

Minutes

CITY OF ALBANY TRAFFIC AND SAFETY COMMISSION

March 22, 2007

I. Call to Order and Roll call

Meeting started at 7:05 by Ray Anderson, Chair.

Members present: Richard Treat, David Madson, Lubov Mazur, Marsha Atkinson, Ray Anderson.

Staff present: Ann Chaney, Lieutenant Daniel Adams, Aleida Andrino-Chavez. Also present was Ted Moss of Kimley-Horn and Associates

II. Consent Calendar

Anderson asked if there were any corrections to the February minutes. Treat said that on page 6, first paragraph, the word "appropriate" should be added before "bus shelter" because we have to be aware of the prevailing weather conditions. Treat also said that on the third sentence of the same paragraph, he said that it would have been nice to have more options to choose from, instead of only Option 1 and Option 2.

Clara-Rae Gensur, 555 Pierce said that the minutes should include statements she recalled were made by Mr. Madson: one related to his concern that the residents of Gateview do not care about bicyclists, that all they care about was their parking space. The other comment she recalled was when Mr. Madson compared the residents of Gateview to people who buy near an airport and then complain about the noise.

Sol Strand, 555 Pierce, said that on page 4, he quoted from an EIR, that traffic was lower now than when the freeway ramps were directly off of Pierce Street. Same paragraph when he said that nobody would use the "Cadillac path" he was talking about the residents, particularly the ones traveling northbound, where he believes no one would cross Pierce Street to go along the soundwall and then cross the street to access the entrance of the condominiums, particularly 555 Pierce. On page 3, when he mentioned that the path might not for 20 years, he was referring to the south extension of the path.

Chaney suggested postponing adoption of the minutes to the next meeting when members had a chance to review these suggested changes.

The Commission moved that the minutes be continued and that staff come back with the corrected minutes next month. The vote was 4 in favor and 1 abstention.

III. Public Comment

A member of the audience said that he wanted to include in future discussions, the safety of bicyclists along the 700 through the 900 block of Pierce Street. Chaney said that this

same issue is contained under VIII. Correspondence at which time the Commission will decide whether to place it on a future agenda.

Commissioner Treat referred to the School Board email about the March 27 meeting regarding traffic issues around the schools, and asked whether Commission members and staff would be attending. Staff indicated they plan to attend and several

IV. Unfinished Business

A) Chair and Vice-Chair election

Anderson asked for nominations for Chair. Commissioner Treat was nominated for Chairman. **Vote was unanimous.**

Treat nominated Commissioner Madson for Vice-Chair. Atkinson seconded the nomination. **Vote for Vice-Chair was 3-2**

Commissioner Treat took over as the new chair. Anderson thanked the Commission for their support in the past and allowing him to serve for the past two years.

B) Pierce Street Restriping Proposal

Commissioner Atkinson recused herself from discussion of this item and left the room. Chaney distributed minutes and Staff Report from the December 2004 City Council meeting where the Council amended the Bicycle Master Plan to include the 500 block of Pierce Street as a Class I path. She also asked if the Commission had received Sol Stand's most recent communication.

Chaney reported that the Commission recommended a restriping and bicycle path along the soundwall in the west side of the street. The plan recommended by staff, and approved by the Commission in February, contemplated 30 degree angled parking along the west side of the street and retention of parallel parking on the east side of the street. However, because of residents' concerns that this option loses 11 parking spaces, the engineers developed yet another option that places all the parking on the west side next to the soundwall. She said the Commission could reconfirm the previous recommendation to City Council, made in February, or they may wish to consider the new alternative. Chaney presented a short background history of how this project evolved; explained the new Option 3, with the help of staff and the consulting engineer, and summarized the Gateview proposal to not construct the bike path, and in lieu of that incorporate 34 additional parking spaces.

She noted that during that February meeting, residents of Gateview raised the issue of where moving vans and large deliveries would be made since they now use the street. Thus, after the last meeting, City staff met with Mr. Strand to talk about these design issues as well as the concern over loss of parking. The City Engineer decided to take another look at this, and thus developed this third option of locating all the parking to the west side of the street. There was another alternative analyzed, but was rejected, that would place the bike path to the east side of the street. However, because of the number of driveways, and the number of potential conflicts between pedestrians, driveways and

bicycles, it was decided to seek another alternative. The new Option 3 proposes 60-degree angled parking instead of 30-degree angled parking. This is similar to Solano Avenue. The plan also eliminates parallel parking on the east side of the street. It includes raised crosswalks, which would decrease vehicular speed, includes 17 compact spaces, and loses only one (1) parking space. This design has been modified several times by the engineers over the last few weeks in an attempt to make it better. For example one of the bus stops was moved to accommodate two or three additional spaces. Another suggestion was that because the loading zone would not be used at night, perhaps it could be dedicated to accommodate a couple of parallel parking spaces at night. The Kimley-Horn engineer is skeptical about that because of visibility issues, but can look at it.

Regarding the concern that this path will go nowhere, she described the Alta Plan, prepared jointly with El Cerrito and Richmond that plans the interim and ultimate location of a bicycle path that connects the Ohlone Greenway with the Bay Trail. This plan was paid for through a Coastal Conservancy grant administered by ABAG. Chaney believes that because of the regional interest in this trail, implementing this crucial piece of bike path might cause Caltrans to be more willing to discuss possible land acquisition of the Caltrans owned parcel.

Mazur suggested that the green triangle in the upper drawing could be motorcycle parking. Moss asked if there were motorcycle parking inside the garages. Residents responded that there are and that there is no need for motorcycle parking on the street.

Treat asked about the width of the spaces. He asked about the current width dimensions of the parking stalls. Chavez responded that the regular spaces were 8.6' wide and the compact spaces were 8.0' wide. Treat asked what was the width currently on Pierce Street. Chaney answered that the width varies, but the average width was 8.4' wide. Option 3 makes the width uniform. Chaney read Lynne Filson's email clarifying that Option 3 has 93 regular spaces that are 8.5' wide, and 17 compact spaces are 8.0' wide.

Discussion was open to the public. The first comment was from Ms. Reagan, who wanted to correct a few things that she mentioned before. She said that their manager was never notified. She understands that notices were sent to the managers instead of sending them directly to the residents. Another concern that she mentioned is that eliminating the parallel parking along the east side of the street, would affect people with mobility limitations.

Sol Strand of 555 Pierce Street said that as far as what he could tell, given all of the minutes and public record, not one resident of the three condominiums supported the bike path along the soundwall. He said he collected 437 signatures on a petition, including several bicycle enthusiasts, who said the plan does not make any sense. He said they do not understand why Madison or Adams streets are not used. He said that if El Cerrito wanted a path that goes to the Bay, we simply could put a footbridge across the extension of Cutting Boulevard, go around to Castro and then to Adams. He said that the stalls are 8.0' wide and if the members of the Commission wanted to know what it is like, they should go to Ranch 99.

Preston Jordan commended the engineers for coming up with Option 3. He said that he does not know which is the best option, that all of the options have advantages and disadvantages. He said that this segment of bicycle path is part of a regional facility.

Rogelio Marquina, of 555 Pierce, has two daughters who go to school, two cars and one parking space in the condominium, so he has to park on the street. Many times he has to park near the creek and supports the idea of creating more parking spaces, not decreasing the number of spaces.

Dee Jacobson, resident of 555 Pierce Street, said she the discussion seems to ignore the fact that this is not an empty field and affects 800 plus families. Because no one wants to lose parking, this plan affects their quality of life. She supported Mr. Strand's plan that adds parking spaces. She said no one is disputing a Class III bike path. Lastly, she said, the Commissioners do not live there. The residents are the ones who have visitors during the weekends who have to deal with the lack of parking.

Sherie Reineman of Cornell Street, said that a bike path would enhance property values. She said that Albany is a community of one-car garages and everyone has to deal with the lack of parking. She said that Option 3 is a good option and urges the Commission to vote for Option 3.

Another member of the audience said that everyone would appreciate if "their" city would add more needed parking spaces. She does not see how a Class I bicycle path that ends at the end of the block and then, narrows would enhance property values.

Sol Strand said that he does not believe how a bike path would enhance property values. If that were the case, a lot of neighborhoods would want to compete for this bike path. He said that a lot of the residents of the 500 block of Pierce are recent immigrants who have not learned to speak up for what they believe.

Preston Jordan said that with due respect to the previous speaker, if running the path through Adams Street, it would mean to eliminating parking along one side of the street. Option 3 maintains the status quo by eliminating only one parking space. In addition, he said that the purpose of the Class I path is to connect the El Cerrito Creek path to the Bay Trail.

Another member of the audience said that the residents of the 500 block of Pierce are not against bicyclists, and that a Class III path is welcome.

Anderson asked how many parking spaces there were inside 545 and 535 Pierce. However, no one was present from those condominiums. Anderson also asked about the new configuration of parking space width on Solano Avenue. Chaney said that staff would check. Strand said that he had gone out to measure and that width varies from 10 to 10'-2" wide.

Chaney stated that staff looked at the traffic volume between Solano and Pierce. Solano has about 11,000 cars per day, while Pierce Street has about 3,000 cars per day. Thus, the volume on Solano is three times that of Pierce Street. In addition, one street is residential and the other is commercial. The turnover on Solano is greater than that on Pierce, and the two streets operate very differently.

Mazur said that one of the factors that keep Gateview condos costs lower than other condos is the fact that they only have one parking space per unit. She does not believe it is the City's responsibility to provide more parking, but does believe that the City should try to preserve as much as possible which is the case with Option 3. If the northern portion of the loading area is dedicated to a parking space, we would be adding the one parking that is missing. She said if the City fails to make the best possible commitment to bicycle transportation, the City is not acting in the most sound environmental manner. This is a link in the regional system. She is encouraging the Commission to commit to the best possible plan for a bike path on Pierce Street. The bike path under the freeway took almost ten years to complete. There is never enough parking in the City, but we have to make a commitment to environmental issues here.

Commissioner Madson added that Option 3 is a huge improvement because it listens to the concerns of the neighbors. He said it is fine to be concerned about creating spaces for people with disabilities and designating some parking spaces as disabled only.

Mazur asked how many parking spaces could be attributable to the bus. Chavez said between 8 or 9 parking spaces were lost due to the bus turnouts. She said that the bike path would have otherwise added parking spaces, but in reality, the plan with the bus turnouts makes the area safer.

Treat said that he liked the raised crosswalks, but he would like to have them lighted. He also asked if stop signs could be warranted. Chaney responded that the maintenance of the lighted crosswalks may be an issue, but staff will continue to check in with cities who using them. To date, traffic consultants have said stop signs are not warranted.

Treat expressed his gratitude to the engineers for developing Option 3 at the last minute. As far as the parallel parking spaces, there is no guarantee as to who might get these parking spaces, but it is great to have this option.

Treat asked if there was additional discussion from the members of the Commission in relation to this item.

Mazur moved that the Traffic and Safety Commission recommend that the City Council approve the new Option, with the provision that if more spaces could be installed with the sanction from the traffic engineer, the City should be open to those changes, but that parking not to be reduced from the 113 spaces. Treat added that the members of the audience have the option to appeal this decision to the City Council. Motion passed with a vote of 3-1.

Mazur stated that the Traffic and Safety Commission is a recommending body. The City Council would have the final decision on this.

C) Street Sweeping Enforcement

Chaney reported that as the former Chair, Mr. Anderson requested this item to be included on this agenda. Anderson said that the problem is on and around Solano Avenue, when the parking enforcement officer issues tickets to cars even when they park after the sweeping truck has passed. He thinks that this is unfair although he recognizes that the no parking timeframe is still in effect. He added that in the past, the City had its own street sweeper, but now that we have a new contractor, it is difficult to coordinate the time the sweeping will take place, and when cars were allowed to park.

Lieutenant Adams explained that it is impossible for the enforcement officer to know when the sweeping truck has passed. He said when the truck gets full, it has to go to the depot and come back to continue its work. The police department cannot keep track of when the sweeping will take place. There are two separate entities and the officer has to rely on the time slots posted on the sign in order to do this job.

Mazur said that perhaps it would be possible to make some adjustments to the sign text. She also suggested that enforcement personnel should not ticket if they see that the sweeping truck has passed. Lt. Adams said that there would be complaints about the posted time slot.

Treat said that we should look for consistency for what is signed and this should be enforced. Chaney added that Council allowed the City to contract for the sweeping services because maintenance of the City's street sweeper was expensive, and replacing such equipment is costly.

A member of the public asked when the street sweeping signage placement would be consistent. Chaney reported that Nicole Almaguer, who manages the street sweeping program and is currently on maternity leave, plans to look into that upon her return. Chaney said that staff has to rely on police or the public about getting information on where the inconsistencies exist.

Treat suggested that the Commission have a discussion about pick up and drop off time around schools on the agenda for next month. Particularly, when it pertains to conflicts between street sweeping and enforcement. This will likely be discussed in the upcoming meeting that the school district will have in March.

V. New Business

A) Initial Study Session on Speed Humps and Other Traffic Calming Techniques

Chavez said that in light that the City has not developed specific criteria to implement traffic calming techniques, she collected information from different cities in California, and some in Portland and Washington. Mazur said that she thought the City had done this before. Chavez said that the process the City has now is that if the speed survey

shows an 85th percentile of 6 miles above the posted speed limit, then the Commission may recommend a change on the street. She mentioned that sometimes there are problems with placing the speed trailer on a street because it functions as a traffic calming measure. She said that the City has to develop standards that that would be followed when a claim about speeding takes place.

Chaney suggested that the Commission take a look at the list of priorities and staff will give you an update of what has been accomplished.

Madson said that it is necessary to develop a process for when requests come up, a petition process, for example. Mazur said a petition process was developed in the past.

Treat said that the action is to read what other cities are doing and then develop some ideas that can be incorporated in Albany. Chavez said that she will include Albany's criteria in the next packet.

VI. Police Updates/Reports

Lt. Adams reported accidents between February 22 and March 22.

There were 20 traffic collisions reported, 15 of those were non-injury. For the first time, there were no accidents reported on Marin Avenue. Of the injury accidents, one collision was reported between a skateboard and a vehicle. The driver was 16 years old, and the skateboarder was 15 years old. Lt. Adams said that the person on the skateboard was more at fault because he did not follow pedestrian rules when crossing the street. He said that the person on the skateboard was about 15-20 feet from the crosswalk. The driver had obscured visibility.

Another school related accident on Talbot involved an 11-year old who was struck by a vehicle while crossing the street in the middle of the block.

Treat said that he would be curious to know what the school district reports at the upcoming meeting. Chaney reminded about the Commission about the three E's: engineering, enforcement, and education.

Lt. Adams reported another injury accident between the intersection of Buchanan and Jackson where one car ran the red light and hit another car. He does not believe it was during school hours. He reported two hit and runs, and a couple of high-profile violent crimes occurring in the neighboring city of El Cerrito along the Ohlone Greenway. Albany Police Department is closely working with El Cerrito Police to increase surveillance of the area. The crimes were armed robberies.

VII. Status Report/Discussion

A) Bike Path under I-80 ramps—Chavez reported on the opening ceremony on March 17 and shared the newspaper article from the Journal. Treat officially thanked the members of the Commission and staff who worked on the project.

B) Marin Avenue Reconfiguration—Chavez reported that she requested Bill Burton of DMJM Harris (formerly, Korve Engineering) for a cost estimate of the changes approved by the Commission. She had not received it yet.

C) Marin Elementary—Chavez reported that some of the changes requested by Marin Elementary are included in the work DMJM Harris is developing, and she is working with Public Works on the curb painting and signage request.

D) Solano Avenue in Street Pedestrian Signs—Chavez said she is working with Public Works to install the signs as soon as they are ready.

E) Ohlone Greenway—Chavez said the lighting test demonstration event went well. Chaney said that the lights to be used along the Greenway are similar to the lighting that El Cerrito has along the BART tracks.

Chaney briefly reported on the Council's decision on the Street Closure project and will bring a full report on this at the next Commission meeting.

VIII. Correspondence

A) E-mail from Mary Nielsen opposing parallel parking on Pierce Street. Treat said that there is very minimal parallel parking on the last proposal recommended to Council by the Commission.

IX. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:40 pm. Next meeting is April 26, 2007.