

**CITY OF ALBANY  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA  
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: September 21, 2009  
Reviewed by: BP

**Subject:** Buchanan/Jackson Traffic Signal Design concept

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**TRAFFIC & SAFETY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:**

That the City Council approve the design alternative for the Buchanan/ Jackson traffic signal as recommended by the Traffic and Safety Commission and presented in Exhibit A, which includes:

- A new traffic signal with two-way protected left turn arrows on Buchanan Street onto northbound and southbound Jackson Street, with an option in the future to implement a four-way protected left turn from Jackson Street onto eastbound and westbound Buchanan Street.

**BACKGROUND**

At the July 20, 2009 City Council meeting, a member of the public expressed concern about the Traffic and Safety Commission decision, and advocated instead for the four-way protected left turn arrows at Jackson and Buchanan streets. In response, the Council agendized the review of the Commission's decision for the two-way protected left turn arrow only.

In 2007, the City received a \$293,760 grant from Caltrans' Safe Routes to School program for a project that includes:

- A new traffic signal with two-way protected left turn arrows at Buchanan Street onto northbound and southbound Jackson Street.
- Pedestrian countdown devices.
- Curb reconfiguration, which includes a bulb out at the southwest (AC Transit bus stop) and northwest corners of the Jackson/Buchanan intersection.
- Two solar speed feedback signs along Buchanan Street between San Pablo and Pierce Street.
- Two ADA compliant curb ramps along the south side of Madison Street/Solano Avenue intersection.

- Crosswalk striping on the north side of Buchanan from Pierce Street to Jackson Street, and on both sides of Solano Avenue from Pierce Street to Jackson Street, thereby more clearly marking the route to Ocean View School.

The design work was awarded to DMJM Harris, which is also preparing the plans for the Buchanan Bicycle and Pedestrian Path project. In analyzing the project, DMJM Harris found that there were 87 vehicles turning westbound on to Buchanan during the morning peak hour. This is significantly higher than the number of vehicles turning left from Buchanan onto Jackson Street (40 northbound and 43 southbound) during the morning peak hour (see Exhibit B). Under current conditions, as well as the proposed two-way protected left turn, this left turning traffic tends to conflict with pedestrians crossing Buchanan Street, primarily walking to Ocean View School.

To address this concern, City staff suggested that the consultant explore the possibility of a four-way protected left turn movement at the new signal (Exhibit C), rather than limiting it to the proposed two-way protected left turn. The addition of a protected left turn movement gives these vehicles their own right-of-way without conflicting with pedestrians. While the four-way left turn arrow will not eliminate the potential conflict between pedestrians and vehicles travelling southbound on Jackson and turning right (westbound) onto Buchanan Street, the addition of the proposed bulb out will help deter fast turning vehicles.

In order to accomplish a four-way left turn arrow, dedicated left turn lanes would need to be added on Jackson Street. This would result in the removal of four parking spaces in the 900 block of Jackson Street north of Buchanan, and approximately seven angled parking spaces on Jackson Street south of Buchanan (across from Ocean View Elementary School).

## **DISCUSSION**

A neighborhood meeting was held on April 22, 2009 at the Community Center to discuss the new Jackson/Buchanan traffic signal and the Buchanan Bicycle Path proposal. When discussing the four-way left turn arrow proposal, concerns were raised by residents in the 900 block of Jackson Street about the loss of parking along the east side of the intersection approach on Jackson Street. They were also concerned that the dedicated left turn arrow would induce additional traffic on Jackson Street. The project consultant stated that the induced traffic would be minimal. According to the Circulation Element of the City's General Plan, the 900 block of Jackson Street is classified as a Minor Arterial, that "serve large segments of the City, but do not involve citywide cross-town circulation. Major intersections are signalized but may not have separate turn lanes." The established threshold for daily traffic volumes on Minor Arterials in the Traffic Management Plan is less than 18,000 vehicles. Existing volume on Jackson is 1,100 vehicles (Traffic Management Plan).

City staff also met with stakeholders (e.g., School District, UC Berkeley) in February and March of 2009 about the traffic signal and Buchanan Bike Path projects. At a recent

meeting with the Albany Unified School District staff, they expressed concern about the loss of the seven angled parking spaces along the south leg of Jackson Street because these spaces are used by school staff members.

The Traffic and Safety Commission held public meetings to discuss these projects on May 28, 2009 and June 25, 2009 meetings. While the Traffic and Safety Commission understood that a four-way left turn approach at this intersection offered increased pedestrian safety, the Commission was also sensitive to the on-street parking needs of residents in the 900 block of Jackson Street. Therefore, at its June 25, 2009 meeting, the Commission directed the consultant to implement the two-way protected left turn on Buchanan Street (Exhibit A), with provisions for the implementation of a four-way protected left turn in the future (Exhibit C).

### **SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT**

The project, with the two left arrows or four left arrows brings increased safety around the school. Safer routes to school encourage students, and their families, to walk to school and other nearby destinations (e.g., Ocean View Park), thereby reducing carbon emissions. The project dovetails with the Buchanan Bicycle and Pedestrian Path project which will provide an alternative means of travel to driving.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

There is no significant increase in cost between the two-way and four way left turn arrows because the signal mechanism (controllers) are designed to accommodate either turning movement. The only cost that would be anticipated is restriping the roadway for a new left turn lane on both sides of Jackson Street.

#### **Attachments:**

- Exhibit A: Two-way protected left turn map
- Exhibit B: Existing traffic volumes
- Exhibit C: Four-way protected left turn