



**TRAFFIC AND SAFETY COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES**

**CITY OF ALBANY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
1000 SAN PABLO AVENUE  
CITY OF ALBANY  
April 24, 2008**

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**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, Richard Treat, and Marsha Atkinson. David Madson left voice mail that he would be arriving late.

**3. Consent Calendar**

Lubov called attention to the minutes stating that she did not find her question to the consultant (Sam Tabibnia) asking whether the Level of Service (LOS) on San Pablo Avenue would not further deteriorate if Kains Avenue were left open. Mazur said she recalled Mr. Tabibnia responding that he would not think so. She also requested to include the time Madson left the meeting that it was 9:30 pm. Minutes were approved as amended Anderson moved/Treat seconded to approve the March 27, 2008 minutes. The motion was passed as written.

**4. Public Comment**

Police Chief Mike McQuiston introduced Lt. John Geissberger as the new Police Department liaison to the Traffic and Safety Commission.

Scott Terry addressed the Commission on the issue of parking limitations in front of his house at 907 Madison Street. He would like the City to implement a parking permit program or change the 90-minute limitation because both sides of the street have different number of 90-minute limit parking stalls. The issue will be on the agenda for a future meeting.

Mazur addressed the commission regarding the drop off mailboxes that are on the wrong side and drivers have to get out in order drop off mail. She asked if it would be possible to install a mailbox inside the parking lot of the City Hall. Chaney suggested that Mazur met with staff to look at the plans for the parking lot and discuss where the mailbox would be located.

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

**5-1 AC Transit Shuttle proposal—cost estimates presented by AC Transit staff**

Chavez introduced Puja Sarna of AC Transit staff. As requested by the Traffic and Safety Commission during a previous meeting, Sarna presented the cost estimate for a shuttle service that would connect Target, the condominiums on Pierce Street, Solano Avenue, El Cerrito Plaza Shopping Center, the Albany Senior Center and the Library. The service would be every 30 minutes and would cost \$2.2 million. Sarna said that AC Transit does not have a source of funding for this service at this moment, but provided alternatives that other cities have used. For example, parcel taxes, assessment districts, and Ecopass. She acknowledged that the service is expensive and that the best option was a private shuttle.

Mazur asked how much the Ecopass would be per household in Albany. Sarna stated that AC Transit's Marketing Department is responsible for developing cost proposals.

Treat asked if a certain percentage of households would have to be signed up in order to guarantee the program. Sarna said that there are several forms of approaching the program.

Chavez added that she had been meeting with Councilmember Joanne Wile in regard to implementing this program in Albany. They had approached the school district and the US Department of Agriculture to explore interest in this program. The City of Albany has conducted a survey to have an idea of how many employees would use a pass if available. Chavez's idea is to pool the three largest employers in Albany in order to make the program more cost effective.

Anderson said that his impression was that the shuttle was going to have the same alignment of the holiday shuttle of two years ago. He said he was disappointed but he stated that he was willing to work with the transit agency.

Atkinson asked if it would be possible to ask for collaboration from El Cerrito and Berkeley, as the route would be serving those cities as well.

Mazur opened the discussion to the public.

Preston Jordan was curious about the Ecopass and asked if there are other cities that have implemented it as a citywide program as opposed to employer-based.

Sarna said that AC Transit is working with other cities in order to implement it, but that there were examples nationwide.

Sol Strand said that there are two kinds of Ecopass: One that would be for commuters or City employees. And the other would be a program for residents that could be used perhaps during a period of time during the day. The other point he made is to start planning for a shuttle now for when the Gilman interchange is improved and the Senior Center is up and running at UC Village. The shuttle would be a shorter one connecting Ranch 99, Target, the Gill tract, the Senior Center. He asked if AC Transit could use smaller buses for this service.

Sarna said that AC Transit does not have vans anymore. The smallest buses are 30 feet in length.

A member of the audience said that the shuttle is a very expensive service and it seemed to be duplicative of the existing AC Transit service.

Sarna said that she agreed and that if a service like this must be pursued, there are other options for consideration, such as contract operators that are cheaper than AC Transit or the Emeryville Emery-go-Around model, which would be a good one to investigate.

Mazur said that she had talked to Ann Chaney about the idea of the Ecopass program for the City as a whole. She said that this idea is worth exploring.

## **5-2 AC Transit's request to relocate a bus stop from the northeast side of the Buchanan/Jackson intersection to the northwest side**

Chavez introduced the subject stating that AC Transit had received a request to move the bus stop from the near side of the intersection to the far side. AC Transit staff favors this request because the relocated stop would serve two routes instead of one, as it is currently the case.

Sarna showed pictures that depicted the change. She explained that a vision-impaired passenger who works at USDA had requested this change and that it makes sense since the 52L and the 18 would be able to use the stop. She explained that there is another stop across from the northwest side of the intersection.

Mazur asked if the Commissioners had any questions.

Anderson asked if the proposal would move the stop in front of the house that sits angled to the sidewalk. Sarna said that it would be up to the existing red curb. Anderson said that he did not think it is the best location for a bus stop because of the planned undergrounding. Chaney said that if nothing else changes, there is no problem with locating the stop at the proposed site.

Treat asked where is the next stop further west on Buchanan. Sarna said that the next stop is on Polk Street.

Anderson said he was concerned about the bus sticking out and blocking the crosswalk. He said that this intersection is very busy and that there are lots of children crossing there. Sarna said that this is the particular reason they request the 65 feet of red curb, so the bus does not block the crosswalks and is able to park along the curb. In this location, there is 54' of available curb plus the 10' of red curb next to the hydrant.

Treat asked if AC Transit would be using the 44' bus and what was the average seat utilization in this route. Sarna said that once it entered UC Village the bus usually carried approximately 60 people.

Mazur said that this intersection would undergo several changes. Chavez said that there would be a left turn signal, crosswalks on the west side of the intersection. Chaney said that if crossing on the east side were permitted, the City would have to provide another crossing guard. Mazur added that at Marin Elementary, there are two crossing guards and they would only cross pedestrians on one side of the intersection. Chaney said that it is better to consolidate the crossings because there is less control when pedestrians are spread out.

Mazur open the discussion to the public.

Barbara Williamson, resident at 911 Buchanan Street said that the intersection is heavily congested with vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Her main concern is that she owns the house at the corner where the stop would be relocated and the house sits at an angle very close to the sidewalk. There is a mailbox on Jackson adjacent to her house and people and cars constantly stop by it to drop off mail. Having a bus constantly stop in front of her house makes her uncomfortable. She had problems in the past with people standing at her front porch when it is raining and she thinks that if the bus were there, there would be more opportunities for strangers to stand in front of her house and look through the windows.

Diane Williamson, a resident of Pierce Street and Barbara Williamson's sister said that traffic is heavy along Buchanan and that the Jackson intersection is very dangerous. She is concerned that the bus stopping at the proposed location would block the crosswalk. The bus would also create more congestion at this busy intersection. She proposed to have a bus stop on Jackson before it turns left onto Buchanan because it is safer. It would only require building the sidewalk.

Norm Ludwig, resident of Albany for almost 20 years, recommended denying AC Transit's request because of the visual impact the large buses will have on drivers. The buses will block visibility, are noisy and polluting. The other concern is that Buchanan is a bike route, bringing more conflict between users. Parents are already stressed when dropping off children. He

recommended moving the bus stop further west. He thinks that the current proposal would result in lawsuits to AC Transit and the City.

Preston Jordan mentioned that a bulbout was proposed for the Buchanan/Jackson intersection and that this would interfere with the proposed bus stop relocation. In addition, this proposal would put a diesel bus right into the crosswalk where children cross on their way to school. Chavez clarified that the bulbout had been suggested as a result of the walking audit around Ocean View Elementary, but that it was not included in the grant because it would have required a public process and there was not enough time before the deadline to submit the Safe Routes to School application.

Mazur closed the public session and invited comments from the Commissioners.

Anderson asked Lt. Geissburger to look at accident data at that intersection.

Atkinson said that she had crossed this intersection as both, as a pedestrian and as a driver. She suggested moving the bus stop further west.

Treat said that he would like to avoid the tail of the bus encroach into the crosswalk. He thinks that turning left and park requires additional maneuvering. He understands that residents have to rely more and more on AC Transit buses, but until he sees, full utilization of the buses, smaller and cleaner vehicles on this line he would be willing to get the best for most people.

Mazur asked if the proposed stop would require a special pad. Sarna said that because this is not a high ridership location, it would not require a special treatment. Mazur said that she would like to see how the Polk St. intersection looks like before the Commission considers Buchanan and Jackson.

Atkinson said that it does not solve the problem of crossing Buchanan because there is no crosswalk available. The item was continued to the next meeting in May to allow for a pilot test having a bus actually turn into the proposed bus stop from UC Village. The Commission felt the test should be done at around 8:20 am when the highest number of school children are crossing, so that the worst-case scenario is observed. Another important consideration is the parking loses and see if by implementing this proposal we are parking neutral.

### **5-3 Continue discussion of the loading /loading and 20-minute parking request on the 1400 block of Solano Avenue.**

The commercial businesses on the south side of the 1400 block of Solano Avenue have asked that the existing bus stop at Santa Fe and Solano be reduced in size in order accommodate a loading and unloading parking space, or an additional 20-minute parking stall. Staff and AC Transit conducted a test where a car and cones were placed to create a “new” parking space. A bus was driven along the proposed configuration to test if it would be able to stop safely. The test resulted in the bus not being able to pull in close enough to the curb to deploy its wheelchair ramp.

Atkinson asked if the other blocks along Solano had loading/unloading areas and how they were used. Chaney said that it might require a parking study to know that and staff needed about three months to complete it.

Earl Daniels said that a tree, and a bus bench sit in the way, and it is virtually impossible to load/unload because of the obstructions in the way. He said his business is losing customers because of the difficulty of finding parking and the fact that the Police Department is ticketing aggressively. He is asking the tree be removed.

Ron Kowalski, owner of the Laundromat suggested moving the bus stop east of Santa Fe. If it does not work out, he does not understand why AC Transit cannot give 5 feet in order to get an extra parking space. Mazur suggested converting one or two parking spaces to limited-time loading/unloading from 7:00-9 or 10:00 am.

Madson arrived at 8:55 pm.

Kowalski said that he does not have a problem with the loading/unloading area, however he would like to have additional parking for his customers.

Mazur asked for a motion, Madson made the motion to convert the easternmost parking space on the south side of the 1400 block of Solano Avenue to limited time loading/unloading parking stall from 7:00-10:00 am Monday through Saturday. Atkinson seconded. Chaney said that she would have to check if this has to go to City Council.

**5-4 Traffic Calming Plan adjacent to El Cerrito Plaza—Forward a draft resolution to City Council reflection Commission recommendation of March 27, 2008.**

Chaney explained that she would like to have the trips generated by the Albany Middle School because those trips are also affecting Brighton. Fehr and Peer, the consultant that did the traffic study for the Middle School traffic analysis will get back to staff with the information

Mazur suggested inserting a “Whereas” between lines 17-18: Whereas closing all streets but Kains Avenue would not prevent LOS degradation on San Pablo, and “Whereas leaving Kains Avenue would cause unacceptable congestion on Kains Avenue.”

Preston Jordan said he would add another “Whereas” in relation to existing traffic speeds on the 400 blocks conforming to existing speed limits and therefore, traffic calming would not be the objective because volume and not speeds is seen as an issue in this case. Speed is the only parameter Fehr and Peers looked at when determining quality of life degradation.

Atkinson said that the Commission should state to the City Council that the traffic calming option is not addressing the real problem faced by this neighborhood.

Treat said that the Committee should convey that they looked at what the City Council asked them to look at and it was determined that the traffic calming option does not have an effect on improving the quality of life because it is not addressing the concerns of the neighborhood.

Atkinson asked if the Council continued with the EIR process and it determined that the full closure could not be done, would the traffic calming proposal be still an option. Chaney said it was possible.

Madson asked whether Caltrans or other agencies had to approve closing all the streets. Chaney said that the EIR would determine what impacts the project would have on the physical environment. The question was whether or not those impacts could be mitigated. She explained the process of the EIR, CEQA and the opportunity for other agencies to submit comments. However, the City Council is the one body that could override the findings of the EIR.

Ed Fields, 600 block of Kains Avenue reminded the Commission that traffic calming may also discourage people from driving the streets. The other issue is that not all the people living in the area see volume as the main issue affecting quality of life. Speed is one issue

that affects people's perceptions of quality of life, particularly in the 600 blocks where speeds are higher.

The Commission decided to continue discussion of the draft resolution to City Council at the next meeting.

5-5 Email from Councilmember Farid Javandel asking for an ex-officio position

Chavez explained that last month staff had received a request from Councilmember Farid Javandel to add a sixth position representing the bicycle and pedestrian community in Albany. Chaney clarified that the issue is whether or not the Traffic and Safety Commission would like to amend the ordinance to add an ex-officio member.

Atkinson said that she did not understand the request. The Commission is taking care of the bicycle and pedestrian issues in the city. Madson added that the Commission had been very sympathetic to the bicycle and pedestrian needs.

The discussion was open to the public.

Preston Jordan commented that there had been several instances in Albany when projects required bicycle and pedestrian advisory committee input and additional expertise was always necessary when evaluating or implementing projects. He provided examples of valuable input provided by bicycle/pedestrian advocates in the community, like the traffic calming project at Marin and Curtis that led to including "cutouts" for wheelchair access in the pork chops installed to decrease the speed of right-turning vehicles.

Sol Strand said that there is conflict between bicyclists and pedestrians. He said that when the Pierce Street bike path was being discussed, he opposed the travel lane being adjacent to the sidewalk. He collected signatures and even then he was unable to convince the Traffic and Safety Commission that the bike path was not necessary on Pierce Street. He feels that combining bicyclists and pedestrians does not make sense.

The Commission members decided not to act on Councilmember Farid Javandel's request. Atkinson made the motion to leave the municipal code as it stands with the five members of the Traffic and Safety Commission and to continue getting input from the community on bicycle and pedestrian issues as they come up. Anderson seconded, vote was 3 in favor, 1 against (Mazur left).

## **6. Reports**

### **6-1 Police Reports**

Lt. John Geissberger said that a total of 18 collisions had been reported between March 28, and April 23, 2008: 13 non-injury collisions and 5 injury collisions. Two of the injury collisions involved bicycles and two involved pedestrians, one involved a 5 year old at Cornell School where the child ran out in the street across Talbot. The child suffered minor abrasions. He also reported that there were 254 moving violations cited in the last month. The Police Department received an OTS grant for the Click it or Ticket program. The program will run from May 14 through June 2. He said that the Chief would be coming to the Commission later this year with a proposal on the "red light" program.

### **6-2 Buchanan Bicycle/Pedestrian Path Project**

Chavez reported on a meeting staff and the consultant held with USDA where they presented a third and in many ways, superior alternative for the bike path. However, this alternative encroaches into the west side of their property near the back gate and storage area and USDA is concerned about the Homeland Security restrictions. The USDA Director sent an email to staff stating USDA's position for their preferred alternative of placing the crossing at Taylor. Chavez said that staff is drafting a letter in response to USDA asking them to be open to the various options being developed and stating that the third alternative is the safest for bicyclists and the one that would better connect to the rest of the planned and existing bicycle network in Albany. In addition, a meeting is scheduled for mid May where staff and the consultants would like to present the alternatives.

**6-3 Pedestrian Plan—Report on the walking audit around Cornell School**

Chavez reported that she had a very successful walking audit around Cornell Elementary School with several parents and the Principal participation. There were several suggestions and a map is being prepared. The objective is to implement a Safe Routes to School Program at the school that includes a walking bus.

**6-4 Report on AC Transit Board Forum Breakfast on April 18**

Anderson said that he would report on this event at the next meeting.

**7 Announcements and Communications**

- 7-1 Email from Ira Sharenow in relation to bicycle facilities in the City of Albany
- 7-2 Letter from Susan Moffat on behalf of the Albany Strollers and Rollers regarding proposal at the University Village.
- 7-3 Letter from Ellen Toomey on behalf of the Urban Roots regarding proposal at the University Village
- 7-4 Comments and recommendation on establishing paid parking program(s)
- 7-5 Free or low cost bicycle tune up at Albany Spring Festival

Atkinson suggested including item 7-4 in a future agenda. Commission members had questions about the UC Village project. The deadline to provide comments was moved to May 6 because of the offices move. Chaney said that the City is keeping an eye on internal circulation, parking and bicycle connections of the UC Village project. The item will be for discussion in a future agenda.

**8. Future Agenda Items.**

Chavez summarized the future agenda items. Atkinson asked when the Pierce Street Bike proposal would be on the agenda. Chaney said that she is waiting to hear from Caltrans because the bike path is only one component of this project. Madson said that the City Council accepted the recommendation to include the bicycle path, why is this being discussed further. Chaney said that the City is trying to respond to everyone's concerns.

Chavez called attention to the Bike to Work Day on May 15.

**9 Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 10:31 pm. Next meeting is May 22, 2008.