



**TRAFFIC AND SAFETY COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES**

**CITY OF ALBANY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
1000 SAN PABLO AVENUE  
CITY OF ALBANY  
February 28, 2008**

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**1. Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Lubov Mazur, Chair.

**2. Roll Call**

Members present: Ray Anderson, Lubov Mazur and David Madson.

Absent: Richard Treat

Marsha Atkinson has submitted a letter of resignation to the City Clerk.

**3. Consent Calendar**

Madson moved/Anderson seconded to approve the January 24, 2008 minutes. The motion was passed as written.

**4. Public Comment**

None

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

**5-1 Draft Traffic Calming study for area south of El Cerrito Plaza**

Staff gave a brief background of this issue, encouraging the Commission to ask clarifying questions and noting any areas that might not have been addressed. It was noted that a noticed public meeting would be held on March 27.

Sam Tabibnia with Fehr and Peers, presented the findings of the draft report. This included a discussion of existing traffic volumes, speeds, accident rates in the 400 and 500 blocks of Kains, Stannage, Cornell, Talbot and Evelyn Avenues. The plan takes into consideration the effects of the proposed Creekside residential project in the El Cerrito Plaza on the neighborhood streets in Albany. The plan recommendations call for traffic calming devices including circles at several Brighton intersections, speed humps and raised pedestrian crosswalks. Tabibnia noted that the Fire Department favors the traffic circles. To ensure this, the Fire Department tested circles of different diameters using cones at the intersection of Cornell Avenue and Brighton Avenue.

In a comparison between the street closure proposal that would close all streets except Kains, and the traffic calming option, the study found that traffic on Kains between Brighton and the Plaza would increase 200 percent with the closure option, benefitting only the 400 blocks of Evelyn, Talbot and Cornell Avenues. With the traffic calming option on the other hand, the entire neighborhood would be treated equally.

Tabibnia acknowledged that the traffic calming approach would not have a significant effect on volumes, but would have a calming effect and thereby improving livability and the perception of a better quality of life.

Madson questioned the legal implications of closing the streets leading to the Plaza. He asked whether the developer of the proposed condominium at the Plaza could take a position that closing the streets is inappropriate because the El Cerrito Plaza Shopping Mall was built with the understanding that streets would remain open.

Mazur said the neighborhood's primary concern was traffic volumes, rather than speeds.

The discussion was open to the public.

Peter Loubal, of El Cerrito, would be inconvenienced if the streets were closed. He said that the real problem is the lack of parking and the air pollution caused by drivers looking for parking.

Eleanor Moses, Albany resident, said that the issue for the neighborhood has been quality of life. She felt that any mitigation other than street closure would put the needs of the commercial use over the interest of the residents. She said that speed bumps are not desirable. They delay emergency response. She asked staff about the funds that El Cerrito gave to the City of Albany when the Plaza Shopping Mall was being developed.

Chaney said that the funds were used to install the stop signs along the intersections at Brighton Street.

Lucile Miller, 600 Cornell Street, felt there was a double standard by the City of El Cerrito, which discourages cut-through traffic in their General Plan, yet allows the new condominium to use Albany's residential neighborhood to cut through to major streets. She said that originally the streets leading to the Plaza were designed as closed streets, with the exception of Cornell Avenue, which is the only two-way access to the Mall.

Maureen Crowley, 600 block of Kains, would like to see the No Truck signs enforced. She noted poor visibility on the 400 and 500 block of Kains at Brighton because of hill. She suggested a raised crosswalk at this intersection and 4-way stop signs. She supports speed humps on the 600 block of Kains.

Jason Foster, 400 block of Talbot, asked what would the effects be of the street closure proposal on Brighton Street. Tabibnia said that it would be similar to that on the other streets, that is the speeds would go down, but that volumes would not be substantially reduced. Foster asked if the City of El Cerrito would be receptive if the raised crosswalks were on the El Cerrito side. Chaney said she hoped that the El Cerrito would be receptive. He said he was generally disappointed with the level of detail of the report.

Earl Daniel, said that in Los Angeles, they would have installed a cul-de-sac and cause traffic to go around it.

Ed Fields, 600 block of Kains, said he believes the City should try traffic calming first. He said that during peak hour, San Pablo Avenue probably has LOS F now without the street closure.

Matthew Ridgway of Fehr and Peers said that considerable research has been done about traffic calming measures and quality of life. He said that studies have found that there is low correlation between amount of traffic volume and quality of life, and there is high correlation between speed and quality of life.

Eleanor Moses asked if there are other shopping centers similar to El Cerrito Plaza, connecting directly to neighborhood streets.

Anderson suggested that a toll arm be located at the border to charge every vehicle that crosses Albany to access or exit the Plaza. This would definitely reduce volume and increase revenue to Albany.

Mazur asked what was the volume on the Albany residential streets before the Plaza was rehabilitated and how could Kains handle 5,600 more cars. She also asked whether the Plaza could be encouraged to place “wheel capture” devices on shopping carts.

Ken McCroskey, resident of Santa Fe Avenue, said that from a bicyclist’s stand point, he does like circles because they slow vehicle speeds down and it feels safer.

Madson asked about a parking permit option.

In response to a question, Tabibnia said it is possible that some of the Brighton traffic would go to Portland.

Foster would like the plan to focus more on the impacts on Brighton Avenue and to look at an alternative to the circles. He asked how long a project implementation would take before it could be evaluated.

Tabibnia said consultants need about one year to evaluate the effectiveness of a project.

David Danby, 800 block Stannage, asked if there was any way to determine where traffic on these streets originated from. Tabibnia said that the consultants suspect that traffic comes from Berkeley and Albany residents from the southeast.

The Commission closed the public discussion and asked the consultants to bring an impact analysis to Brighton Avenue, alternative to circles, volumes prior to the Plaza rehabilitation, and best practice in California regarding access into shopping centers for discussion at the March meeting.

## **5-2 Proposed ideas from the Albany Library/Albany Middle School for driver education**

Julie Winkelstein, with Albany Library, discussed several ideas for a driver and pedestrian education campaign in the City. Her greatest concern is the inability of drivers to actually stop at stop signs rather than “pause.” She is frustrated that drivers do not come to a full stop, stop for pedestrians, and drive too fast. Thus, she suggested that a

slogan be placed on a banner stating a catchy phrase such as “Albany – A good place to stop.” Others suggested placing a stop sign logo next to it. She also suggested use of a bucket of flags on either side of an intersection for pedestrians to get one as they cross the street and return it on the other side. She said that pedestrians have to be educated as to where they should cross the street.

Chavez suggested inviting a representative from the City of San Jose to share their ideas about the StreetSmart program, a comprehensive educational program that involves bicycle and pedestrian safety, and driver’s education.

### **5-3 Ohlone Greenway**

Chavez said that she would like to follow up on the suggestion to have a joint meeting between T&S and Park and Recreation when this issue is taken up again by the Parks and Recreation Commission.

## **6 Reports**

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

Lt. Adams said that the following collisions had been reported between January 24 and February 28, 2008:

8 non-injury collisions

3 injury collisions

2 out of 3 injury collisions involved bicyclists; Both were fault of bicyclist – DUI passing wrong side of vehicle. Madson asked if the bicyclist was cited. The answer was no. Mr. MsCroskey, representing Rollers and Strollers said they would support the citing the bicyclist due to such poor bicycle riding behavior. Adams said there is a separate section for riding a bicycle while intoxicated, but is not part of the Department of Motor Vehicle code because bicyclists are not required to have a driver’s license. The other injury collision involved a pedestrian.

Of the non-injury collisions, there was an accident at Marin Avenue and Peralta Avenue– low-speed rear ender – and another at the Marin Avenue/Evelyn Avenue intersection.

Lt. Adams said that the Police Department issued 496 citations for moving violations during that past reporting period. He also said that the PD would receive a \$3,000 grant for a Ticket or Click It campaign.

Lt. Adams also reported that the Meniketti case was adjudicated at the end of January. This was the result of a plea deal (nolo contendere) arranged by the presiding judge. The defendant was found guilty of 191.5(b) PC (misdemeanor vehicular manslaughter). There was a short jail sentence imposed, followed by home detention, then 5 years court probation, as well as restitution and a monetary fine. Although the APD was disappointed at the outcome, it is important to stress that this outcome is the result of the judicial process, not the investigation. We have confirmed with the District Attorney's office that there was nothing APD could have done differently to affect the outcome. Ruth's family has been notified of the outcome.

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

Chavez reported that a kick off meeting for the Buchanan Bicycle/Pedestrian project was scheduled for March 13, at 1:30 pm.

## **7 Announcements and Communications**

### **7-1 Letter from Earl Daniel**

Mr. Daniel's wife runs the Thai Lou Restaurant at 1406 Solano Avenue. He complained about the difficulty of loading and unloading merchandise at the restaurant because of the lack of adequate parking in this part of Solano Avenue. In particular he complained about the length of the bus stop (which is about 60 feet) taking up so much of the curb.

He suggested that the bus length be shortened to 40 feet and that a loading zone be added in the remaining space.

Madson moved that the item be put on the next month's agenda and that staff provide some recommendation by investigating loading areas at similar locations. Anderson seconded it. The vote was 3-0. Lt. Adams said that the Police Chief has spoken with some of the merchants.

### **7-2 Letter from Scott Rowe and copy of staff response letter**

A copy of the letter from Scott Rowe, resident of Berkeley sent to the Commission and the City of Albany was included in the packet. The letter suggested back in parking along 8<sup>th</sup> Street (Jackson St.) across from Ocean View Elementary. The letter was forwarded to the University of California as the school sits on University property.

### **7-3 Memorandum to Naomi Puro in response to email regarding suggestions for Marin Avenue**

A copy of the memorandum that would be sent to Naomi Puro in response to her email suggesting changing the speed limit on Marin Avenue to 30 mph.

## **8. Future Agenda Items**

- 8-1 Feasibility of AC Transit Shuttle in Albany
- 8-2 Measure F funding status and revised list of priorities for 2008
- 8-3 San Pablo and Solano Avenue northbound Ac Transit Bus Stop
- 8-4 Bus top Target

## **9 Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 pm. Next meeting is March 27, 2008.