

**Approved Minutes**  
**Transportation Commission Meeting**  
**Wednesday, May 26, 2021**

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Location: Due to Governor Executive Order N-29-20, Transportation Commissioners were able to attend the meeting via teleconference. The City allowed public participation via Zoom. City Hall was NOT open to the public during the meeting.

Legistar Link:

<https://alameda.legistar.com/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=811334&GUID=929D18C0-4EF7-433D-83B3-574DE7818372&Options=info|&Search=>

**1. Roll Call**

Present: Chair Soules, Vice Chair Nachtigall and Commissioners Yuen, Kohlstrand, Hans and Weitze.

Absent: Commissioner Randy Rentschler

**2. Agenda Changes**

None.

**3. Staff Communications are as shown in the web link here:**

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4957779&GUID=CF0A5B93-1B33-4C37-B39B-6855036CD070&FullText=1>

Vice-Chair Alysha Nachtigall addressed the upcoming election for Chair and Vice-Chair. While she had valued and appreciated her time as Vice-Chair she would not be throwing her hat in the ring and would be stepping back for the next year.

**4. Announcements / Public Comments**

None.

## **5. Consent Calendar**

### **5A. Draft Minutes - Transportation Commission Meeting from Wednesday, September 23, 2020 (Action Item)**

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4957780&GUID=A3EDAE6D-7EAB-453E-8949-A3C1522365AD&FullText=1>.

### **5B. Draft Minutes - Transportation Commission Meeting from March 24, 2021 (Action Item)**

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4957781&GUID=0F801557-03F6-4328-9695-12B963C5E801&FullText=1>.

Commissioner Rebecca Kohlstrand made a motion to approve both sets of minutes and Commissioner Tina Yuen seconded the motion. A vote was taken by a raise of hands and the motion passed.

## **6. Regular Agenda Items**

### **6A. Endorse the City Council's Adoption of a Resolution Establishing Policies on Intersection Access Equity and Pedestrian Timing and Detection to Improve Safety at Intersections (Action)**

Russ Thompson, Interim City Engineer, introduced this item and gave a presentation. The staff report and attachments can be found at:

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4957782&GUID=45694D62-1596-4907-982E-A627F75C67DA&FullText=1>.

### **Commissioner Clarifying Questions for #6A**

Commissioner Kohlstrand asked if there was a specific deadline that this needed to go back to City Council.

Staff Member Thompson said it was currently scheduled for the second week of July.

Erin Smith, Director of Public Works, said there was no specific deadline but that the referral was from September 2019. There was some pressure to be responsive.

Commissioner Scott Weitze wanted to know the thinking behind the removal of the pedestrian barriers and what the data had shown.

Staff Member Thompson said he didn't want to give the impression that there was a rush to do it. The overarching goal was to make intersections have crosswalks on all sides. That's assuming there was Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) money available to extend sidewalks to create the infrastructure that was needed. He discussed the expenses that would go into making intersections fully functional on all legs.

Commissioner Weitze asked if there were any intersections where it didn't make sense to put a crosswalk.

Staff Member Thompson said each intersection had to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Certainly, if it would cost \$300,000 to do all the improvements, it would have to compete with other intersections. Some things were cost prohibitive and if no real traffic or pedestrian safety was being solved that would be a factor as well.

Ryan Dole, Traffic Engineer with Kimley Horn, added that the photo in the staff presentation was at Packet Landing on Bay Farm Island. It was a good example of where sometimes barricades were used to funnel people to a specific crosswalk, sometimes done for efficiency and not just safety. He also explained the reasoning behind another intersection and why barricades could still be warranted and useful in some intersections.

Commissioner Weitze asked if there was actual data that backed up faster cycle times at intersections. He felt that drivers would get more frustrated if only a few cars made it through the intersection at a time.

Staff Member Thompson said the thought was they were trying to avoid allocating time to a movement in an intersection when nobody needed it. The frustration comes in when the cars are stacked up North/South and no pedestrians crossing East/West. That was a simplified version of what they were trying to do, to allocate time to those most in need.

Chair Soules asked about when the commission makes these endorsements and the council adopts these resolutions she wanted to know more about how they were used. She wanted to know how the resolution would be used going forward and what is established.

Director Smith acknowledged there had been inconsistency in how pedestrian detection had been used in the city and this policy intended to provide that consistency. She pointed out areas on the map that would be impacted and also discussed what projects would be started depending on the budget.

## **Public Comments for #6A**

Denyse Trepanier, from Bike Walk Alameda, thanked staff for putting this policy out for the public to respond to. She thought it was very important they discussed how much of a burden they wanted to put on people who move around public spaces not in a car. However, Bike Walk Alameda was hoping that this policy would address the inequities there were in the burden right now in terms of how they move about. She discussed all the inequities around the city and felt that this policy didn't deal with the inequity of burden.

Cyndy Johnsen appreciated the effort so far on this important issue but she thought that the resolution still needed work. She believed it fell short of the Council's direction and she hoped that it could be improved. She called out the Council's first request about how if access is given to the car then the pedestrian way should be granted too, and in the policy, it had been watered down to only happen in certain circumstances. She brought up cities like Berkeley and Seattle that were making bolder commitments to pedestrian safety and equity. She hoped they could work a little harder to get it right.

Jim Strehlow said he agreed with the staff's recommendations that were against the Council's referrals. He was happy to see a Civil Engineer finally providing input into these much-needed discussions since without one it had lead to bad decisions historically. He agreed long and unnecessary wait times lead to delays in transit and adds to greenhouse emissions and gave the example of Sixth Street and Pacific Avenue and others. He agreed with Commissioner Weitze that dangerous intersections exist that do not need crosswalks and gave the example of High Street and Marina Drive.

## **Commissioner Comments and Discussion for #6A**

Commissioner Kohlstrand agreed with many of what the public speakers had said and commended the staff for moving this issue forward. She was also pleased to see many new crosswalks painted around the city at intersections that had pedestrian safety issues. She generally agreed with the staff recommendations as they related to signalized intersections but in response to the first two speakers thought they should take things further, she gave examples of intersections and advised to get rid of the beg buttons if they were not doing anything. She was concerned that this policy exclusively focused on signalized intersections as a means of addressing intersection equitable access for the city. She also addressed there was virtually no discussion about roundabouts and how they treat stop-controlled intersections. She felt that they should be moving away from signalized intersections and felt that was a primary way this resolution fell short. She thought that the staff should take more time to really delve into this and get creative. She wanted to see that happen before they took any action on this resolution and then refer it to the City Council. She also

asked about Transit Priorities and when the Mobility Element Technical Appendix would come back for a review. She believed it was important that they review that appendix since the Transportation Element itself did not address transit or bicycle priority, that information was in the appendix.

Staff Member Payne did not believe the status on the Transit Priorities Streets would change much because it tended to be where AC Transit was operating. She saw that as a stable situation.

Commissioner Kohlstrand said she disagreed with that. She had looked at it again and she did not believe it reflected where AC Transit services are. She gave the example of how Clement Ave was listed and it was not up to date.

Chair Soules recalled that they were going to get an updated version of the appendix because they knew it needed a revision. Going forward they were going to want that to serve as a baseline as other projects came forward for approval. She offered to follow up with Staff Member Payne to see what the status was. She added that when she read the resolution, if and when there was a traffic signal this is how they would operate. She felt that this captured that one piece where it didn't need to contemplate everything else because it was only where it applied to an operation of traffic signals.

Commissioner Kohlstrand said she appreciated what Chair Soules said and as it related to the management of traffic signals she did not have an issue with what staff recommended. It was that the definition of intersection equitable access was focused solely on signalized intersections and that was where they had made a misstep, it should not just be focused on that.

Director Smith appreciated the comments and said it had been a difficult one to frame. She agreed with Chair Soules that this was more of a traffic signal operation policy but perhaps there should be better framing around that. She also agreed that when they defined intersection access equity they had been thinking about how it would apply to signalized intersections in response to this referral. She added that there needs to be a definition to happen for all intersections regardless of what the control was.

Chair Soules was fine with it since it was trying to answer this one specific issue with traffic signals on the recall. Her biggest issue was for transit corridors to have that reliability.

Commissioner Kohlstrand said she understood that this was very focused on signalized intersections but still had issues with the definition of intersection access equity in the staff report. This was a new term to her and brought up ways they should broaden that definition.

Director Smith clarified that intersection access equity was not an industry term, and it came out of the Council's referrals. She thought of ways they could broaden that term or clear up the language. She also thought about not defining it and just moving forward with the Council's referrals.

Commissioner Yuen said she was challenged by what the goal of the policy was trying to achieve. She wondered if there needed to be some articulation of principals around what was guiding the effort.

Director Smith clarified the crux of what they had been going for was to serve the needed time to the users when they were there. This was about detection and actuation in setting signal timing. They did not want to put an undue burden on the people who were actually at the intersection.

Commissioner Weitze said he read this document as an allocation of time document as opposed to a safety document. He thought it did a good job of balancing multiple needs as well as acknowledging the requirements for changes. While he did normally agree with Bike Walk Alameda and Oakland on a lot of issues he did, however, not agree with them on the evils of beg buttons. He thought they were good, solved many problems, and were not an undue burden in the majority of cases for pedestrians and bikes who use them.

Commissioner Kolhstrand said she tried to understand the Council's specific questions about signal timing and tried to reconcile that with the staff report and the statement that intersection equitable access had to do with signal timing. She thought if they cleaned that up, it would be better.

Director Smith asked if it would help if they renamed it or coined a different term. She discussed the different programs they had that did address safety to various other intersections.

Rochelle Wheeler, a Senior Transportation Coordinator, believed that changing the title of that definition would have it go in the right direction since they have many policies and documents that had looked at intersections of all types. She added that staff should and did look at existing policies when they implement new ones.

Vice-Chair Nachtigall understood how hard this was to frame. She too would appreciate the definition being clarified. She echoed Commissioner Weitze's comment about the benefits of beg buttons, and it is better when they work consistently, however.

Commissioner Kohlstrand asked that there be more explanation around the term intersection access equity. Even with all her experience in the transportation field, she had never heard that term.

Chair Soules made a motion to bring this agenda item back at the July meeting or according to the schedule that the city staff set with the time needed for revisions before it went to Council, and wanted to reference “signalized” intersection access equity. Commissioner Weitze seconded and a vote was taken by a raise of hands, the motion passed 6-0.

**6B. Recommend that the City Council Authorize the City Manager to Negotiate and Execute Documents Necessary to Accept and Allocate \$1,555,000 in Grant Funds from the Alameda County Transportation Commission to Complete a Project Initiation Document for the Alameda-Oakland Bicycle-Pedestrian Bridge Project (Action)**

Chair Soules recused herself from this agenda item.

Staff Member Wheeler introduced this item and gave a presentation. The staff report and attachments can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4957783&GUID=809FF584-BBD0-49BD-8E4C-6F4A45F057E2&FullText=1>.

**Commissioner Clarifying Questions for #6B**

Commissioner Weitze asked for clarification on the initial and annual costs of the water taxi.

Staff Member Wheeler pointed out that was part of the feasibility study page. She added that it would depend on how frequently the boats were used, who owned the boats, and many other factors that the study did not go into. In general, the potential cost would be around \$1 million to initiate the water services and \$2 million to operate and maintain it annually.

Commissioner Weitze said that he was baffled by the numbers, and he did not understand why those numbers were what they were. Why not just buy the boat tomorrow?

Staff Member Payne explained they would have the boat in July, WETA would be starting water shuttle services from the Alameda Main Street ferry terminal for commuters going to Oakland.

Commissioner Weitze asked if that was the short hop that was part of the regular route or was it just a short hop frequently.

Staff Member Payne said it was during commute time at this point and it was part of the Sea Plane Shift.

Commissioner Weitze said that was helpful information but it did not answer his question. He did not understand how the boat cost \$1 million and \$2 million a year to operate but the bridge cost \$200 million in 25 years when they build it. He did not understand why there wasn't a new boat out of Alameda Landing 6 months from now and they just don't run it.

Staff Member Wheeler said the medium term option was the water shuttle. She discussed all the effort going into getting a water shuttle and getting a boat in the first place. She also discussed all the ways they had looked into bringing the cost down.

Commissioner Weitze asked if this project were to be funded, what kind of population requirements were there for the island.

Staff Member Wheeler said they had looked at the projected population based on current zoning and planned projects. She believed they would be looking at the number of people who use the boat, which is also based on employment. She did not anticipate that Alameda had to grow by a certain amount.

Commissioner Kohlstrand asked about the first forecast for the Pedestrian and Bicycle Demand from 2009 and wanted to know if they would look at that again when it came in for environmental review.

Staff Member Wheeler said they had done the Traffic Demand Model with the study they had published this year.

Commissioner Kohlstrand asked if the bridge was high enough that it would not have to be raised for the sailboats but just the Coast Guard Cutters.

Staff Member Wheeler said when the bridge would be down, the height would be about 65-70 feet above the water and that would allow about 90 percent of sailboats to go underneath it.

## **Public Comments for #6B**

Denyse Trepanier, with Bike Walk Alameda, gave her support for the staff recommendation that they accept \$1.5 million from the county. She also wanted to acknowledge all the work done by



Staff Member Wheeler. She believed that this should not be a city lead project but a regional project and felt that Staff Member Wheeler had done the lion's share of this project. She acknowledged that getting a new transit service up and running was really hard and time-consuming. She discussed all the difficulties in getting the water shuttle services up and running and it was the short-term solution. She thought they were in a really good place to move forward with this project.

Susie Hufstader echoed what Ms. Trepanier had said about Staff Member Wheeler and her team for all the work she had done shepherding this project forward. This project was overwhelming and it took a lot of work from the city staff. She discussed the importance of really thinking differently about infrastructure and what other cities were doing. She believed this project would be transformative for Alameda. She encouraged the commissioners to speak up about this project to make it a high priority.

Cyndy Johnsen also thanked Staff Member Wheeler and staff for working on this gigantic project. She wanted everyone to think about how big and impossible it seemed at one time to have highways across America, and now it's just part of life. The price might seem high but there was no bike infrastructure or the West End that connected to Oakland. She gave other ideas on how to think about bike equity and discussed all the different requirements this bridge had to meet. She hoped there were ways they could work with the Coast Guard and look at design elements to bring the cost down. She was very excited about this project.

Jim Strehlow wanted to discuss the Feasibility Study from 2009 that had been a priority for 7 years. He had asked repeatedly for a year now for a project status update from Staff Member Wheeler. He wanted to know how much income had been brought in since Alameda Landing was supposed to contribute \$175,000 and he wasn't sure if that was yearly or not. He thought that going from the Main Street ferry terminal to Webster Street was too far, Alameda Landing was a better option. He liked that WETA was involved. He wanted to know what lies had been put into the Travel Demand Model estimate of the daily bike trips. He talked about past bridges in the area that boats had crashed into and the plan had no disaster backup plan.

### **Commissioner Comments and Discussions for #6B**

Commissioner Yuen said she was very much in support of moving this forward. She did not see this as an either-or situation, bridge vs. other modes of access across the estuary. She mentioned she lived on the West End and she was excited for the water shuttle and this bridge. She saw this as an important critical next step in moving this project forward and fully supported it.

Vice-Chair Nachtigall believed this was very notable especially with the research that showed that over 40,000 fewer auto trips per week were possible. She was in full support.

Commissioner Kohlstrand made a motion to approve the staff recommendation that the City Council Authorize the City Manager to Negotiate and Execute Documents Necessary to Accept and Allocate \$1,555,000 in Grant Funds from the Alameda County Transportation Commission to Complete a Project Initiation Document for the Alameda-Oakland Bicycle-Pedestrian Bridge Project. Commissioner Michael Hans seconded the motion, a vote was taken by a raise of hands and the motion passed 5-0 with Chair Soules having recused herself.

#### **6C. Update on Vision Zero Action Plan Development and Crash Data Analysis (Discussion)**

Lisa Foster, Transportation Planner, introduced this item and gave a presentation. The staff report and attachments can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4957784&GUID=CC342571-9648-4854-9EF6-C939AA16557F&FullText=1>.

#### **Commissioner Clarifying Questions for #6C**

Commissioner Weitze asked if the recent work done at Alameda Point had conformed to all the Vision Zero recommendations.

Staff Member Wheeler said they were focusing on as much state-of-the-art infrastructure as they could.

#### **Public Comments for #6C**

Jim Strehlow said that this study did not publish counts of who was at fault, such as poor lighting or someone distracted by their phone. He said with all the different cultures on the island, he wanted to know in what different languages they had created safety information for.

#### **Commissioner Comments and Discussions for #6C**

Chair Soules said this was a lot of data but thought it had been put forward in a great graphic way.

Commissioner Yuen thanked Staff Member Foster and city staff for all their work on the Vision Zero Plan and was really pleased with the progress. She asked what city staff had learned from a recent fatality and two severe injuries that happened in the first quarter of 2021.

Staff Member Foster said the fatality had been a cyclist and they had done a Post-Collision Site Visit. She discussed the ways they were planning on making the intersection safer and the entire corridor was slated for improvements. The other two collisions still needed to have their Post-Collision Site Visit.

Commissioner Yuen said since the data went until 2018 was there any plan to continue to update the crash data and high injury corridors.

Staff Member Foster said the plan was to do a full high injury corridor every 5 years. She also discussed other information that would improve and help her studies.

Vice-Chair Nachtigall appreciated the data-driven analysis and commended Staff Member Foster, staff, and the consultant team. She found the information easy to read and understand. She stated as the parent of a third-grader the findings in the study were very challenging and unfortunate. She appreciated the new high visibility crosswalks and safety measures, and she was looking forward to seeing the full Vision Zero Action Plan.

Commissioner Weitze asked about the crash data in the report and wanted to know specifics about the 33 percent of drivers hitting pedestrians in crosswalks. He wanted to know if that included straight-on collisions and right turns.

Staff Member Foster said that was drivers traveling straight, not turning.

Commissioner Weitze asked if they had the information about crashes where drivers were turning.

Staff Member Foster said she could get that information for him.

Commissioner Kohlstrand echoed her fellow commissioners in that this was great work so far. She asked when the Socially Vulnerable Map would be updated.

Staff Member Payne said it was happening with the Hazard Mitigation Plan update that was beginning now.

Commissioner Kohlstrand asked if it was based on Census Data or some other data.

Staff Member Payne said that it was mainly based on Census Data and a combination of various factors.

#### **6D. Status Report on Transportation - May 2021 (Discussion)**

Staff Member Payne introduced the item and gave a brief presentation with Staff Member Wheeler. The staff report and presentation can be found at

<http://alameda.legistar.com/gateway.aspx?M=F&ID=792bf795-7f1d-41b8-a994-14e7b34ce277.pdf> and  
<http://alameda.legistar.com/gateway.aspx?M=F&ID=e03c16e4-945d-47c1-bf9d-07656ad6a5a7.pdf>.

#### **Commissioner Clarifying Questions for #6D**

Chair Soules said the graphics and the layout had come a long way. She commended the extra effort the staff did to make this more readable.

Vice-Chair Nachtigall asked if they were going to be charging for parking right away at the Sea Plane Lagoon ferry terminal.

Staff Member Foster said they would not have paid parking in place for when the ferry started but they would be getting it implemented soon. Pay stations will be installed in the coming months.

Commissioner Weitze wanted to know what the staff thought about traffic being bad and backed up everywhere except getting on and off the island on the West End. How could they keep that going forward?

Staff Member Payne said much of that had to do with the demographics of Alameda, people tend to have jobs where they can telecommute, and schools were not in session.

Commissioner Weitze asked if city staff was projecting that to continue since demographics were going in the direction of telecommuting.

Staff Member Payne said that was hard to predict but it did present an opportunity to help with congestion on and off the island.

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Commissioner Yuen had also thought about the VMT returning to almost 100 percent in parts of the Bay Area. She wondered what that meant for the future VMT for Alameda and how to keep it low. She saw transit as a way to do that and a way to alleviate fears with Covid measures.

### **Public Comments for #6D**

Jim Strehlow said they completely ignored the Alameda Oakland Access project. This was a major project over the last 6-8 years. It will highly affect the multimodal travel patterns. He asked that they also identify Orion Street's endpoints.

### **Commissioner Comments and Discussion #6D**

There were no other comments on this item.

## **7. Announcements / Public Comments**

Commissioner Kohlstrand discussed a recent story she heard on NPR about the potential removal of the I-980 Freeway in Downtown Oakland and that it was gaining some interest in moving that project ahead. She wanted to know if Alameda had been involved in that discussion, she believed it would be wise to do so.

Staff Member Wheeler said she had not heard that story but they could reach out to Oakland City Staff.

Staff Member Payne agreed they could and should look into that.

Jim Strehlow also discussed the potential closure of the I-980 Freeway in Oakland. He could not believe that was a good idea and was going backward.

Chair Soules discussed the morning's tragedy at the Santa Clara VTA rail yard in San Jose. She sent her thoughts to the victim's families and everyone in the industry.

## **8. Adjournment**

Chair Soules adjourned the meeting at 9:40 p.m.