitting the columns and in doing so, they would dig out around a box of approx. 10 ft. from the center of each column and a dept of 4-6 ft. The City Council's recommendation was the following:

Widen the path from 9' to 14'. The wider path accommodates both the commuter bicyclists and pedestrians. The existing pedestrian path is to remain in place although it is not widely used.

The City does not know how much of this proposal is going to happen because BART is using public funds and there are some strings attached. BART has proposed to replace everything that is destroyed during the retrofit project. However, the cost of the City's proposed enhancements for the Greenway is higher than what BART would reimburse the City. Albany is looking into making the difference between the BART cost and the City proposal cost. One way to do this is negotiating with the owner of the land the path sits on. Another is taking into consideration the value of mature trees. Because BART would be removing mature trees, the value of each mature tree removed is higher than that of a young tree. BART could reimburse the difference to the City. Yet, another way to raise funds is the fact that CALTRANS standards for a multi use path is 12' and the existing path is 9'. The city has asked BART to bring the path to Caltrans standards. If BART accepts this request, the City would only be paying for two additional feet of path.

Sherie Rheineman asked if a 14' path included bike lanes on both directions and 2' of pedestrian trail. Chaney said that nobody had yet done a striping plan for the path.

Preston Jordan said his understanding was that the path would be similar to the Bay Trail in Berkeley, which is the ideal situation. He commended the Commission and staff for bringing this proposal together. He said that because this is an inter commission issue, there were some things that fall in the cracks. He said that the AS&R suggested bulb-outs at some intersections and the Parks & Recreation Commission voted that idea down. However, the City Council did implement the bulb-out on Marin between Masonic and Key Route

He said that another issue he raised was that the Traffic Management Plan called for speed humps on Masonic Avenue because of speeding. He suggested instead, the

installation of bike lanes or sharrows, or the expansion of the Greenway into the street. He urged the Commission to include this in the master plan and to work in concert with the Parks and Recreation Commission in order to address the issues that overlap between the two bodies.

Mazur asked Jordan to bring a plan of sites where he recommends these improvements to take place so they could be incorporated into the vision proposal.

Chaney said that because of the immediacy of the situation as BART is moving along so quickly, the City had to make a decision about what is more urgent and save the vision plan for later.

Reineman encourages keeping the pedestrian path and making the path more amenable to pedestrians. She said that there is a California law that directs the use of a pedestrian path if there is one available. She agrees with Preston in regard to the implementation of bike lanes along Masonic.

John Petrosky, believes that improving the pedestrian path rather than encouraging more pedestrians to use the bike path is the way this should be done.

Amy Smolens said that the City should come up with the funds to zero the balance.

Chaney said that the council has to decide where the funds would come from.

5-5 Buchanan bicycle path USDA

Chaney introduced Dr. James Seiber, Director of the Western Regional Research Center for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). As a background, Chaney said that the project the City put forward for the grant stated the path would be aligned along the south side of Buchanan, but the consultants would propose where the crossing to the north side would be located. Two alternatives were identified: A crossing at Taylor or a crossing at Pierce. Chaney said that during the walk through along the project site, the idea of aligning the path behind the redwood trees into the USDA property was suggested.

Dr. Seiber said that USDA went on record in 2006 to allow a bicycle path to traverse a part of their property. He also said they recognize that many on their staff bicycle to work and it would be beneficial to them. USDA has typically favored a crossing at Taylor Street because of the natural integration, the fact that a signal is needed at this intersection, and this option encroaches the least into USDA property.

Dr. Seiber said that there are reasons for concern on the part of USDA and its exposure to the public. In 2002, a “terrorist” group broke into one of USDA’s greenhouses because this group did not approve of USDA’s research. Some of their researchers were personally named on the Internet, which caused concern. USDA also houses the Forest Service, which asked that their “west” gate be closed as an employee entrance for security reasons. That gate is now closed to all traffic, except deliveries. Over a million dollars were spent on the various upgrades to the fence and to the gate. The alternative

bicycle path being discussed would be close to the air intake areas, and is near the Food Safety Research building, close to the heat exchanger, and water tank.

Per their 2006 letter, USDA reiterates its support for the two alternatives being studied, but would oppose a path that is aligned adjacent or in their property around Cleveland.

Dr. Seiber said that the USDA Division in Maryland had been consulted and would not support a path/route close to the building that uses Cleveland.

The Commission appreciated Dr. Seiber's clarification

Preston Jordan said that the idea of the 3rd path alternative did not come up during the walk through, but it was mentioned in the consultant's proposal. He noted that a bus stop is located near the "west" gate of USDA, so it was not totally correct to say that gate was exclusively used by delivery trucks. Jordan also talked about the merits or lack thereof of a crossing at Pierce because of the dip on Buchanan Street and the visibility issue. He referred the University of California's Tech Transfer study findings. He felt that neither Taylor nor Pierce is an ideal crossing and advocated a crossing at Cleveland. He was not convinced that there were not other security measures that could be incorporated into the project's budget to deal with USDA's concerns. He asked the Commission that this third option at least be studied.

Harry Chomsky, was not convinced as to why USDA is opposing this.

Karl Patrosky, having visited the site today, did not see any security and therefore felt the security argument is a non-issue. He agreed that the water tank would probably need to be moved but that would not be a large issue. He asked why was security threatened when it is not provided now?

Sherie Reineman, Albany, felt the Pierce Street crossing was the scariest.

Another member of the audience asked for the name of the department to which the USDA reports. Dr. Seiber responded that it is the Secretary of Agriculture.

Dr. Seiber, in response to comments, said he was not a security expert but there were hazardous materials there. For example, gas cylinders are delivered through the "west" gate. Natural gas is plumbed in. He indicated that he was not the one making the decisions. Therefore, several contacts with headquarters have been made. They believe that the path would bring more people to the area that could be difficult to see.

Members of the audience did not agree with Dr. Seiber.

During the Commission's discussion they asked staff whether this area could be studied. Chaney said that while it might be possible to study this alternative, implementation of such a plan could not be accomplished without approval of the property owner. In addition, study of a particular option would be limited if access to the site were limited for study purposes.

Mazur asked that staff return in September with a report that more definitively answers the question of whether the city can legally pursue a study on a property if the property owner is not willing to allow the right of way. In addition, she asked that staff clarify with the consultant if a study of the third option can be done under the current budget, but without slowing down the existing process. She said that the Traffic and Safety Commission would like to look at all possible alternatives before deciding on one.

5-6 AC Transit Easy Pass

Chavez presented information obtained from a meeting with AC Transit Easy Pass staff. She said that AC Transit has three Easy Pass programs:

- EZ Pass for businesses
- EZ Pass for Colleges
- EZ Pass for Residential Communities/Developers – participation in the Easy Pass program may be mitigation measure for reducing the required number of parking spaces

To be involved with the program, the City (for example) would need to enter into an agreement with AC Transit. The minimum number of participants is 100 to qualify for the program.

Albany employers that might be most interested in the AC Transit program would be USDA, the School District and the City. Chavez said that she and Councilwoman Wile have contacted these employers and they had expressed interest in this program. Chavez said that she is suggesting pooling, so the City could participate. While AC Transit does not have experience with a pool of companies, mainly because the program is practically new, they welcomed the suggestion and said that they would have to look into modifying their contract terms and pooling agencies should assign a Program Administrator on site to take care of the EZ Pass program.

Anderson commented on the route changes that AC Transit made last time and how those affected residents in Albany.

Sherie Reinman wanted to echo Anderson's comment about the loss of AC Transit bus line # 43 for the #18.

6 Reports

6-1 Police Repots

Lt. Geissberger said that of the 13 collisions reported in June, 9 were non-injury and 4 were injury collisions. Five were hit and run and 2 occurred near Marin Avenue, and 2 near a school. One of these collisions involved a cyclist.

Geissberger mentioned a ticket that was issued for \$32,000 for an overweight truck using Marin Avenue. He said there are certain exceptions.

In response to a question by Preston Jordan, he gave more detailed information about the hit and run collisions.

He also announced that the Albany Police Dept. is doing another Night Out on August 5 at Memorial Park. It is an opportunity for PD to show the community what they do. Anderson encouraged everyone to attend this event and applauded the PD for doing this.

6-2. Street Closure presentation to Council

Chaney reported that the Council accepted the Commission's recommendation and directed staff to proceed with an environmental document that considers the closure of all four streets. The Council also iterated that such a document would look at alternatives.

7 Annoucement and Communications

7-1 AC Transit's parcel tax

Chavez referred to a letter sent by AC Transit in relation to its Parcel Tax proposal as means to close the budget gap.

Atkinson stated that she supports transit but she was concerned that AC Transit is not doing a good job in serving the Albany community.

7-2 Letter welcoming Ms. Nancy Peterson to the Traffic and Safety Commission

7-3 Letter from Nolen Edmonston about Marin Avenue being used as "used car lot"

7-4 Letter from Leslie McCauley asking for speed bumps on the 900 block of Stannage

7-5 Letter from Barbara Trotter about new 90-minute signs on Washington Avenue

7-6 Climate Action Plan kick off meeting on 9/17/08 at 7:30 pm at 979 San Pablo Avenue

7-7 Albany Shoreline and Creek clean up on Saturday, 9/20/08

7-8 Albany-El Cerrito garage sale on 10/11/08

8 Future Agenda Items

8-1 Measure F funding

8-2 Pierce Street re-striping

8-3 Bulb-out at Buchanan and Jackson

9 Adjournment –The meeting was adjourned at 10:05 p.m. Next meeting is on September 25, 2008 at 7:00 pm