

AGENDA ITEM 5-5

DRAFT Resolution of Recommending Buchanan Street Visioning/Master Planning

WHEREAS, Buchanan Street is the only east-west arterial in Albany west of San Pablo Avenue,

WHEREAS, two of the three freeway exits into Albany connect to Buchanan Street,

WHEREAS, three of the three freeway entrances in Albany are from Buchanan Street,

WHEREAS, approximately 30,000 motorist trips along Buchanan Street occur on the average week day,

WHEREAS, the above indicates Buchanan Street serves as one of the main -gateways to Albany for those arriving and leaving via I-80 and I-580,

WHEREAS, Ocean View School is located on the south side of Buchanan Street,

WHEREAS, Ocean View Park is located on the south side of Buchanan Street,

WHEREAS, the section of Marin Avenue between San Pablo and Buchanan Street is considered by most part of the Buchanan corridor,

WHEREAS, Albany's Civic Center is located on this portion of the Buchanan corridor,

WHEREAS, Buchanan Street is the only relatively level east-west street in Albany connecting from San Pablo Avenue to the Albany Waterfront,

WHEREAS, the portion of Buchanan Street from the eastern end of the railroad overpass to its western terminus is fronted by a separated cycling and walking path,

WHEREAS, the portion of this path west of I-80/I-580 is a part of the San Francisco Bay Trail,

WHEREAS, the closest connection to the waterfront and the Bay Trail to the south is via Gilman Street, which has relatively more difficult to negotiate intersections in the vicinity of I-80,

WHEREAS, the closest connection to the waterfront and the Bay Trail to the north is via Central Avenue, which has a relatively more difficult to negotiate intersections in the vicinity of I-80,

WHEREAS, the above indicates residents travelling to the Civic Center, educational and recreational facilities must travel along or cross Buchanan Street, and also that Buchanan Street serves as the only means of accessing the City's waterfront,

WHEREAS, 85th percentile motorist speeds on Buchanan have been measured in the range of 31 to 41 mph since 1997,

WHEREAS, the speed limit on Buchanan Street is 25 mph,

WHEREAS, Albany contracted for a Traffic Management Plan in order to determine modifications to the City's motorized transportation infrastructure that would improve residents' quality of life,

WHEREAS, the Traffic Management Plan was developed from 1998 to 2000,

WHEREAS, several concerns about Buchanan Street, including motorist speeds, were raised by the community during the Traffic Management Plan process,

WHEREAS, these concerns were validated by engineering analysis during the Traffic Management Plan process,

WHEREAS, three of these concerns received a high priority in the Traffic Management Plan, ranking sixth, seventh and eighth out of 54 concerns,

WHEREAS, concern about motorist speeds on Buchanan Street was ranked eighth in the Traffic Management Plan, but had the same ranking score as the sixth and seventh ranked concerns (24), also regarding Buchanan Street,

WHEREAS, all those concerns ranked above these Buchanan Street concerns involved Marin Avenue,

WHEREAS, the Traffic Management Plan recommended lane reduction as the remedy for many of the concerns regarding Marin Avenue, and as a partial remedy for many of the other concerns about this street,

WHEREAS, the lanes on Marin Avenue were reduced in 2004 pursuant to Resolution 02-52, and have subsequently been shown to have been effective at reducing motorist speeds by a comparison of the pre-lane reduction motorist speeds with the year 2008 motorist speeds,

WHEREAS, the Traffic Management Plan recommended raising the speed limit on Buchanan Street to 35 mph as a remedy to motorist speeding,

WHEREAS, this would have made the speed limit on Buchanan the highest in the City, perhaps only tied with portions of Cleveland Avenue,

WHEREAS, the City Council implicitly rejected this recommendation and sought a different remedy by requesting analysis of lane reduction on Buchanan Street as the second phase pursuant to Resolution 02-52,

WHEREAS, lane reduction was considered and found infeasible due to the high number of motorist trips on Buchanan Street^[ac1],

WHEREAS, no subsequent action on the part of the Council or the Traffic and Safety Commission occurred to investigate other comprehensive means of reducing motorist speeds on Buchanan,

~~WHEREAS, at this time there is no coherent engineering plan for reducing motorist speeds throughout Buchanan Street^[ac2];~~

WHEREAS, the residents of Buchanan Street and vicinity have reason to expect the City to address their concerns in an organized manner commensurate to that applied to Marin Avenue,

WHEREAS, the City received grant funding and installed flashing warning lights (“hawk lights”) to alert motorists to their entry into a 25 mph school zone in the vicinity of Ocean View School,

WHEREAS, the City has received grant funding from ACTIA to pursue planning improvements along Buchanan Street to make cycling and walking safer along this corridor, specifically by providing cycling-specific infrastructure to close the gap between the west end of the Marin Avenue cycling lanes at Cornell Avenue and the separated cycling and walking path on the railroad overpass,

WHEREAS, this planning process is at an advanced stage, with alternate preliminary design plans having been formulated for selection and development of the final design,

WHEREAS, the City has contracted for redesign of the Marin/Buchanan merge west of the Civic Center to address another of the Traffic Management Plan concerns regarding Buchanan Street,

WHEREAS, the City has received grant funding from the federal Safe Routes to School fund for design and installation of new signal elements, signal phasing, crosswalks and curb ramps at Buchanan and Jackson Streets,

WHEREAS, the new signal at Buchanan and Jackson Streets will also include a red light photo enforcement system,

WHEREAS, the City has also contracted for design of pedestrian bulbouts at Buchanan and Jackson Streets,

WHEREAS, the utility undergrounding funds designated for Albany will tentatively be used to place the currently above ground power and communication lines underground when they reach a sufficient amount in the next few years,

WHEREAS, all of these proposed changes to Buchanan Street are not occurring in a manner designed to advance an articulated vision to improve aesthetics and motorist behavior^[ac3], which can reinforce each other and would improve the quality of life for residents on and in the vicinity of the street as well as users of the street's civic, educational and recreational facilities and facilities beyond, such as the waterfront,

WHEREAS, such an articulated vision could include tree bulbs on the south side of the street, similar to those found on the north side of Fairmount Street in El Cerrito,

WHEREAS, such an articulated vision could include reconfiguration of the north side of the street similar to the west side of Sutter Street in Berkeley, which provides more space for a cycling lane as well as street trees,

WHEREAS, such an articulated vision could include pedestrian bulbouts at all intersections, which would both improve pedestrian safety while at the same time possibly expanding on street parking by shortening red zones near corners, AND

WHEREAS, the three aforementioned example improvements would provide more space for street trees, more coordinated street tree plantings, and place street trees closer to the motorist lanes contributing to motorist speed reductions,

WHEREAS, in order to get the maximum improvement from the various projects currently proposed for Buchanan Street, they should all be embedded in and advance a unified vision of the street to the extent possible,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Traffic and Safety Commission of the City of Albany recommends that the City Council of the City of Albany contract for development of vision/master plan for Buchanan Street with the goals of reducing motorist speeds to address priority eight of the 2000 Traffic Management Plan, increasing safety and comfort for cycling and walking along Buchanan Street, and improving the aesthetics to this gateway street to the maximum feasible during both the upcoming planned changes on Buchanan Street as well as planning beyond these changes.

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[ac1] Preston, The Buchanan Path alternatives is recommending lane reduction to accommodate the bicycle lane on the north side of Buchanan.

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[ac2] Please review my edits on the Buchanan bicycle path below

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[ac3] The Buchanan path design may actually impact speeds as one of the alternatives includes bulb outs, may include a traffic signal and it may impact aesthetics of the street as well. I would say that this design provides opportunities to create a coordinated vision for the street.