



**TRAFFIC AND SAFETY COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES**

**CITY OF ALBANY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
1000 SAN PABLO AVENUE
CITY OF ALBANY
NOVEMBER 29, 2007**

1. Call to Order

Richard Treat, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Members present: Ray Anderson, Richard Treat, Lubov Mazur.

Members absent: David Madson, Marsha Atkinson

Staff: Aleida Andrino-Chavez, Lt. Daniel Adams.

3. Consent Calendar

Anderson/Mazur moved/seconded to approve the October 25, 2007 minutes with a change on item 2, stating that Lt. Adams was present. It was Sgt. Willis who was present.

4. Public Comment

Sol Strand said that a month ago there was a notice in The Journal about a meeting in relation to the Central Avenue interchange. The meeting was organized by Caltrans, Richmond, and El Cerrito staff in order to discuss possibilities to improve the interchange. However, nobody from Albany staff, nor the Traffic and Safety Commission was there. Several important issues were discussed at that meeting, such as the possibility of implementing a No Left Turn onto Cleveland Avenue.

Treat asked if the City was notified. Chavez said she did not know. She was aware that about six months ago, the City was contacted by the City of El Cerrito about the Central Avenue Interchange improvement, but that after that she had not heard anything in that regard.

Amy Smolens from the Albany Rollers and Strollers said that last month the Commission said that it was going to prioritize the Measure F project list and Rollers and Strollers would like to know when the Commission is going to pursue this.

Treat said that he would like to call attention to the issue that Cornell Elementary School has a mid-block pedestrian gate that is about two steps down from the schoolyard level. He would like to explore the possibility to installing a light to illuminate those steps. He said that a pole is located there and that it is only a matter of installing the light bulb.

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

5-1 AC Transit Recent Route Changes

Puja Sarna from AC Transit explained the process of the route changes in 2007. She said the new 52L serves the Pierce St. area coming from BART and continuing to the East

Pacific Mall continuing to UC Village and the UC Berkeley campus. She stated that the goal of route changes was to improve connectivity between the El Cerrito Plaza and the UC Berkeley campus. She also mentioned that AC Transit is working with the City and Target on a project that would bring the existing Route 18 into the Target parking lot.

Treat asked if the residents of the Pierce Street Condominiums had an opportunity to comment about the proposed changes. He understood the meetings were held in 2003/2004 and the changes were implemented in June 2007 because of labor negotiations. Sarna said that comments were received and that she had looked at the comments received from Albany residents.

Treat asked if AC Transit staff believed that the residents of the condominiums had better service than before. Sarna said that ridership on the route serving the condominiums had increased, particularly between Pierce and Central and Buchanan and Jackson.

Sarna mentioned that the public could send comments to AC Transit about changes or proposed services, by writing a letter, or submitting comments online.

At a question regarding the bus service to Target, Chavez said that her understanding was that Route 18 has time within the runs to deviate to Target, and that operationally, it would not incur additional costs. The main concern is the loss of parking in Target's satellite parking lot, because Target is planning on leasing it, possibly for restaurant or cafeteria use.

Anderson asked if the surveys showed how many people took the 43 line throughout the length of the route before the changes. Sarna said that two routes, the 52L and the 18, replaced the Rt. 43 and that she can provide the Commission with ridership data

Anderson said that at the transfer point at Buchanan and Jackson, there is no bench, no shelter, it is dark and people do not feel at ease waiting for the bus at nighttime.

Sarna asked if the City was involved in the bus shelter program. Chavez confirmed.

Anderson commented that there was bad communication because the condominium management did not notify the residents of the proposed changes. Currently, it is difficult for the residents of the 500 block of Pierce Street to go shopping along Solano Avenue.

Treat opened the discussion to the public.

Sol Strand mentioned that the condominium residents are totally cut off from the library and the Senior Center. He added that by benefiting one type of ridership (students), the changes negatively impacted the senior residents along the 500 block of Pierce Street.

Treat said that what is needed is a localized loop route that intersects with the 72 Rapid line. For example a route that looped around Pacific East Mall, the concentration of population on Pierce St., Albany Village, the Library, Solano Ave. the High School and back to the condominiums on Pierce. By crossing Solano and San Pablo we would be adding improved connections for everybody.

Anderson mentioned that in 2006 there was an experimental shuttle service that would come down Solano, make a left onto San Pablo Avenue, and continue along up to Gilman, make a right on Gilman, another right on Eastshore Hwy, with a stop at Target. Then, it would continue to Buchanan, make a right onto Buchanan St. and continue to Pierce Street. It would make a left on Pierce, stop by the condominiums and continue to Central. It then would make a right onto Central to the El Cerrito Plaza and the BART Station.

Treat asked if service in Albany was diminished. Sarna said that the service in Albany was changed, not diminished. Treat said that he believed that having more routes that loop around to the trunk lines would be beneficial for users. He asked what it would take to accomplish a loop like the one he mentioned before. Sarna said that AC Staff would have to do an analysis of potential ridership.

Anderson asked AC Transit staff to compile statistics and report back on the feasibility of a loop to the Commission, possibly in the January meeting.

Treat suggested placing this item on the next meeting agenda.

5.2 Rapid Transit Plan for Telegraph Avenue

Chavez summarized that at the last meeting, when staff presented the issue of street medians on San Pablo Avenue, Len Coley a representative of Friends of Rapid Transit cautioned the Commission on the Rapid Transit Plan for Telegraph Avenue and the fact that if the Commission decides to allow trees on the medians, it would be difficult to implement this concept if feasible. Chavez said that she had invited Jim Connelly, Senior Planner with AC Transit to present the Telegraph Avenue proposal to the Commission.

Connelly provided the background of this project, stating that in Brazil and Bogota, the rapid bus vast systems were created as an affordable alternative to the proposal of a light rail system. He explained that a true rapid transit concept is to dedicate a travel lane exclusively for bus travel and bus stop stations. He said that this solution is flexible and it does not impact sewer systems like light rail does.

He mentioned that the reason AC Transit decided to study Telegraph Ave. was because of the existing traffic volumes (14,000 vehicles per day). However, on a street like San Pablo Avenue carrying higher levels of traffic volume, it would not be feasible to implement the Bus Rapid Transit concept. Currently, AC Transit is evaluating alternatives and working on the Environmental Impacts of the proposal.

Amy Smolens asked if there will be bicycle lanes included in the proposal and whether the East Bay Bicycle Coalition (EBBC) supports the proposal.

Connelly said that bicycle lanes are considered, however, they need to remove parking and that is a sensitive issue in commercial districts. He added that EBBC supports the concept of a Bus Rapid Transit system on Telegraph Avenue.

Sol Strand asked if the transit agency had timed how long it takes to load wheelchairs and that if low floor buses offer a faster alternative. He also asked whether AC Transit has a

standard for wheelchair/baby stroller loading and unloading when designing new routes in areas with a high concentration of young families and seniors.

Connelly said that all the bus stops meet ADA standards. AC Transit does not have a time standard, but according to his observations, it may take between 1 to 5 minutes, depending on the driver skills. The important issue here is to make sure the wheelchairs are properly secured. He said that it is proposed that all the bus rapid transit buses use the Universal Access Ramp.

A member of the audience asked about the San Francisco Bus Rapid Transit proposal.

Connelly said that there are two BRT proposals, one for Geary Blvd. and another for Van-Ness. However, the Van-Ness concept has operational issues due to the fact that the corridor is used, not only by Muni, but also by Golden Gate Transit District. The concept of BRT takes out some parking, and draws controversy within the business owners, but a Transit First policy should be able to at least get some stakeholders to agree to the concept.

Mazur asked if on the Telegraph Avenue AC Transit would have trolley buses in the middle and regular buses running along the sides.

Connelly said that in one scenario they have buses stopping at every ½ mile. Another option was to put all the buses on the exclusive bus lane. AC Transit used computer models and this concept turned out to have the highest ridership and the lowest operating cost.

Treat thanked Jim Connelly for his presentation and encouraged him to keep communicating with staff and the Commission about the advances on the project.

5.3 Schedule next meeting, possible cancellation of the December regular meeting

Anderson moved to cancel the December meeting and that if there is an item that needed to be discussed, staff should give the Commission the required 72 hour advance notice. Mazur seconded. Motion passed, 3-0.

VI. Reports

6-1 Police Reports

Lt. Adams reported that since October 25 to November 29, 2007, there had been 16 collision reports, 9 injury collisions, 4 non-injury collisions, and 2 hit and run collisions with property damage.

There were no bicycle collisions. The 4 injury collisions involved pedestrians. Two collisions happened on Solano Avenue, near San Pablo Avenue. One of them involved an 11-year-old child who was crossing the street. This occurred at Solano and Adams at sunset. The child had major injuries and was transported to Children's Hospital. The other occurred at Solano and Kains and a driver failed to yield to a pedestrian crossing at the intersection. This happened at about 4:15 pm and the passenger was not injured. The other two collisions were at Marin Avenue at Ramona, which was a 3-vehicle collision at

slow speed. The other collision was on the 900 block of San Pablo Avenue. An East Bay Parks vehicle got into a collision on the merge from Cleveland onto Buchanan St.

Two of the non-injury collisions were DUI.

Treat asked if the Police Department had statistics about speeding tickets and also for any clusters where these occurred and also what is your assessment of traffic around the pick up/drop off zone in schools.

Lt. Adams said that he is happy to report that the situation is better than in the past because they have a full time school and youth resources officer working around schools. He said that he is not at every school every day but they are assigning one officer from each of the day shifts to work at the schools.

Mazur asked if they are giving any citations. Lt. Adams said that they are giving a significant number of citations.

Treat asked if they could bring those statistics to the next meeting.

Mazur said that there was a hit and run vehicle vs. pedestrian on Solano at Neilson and she did not think it was reported. It was back in September and a teen was driving with his mother in the front passenger seat.

Sol Strand asked a question to the Chair about vehicles making rolling stops only on Solano Avenue and on Talbot to Garfield.

Mazur thought a lot of people tend to run the stop signs.

Treat asked Lt. Adams to pass this information to the day shift officers.

6-2 Pierce Street Restriping

Chavez said that staff has scheduled a meeting with Caltrans Management staff in mid-December. She said that one discussion item is the surplus land where the City is proposing to build a park through which the proposed Class I bicycle path will be aligned. After the discussions, City staff plans to go back to the community with a report from this meeting.

6-3 Pedestrian Plan

Chavez said that on November 16, she applied to the Safe Routes to School SR2S Program for two projects that would enhance safety around two elementary schools in Albany. One is for a traffic signal and pedestrian improvements around Ocean View Elementary, and the other involves a traffic signal, loop detection and pedestrian improvements at Marin Elementary. Both proposals were benefited by the walking audits that took place prior to the grant preparation process. She reported that the grant for traffic signal and enhanced pedestrian improvements at Marin School and Ocean View School.

Treat asked when the City would hear about the grant application results. Chavez said by the end of February.

6-4 Buchanan Bicycle Path

Chavez laid out the timeline to review consultant applications, invite them for interviews and select the consultant team for the 35% PS&E for this project. She said that the City expected responses to the RFP on November 30, 2007 and that staff had decided to form a Selection Panel that would include a representative of the Albany Strollers and Rollers, a member of the Traffic and Safety Commission, the City Engineer, and other City Staff. She asked members of the Commission to volunteer to be on the consultant selection panel.

Mazur volunteered to be on the selection panel. Anderson moved that Mazur be on the panel and Treat seconded the motion. Motion passed, 2-0, 2 absent.

6-5 Speed Surveys

Data taken for the 900 block of Cornell and the 900 block of Talbot show that the 85th percentile on Cornell was 24 mph with an average daily traffic volume of 1,198 vehicles. For Talbot, the 85th percentile was 23 mph, with a volume of 790 vehicles per day.

Treat said that the traffic volume difference is compelling, and he thought that this is attributable to the availability of the left hand turn lane from Marin onto Cornell, while on Talbot there is only the center turning lane. Mazur said that she thinks it is because of the width of the street.

6-6 Traffic Calming Criteria

Chavez said that she did not have the comments from the Traffic Engineer, DMJM Harris (formerly, Korve Engineering) yet. She added that at the last meeting the Commission decided to continue discussions about implementing the ranked project list according to funding availability. In addition, the Commission had to decide whether or not it would pursue the second phase of the Marin Avenue project as well as the implementation of speed treatments along Masonic Avenue, since the temporary speed humps on Ordway and Carmel would be replaced with permanent ones.

Mazur said that she would like to have a speed survey conducted on Carmel before the temporary hump is removed and another after it is removed to see if speed treatments are warranted.

Anderson suggested waiting until the January meeting to discuss the location of the speed humps on Masonic. Mazur suggested to survey every block on Masonic and then select the block with the highest speed at the 85th percentile to decide the location of the speed hump or humps.

6-7 Albany Traffic Calming Project at El Cerrito Plaza

Chavez reported that the Administrative draft report had been received and that staff would be reviewing it in the following weeks. Treat suggested for the Commission to review the report if possible, at the January meeting and after that the Commission would set a date for a public meeting.

Mazur asked if staff had an idea as to when the apartment building project in El Cerrito would start. Chavez said that she had not been involved in that process, but that Ann Chaney would know.

Sol Strand asked why the Commission members and City staff call this project “traffic calming” instead of “street closure.” Mazur said that “street closure” is considered a measure of traffic calming. Treat added that the Council had directed staff to look at other traffic calming alternatives before considering the implementation of a street closure. By calling it “traffic calming” it gives the opportunity to consider other options.

7. Announcements/Communications

Anderson said that there is the dedication or opening ceremony of the new lights along the Ohlone Greenway. A lot of people are using the Greenway now at night. Mazur said that the planning for this project started approximately nine years ago.

8. Future Agenda Items

- 8-1 Discussion of the location of speed treatment along Masonic Avenue
- 8-2 Cerrito Plaza Traffic Calming

Meeting adjourned at 9:12 p.m. Next meeting, January 24, 2008, at 7:00 pm.