

# **Transportation Commission Minutes (DRAFT)**

**Wednesday March 28 2012**

*Commissioner Kathy Moehring* called the Transportation Commission to order at 7:02 p.m.

## **1. Roll Call**

Roll was called and the following was recorded:

### Members Present:

Kathy Moehring  
Thomas G. Bertken  
Christopher Miley

### Members Absent:

Jesus Vargas  
Michele Bellows  
Rajiv Sharma

### Staff Present:

Obaid Khan, Supervising Civil Engineer  
Adrienne Heim, Administrative Assistant

## **2. Minutes**

February 22, 2012 minutes (pending)

## **3. Oral Communications – Non-Agendized Items / Public Comments**

None.

## **4. New Business**

*Commissioner Moehring* commented on a letter sent by Walt Grady regarding the traffic calming and Safe Routes to School project at Gibbons Drive at Northwood Drive and Southwood Drive. The Commission directed staff to include the letter in the May meeting, and at that time, there will be a public hearing.

### **4A. I-880 and 23rd-29th Avenue Project Update**

*Staff Khan* presented an update on the I-880 and 23rd-29th Avenue Project. The project is completing its design phase and will begin construction next year.

*Garrett Gritz*, consultant from RBF and Alameda County Transportation Commission's Project Manager *Dale Dennis* reported on the project overview which included: 1) the project purpose and need; 2) overview and history; 3) stage construction plans; and 4) project schedule.

*Commissioner Moehring* asked for any comments to the I-880 and 23rd-29th Avenue Project.

*Commissioner Bertken* asked about the westbound traffic going to Alameda on the bridge where it has a conflict with the left turn going onto the freeway. He wanted to know how that conflict would be resolved.

*Garrett Gritz* replied that there is a two-phased traffic signal there. Vehicles approaching in the westbound direction would stop while left-turn vehicle movements occurred, and when the left turn movements would stop then westbound vehicles could pass through the intersection.

*Commissioner Bertken* asked if the left-turn movement is a ramp meter.

*Garrett Gritz* replied it is a regular signal, where cars would go through that particular intersection and the metering signal would be further down the ramp.

*Commissioner Moehring* called for public comment or questions.

*Jim Strehlow*, Alameda resident and local employee, explained that 5 years ago he attended an Alameda County Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC) meeting about the proposed project and he asked a lot of questions that were critical to the whole project. He was glad some of his objections were somewhat resolved. However, he feared that the project was initiated by the Jingtowntown neighborhood in Oakland and the emphasis was on Jingtowntown's concerns and Alameda was just a consequence. He wished there were additional public meetings 2-3 years ago, where concerns would have been brought up. Thus, the public's input may have affected the project's design. He was mostly concerned with the Ford Street connection where there is going to be a new signal and the 29th Avenue traffic coming off the freeway and now heading towards Alameda will now create a bottleneck. At the meeting, the original project designers said that traffic would increase 10-20 percent into Alameda. Currently, when drivers come across 23rd Avenue, there are two lanes plus an unobstructed slip onto the freeway. Now, the proposal states there will be two lanes that have a stop light and drivers have to share the lane. He wanted to know why the structure being rebuilt for 23rd Avenue could not include 4 or 5 lanes to accommodate future growth. Oakland residents coming upon 12th Avenue have one lane coming into Alameda, whereas before they had 2 unobstructed lanes. He was glad to see that bicyclists' input was included, especially since bicyclists like to cycle out to the Embarcadero going through 29th Avenue. Finally, he requested to see the slide presentation put on the City's website so the public has access to it. He also thanked Matt Naclerio from Alameda Public Works for answering his questions.

*Garrett Gritz* explained that this was his third or fourth time presenting in front of the Transportation Commission and he presented before City Council. During the environmental process, they circulated the environmental document and it was available at the library. Dale and his team passed out flyers and invited the business community to comment about the project at

the public meeting. There were positive comments, and one interesting comment came from a business owner who would tell customers to use High Street instead of 23rd or 29th Avenues to access his business. This project will benefit the local community by providing a direct route. He pointed out that this project is for the trade corridor improvements for the northbound ramps and that is how staff was able to secure funds. He believed the configuration suggestions posed by the speaker were analyzed to solve many of the problems that came up, but were ultimately not used.

*Marilyn Bowe*, Alameda resident, stated that she knows Tom Straus and she wanted clarification on whether most of the traffic would feed in and out of the street in front of Straus Carpet Company.

*Commissioner Moehring* said this is correct.

*Marilyn Bowe* questioned whether the intersection of Ford Street and 29th Avenue would become a bottleneck.

*Commissioner Moehring* replied that the meeting's purpose was to get answers to those questions.

*Marilyn Bowe* stated that she lives on Puddingstone Road, which is a Planned Unit Development. The street in front of her house has now become a feeder street and creates a lot of traffic.

*Garrett Gritz* noted that the intersection of Ford Street and 29th Avenue would become a hub, where a traffic signal will be installed and the Park Street triangle will be restriped.

*Staff Khan* mentioned that the project has been presented to the Planning Board, City Council, and Transportation Commission and advertised on the Alameda CTC's website. So, this is not the first time that the project has been in front of the public. In terms of the impacts, the City recognized those impacts and fought hard to have those concerns addressed. There were concerns about traffic backing up onto Park Street, especially during the am peak hours. However, staff has analyzed that the traffic queues on Park Street will dissipate quickly. He stated that the City requested many improvements, including public transit improvements on Park Street because it will be congested by the years 2030-2035. The City asked for queue jump lanes on Park Street and signal coordination from Park Street and Encinal Avenue to the 23rd Avenue on-ramp. The proposal includes queue jump lanes for transit buses at the 23rd Avenue on-ramp. Staff is now working with AC Transit and Caltrans to review and provide comments on this proposal. The Public Works Department received a Caltrans grant for Park Street signal coordination with the support of the Alameda CTC.

*Garrett Gritz* replied that the project accommodated a future item as part of the area on the 23rd Avenue overcrossing. One of the lanes will be striped out. When the buses are equipped with advance detection then the buses will be able to bypass the queue.

*Carol Gottstein*, Alameda resident, asked if the street that features Bay Auto Center will become

a dead-end street.

*Garrett Gritz* replied that the street would not be a dead-end street, but it will become part of the local circulation. Currently, drivers can exit the freeway and they are right in front of the building. Under the proposed condition, drivers would be required to exit the freeway, turn left, and go into the Jingletown neighborhood to access the street.

*Carol Gottstein* mentioned that she is concerned with trying to coordinate the traffic signals on either side of a working bridge.

*Staff Khan* replied that the bridges have a moratorium not to open during peak hours. The signal for the bridge preemption is being managed by Alameda County, which also manages the bridges. The County dedicates a fiber optic cable that is already on the bridge to connect to Oakland's signals. From Alameda's side, the City has interconnect cables connected along Park Street.

*Commissioner Moehring* asked when does the moratorium start.

*Staff Khan* explained that the moratorium is already in place.

*Commissioner Miley* stated that he commutes through there almost everyday and it is a pain to get over to Fruitvale Avenue. He believes that the Fruitvale Bridge can handle more traffic, so was there any discussion to try to direct more traffic onto Fruitvale Avenue and the bridge.

*Garrett Gritz* replied yes, the fact that the Fruitvale Bridge has more capacity was clear early on and they wanted to figure out a way to use it. However, the objective is to improve the 23rd and 29th Avenue bridges and produce northbound ramp improvement. Once there are funding opportunities to make improvements in the southbound direction then they can better utilize the Fruitvale Bridge.

*Commissioner Miley* echoed Jim Strehlow's concern with potential bottlenecks at Ford Street and 29th Avenue. He asked for the traffic counts on the new bridge and whether traffic would increase by creating that direct route.

*Garrett Gritz* explained that staff identified the existing level of service at the intersection under the proposed condition looking at the year 2030. Under the congestion management agency's model, when you start to overlay the 2035 volumes, a lot of the intersections are significantly impacted. He went on to say that the improvements identified include a signal at the eastbound and westbound approaches to take turns utilizing the Ford Street and 29th Avenue intersection. Currently, there is a delay for residents trying to access onto northbound I-880 and in the future it will take a little longer, but the delay is due to improvements.

*Commissioner Miley* said in the future, they should look at the corridor as an entire system. He would like them to include the High Street and Fruitvale Bridges to find opportunities to alleviate some of the congestion issues that are found in the area.

*Commissioner Moehring* understood the complexity of the project and found it funny that all the improvements cause more delays when the improvements should decrease the delays.

*Garrett Gritz* replied there is only one particular movement that has an increase in delay, but those drivers coming back to Alameda during the evening peak hours will have a decrease in delay. Furthermore, the drivers who access the I-880 corridors from High Street currently have a delay due to vehicle accidents and weaving issues. Once the project goes through, there will be a decrease in delay for drivers traveling from the south to the north.

*Commissioner Moehring* questioned the annual number of accidents that occurred. Also, she wanted to know how dangerous all of the crossings were to bicyclists, pedestrians and vehicles.

*Garrett Gritz* replied that he did not have the specific number, but between 29th and 23rd Avenues where the merge was the problem, traffic accidents were 5-10 times more frequent than the statewide average.

*Commissioner Moehring* stated that she would like Alameda CTC to post an approximate timeline for each phase and updates in addition to the presentation.

*Garrett Gritz* explained that Caltrans has a public informational officer who is assigned to the project. He mentioned that staff would begin advertising through communications channels and alternative outreach approximately 6 months prior to construction. Once the project is awarded, the contractor will submit the construction schedule and staff will revise accordingly.

*Commissioner Moehring* mentioned that Alex Nguyen could disseminate the appropriate information to the public. She urged those in attendance to sign up using their email addresses to receive City updates and meeting information.

*Staff Khan* stated that staff will be directly involved in distributing flyers to the Park Street businesses and it would be good to have a web link included on the City's website from the Alameda CTC to give residents information on the project's schedule and other information.

*Jim Strehlow* presented the official project website link at <http://i880corridor.com/>.

#### ***4B. Webster Street Intelligent Transportation System/Smart Corridors Project Update***

*Staff Khan* presented the staff report.

*Commissioner Moehring* asked for any comments to the Intelligent Transportation Systems/Smart Corridors Project.

*Commissioner Bertken* questioned whether the recording would record on a 5-minute loop.

*Staff Khan* replied that the Alameda Police Department had the sole discretion to record on a 5-minute loop and at this time, they decided not to do it.

*Commissioner Moehring* received a letter from former Transportation Commission Chair John Knox White. As an Alameda resident, he wanted more information about the financial impacts from the project. She shared the letter with Staff Khan and he will provide information about the financial components and other questions for next month's meeting.

*Commissioner Moehring* called for public comment and questions.

*Carol Gottstein* stated that Webster Street is starting to look like Times Square west because the City intends to install a lot of expensive gizmos for such a small area. She wondered what would happen with the traffic-adapting devices when a bus and a fire truck crossed through the intersection at the same time. She would like to see what the studies are for that and she asked Staff Khan to define the acronyms used during the presentation.

*Staff Khan* replied that the devices are expensive in terms of what she is looking at, but realistically it will increase the street capacity by 18-20 percent during the peak hours. He stated that it would be much more expensive for the City to add another lane to the street to provide additional capacity. Moreover, in terms of the passing issues for the fire truck and the transit vehicles, the fire trucks supersede all other vehicle types.

*Carol Gottstein* mentioned that the buses are still being operated by human beings so if the bus driver is approaching the intersection, expects the fire truck to speed through and nothing occurs then what should he do. Also, the City has not brought up that they are not going to widen the tunnels. Finally, she asked if the funding sources were set up for this project.

*Staff Khan* stated the project would cost \$1.6 million and is composed of four to five different local, regional, and federally funded sources.

*Carol Gottstein* asked Staff Khan to publish a breakdown of the funding sources for the project on the City's website.

*Staff Khan* replied he would present a breakdown of the funding sources at next month's meeting.

*Commissioner Miley* asked Staff Khan about the implementation schedule.

*Staff Khan* replied the project's design is 100 percent complete. Since the Alameda CTC is holding the various funding sources, they are managing the project. However, Alameda staff is fully involved and they are working on the permits and equipment. Alameda Municipal Power provided the City with a fiber cable, which will be used to communication with the Police Department. In terms of the project's schedule, construction should start between May and June of this year. The project should be complete early next year, around January or February.

*Commissioner Miley* asked for more information about the on-going costs for all the improvements.

*Staff Khan* replied that the estimated electronic devices (similar to LED lighting) have a span of

10-15 years and the on-going cost to manage the devices is estimated to be \$5,000 to \$6,000 per year. Regarding on-going maintenance, funds should be available under Alameda CTC's Measure B expenditure plan, Vehicle Registration Fee, and the Smart Corridor program.

*Commissioner Miley* questioned whether the Smart Corridor funds would be competitive or allocated based on population.

*Staff Khan* stated that the Alameda CTC manages the Smart Corridor program and there are a handful of projects in the county. Furthermore, the City is part of the Smart Corridor Consortium.

*Commissioner Miley* asked if the countywide agency would provide all the maintenance funds for the few smart corridors in the county.

*Staff Khan* confirmed that the City will work with the Alameda CTC to obtain funding for the maintenance funds.

*Commissioner Moehring* said she has maintained an interest in this project and she believes the corner of Pacific Avenue will definitely benefit from the project. She noted that the cameras are not recording personal information, but will be used for safety and emergency response situations to efficiently circulate vehicles and allow emergency vehicles to pass. Since there are 55,000 daily vehicles that go through the Webster Tube, anything the City can do to make that commute safer is great.

#### **4C. *Quarterly Report on Activities Related to Transportation Policies and Plans***

*Staff Khan* presented the quarterly report on the following activities related to transportation policies and plans:

- The Bicycle Facility Design Guidelines will be presented to the Planning Board sometime after May.
- The City received \$464,000 in funding for the Shoreline Drive and Westline Drive bike lanes project. The project will take one of the lanes in each direction of Shoreline Drive and convert the lanes to parking and bike lanes. Staff has met with Bike Alameda and they will help take this concept to the community. The first public meeting about the proposed project will occur on May 2, and a more detailed description of the project will be presented at next month's meeting.
- There are 20 bike lockers that were installed at the Fruitvale BART station some time ago, and they have gone over their useful life and are now a fire hazard. The City is partnering with BART and Oakland to remove the lockers and replace them with new electronic lockers.
- Staff has ordered an additional 20 racks as part of the Park Street Streetscape Project, and staff is looking at more rack locations around Park Street. The total number of new bike

racks will be at least 32. Staff also is looking at side streets for additional bike rack placement.

- Staff partnered with Bike Alameda to submit a Bicycle Friendly Community application.
- Staff continues to work on the Alameda Point Transit and Access Plan funded by the Federal Transportation Administration. Staff hopes to bring a detailed version of the plan to the Commission in May or June.
- The TSM/TDM plan will go before the Planning Board during the April 9 meeting.
- The Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) New Freedom Grant helps people with disabilities, especially those who are blind to navigate through the intersections. Nine intersections will have APS installed as part of the project.
- The Safe Routes to School project along Gibbons Drive at Northwood Drive and Southwood Drive received an \$184,600 grant. Staff held a meeting last month and received public feedback. Staff will bring the issue to the Transportation Commission in May.
- Staff is submitting another Safe Routes to School grant application for Wood Middle School. The application will be submitted to Caltrans by March 30th.

*Commissioner Bertken* asked if there is more to the Bicycle Friendly Community application besides a public relations achievement.

*Staff Khan* explained that the recognition is good for economic development since the City is friendly towards bicyclists. The City also receives national recognition.

*Commissioner Moehring* asked if staff received approval from the individual merchants to replace the bike racks in front of their businesses.

*Staff Khan* stated that staff met with the executive director of the Park Street Business Association and he provided input on bicycle rack locations. Once the streetscape project is complete, staff will go to each business to make sure they support the bicycle rack placement before they install the additional racks.

*Commissioner Moehring* asked about the placement of the accessible pedestrian signals.

*Staff Khan* replied the signals are distributed throughout the City and staff will provide a rendition of the pedestrian signal locations under the Staff Communications section for next month's meeting agenda. The City's goal is to provide signals when they receive community requests, within proximity to bus stops and next to senior centers.

*Commissioner Moehring* called for public comment and questions.

*Mike Kelly* resides on the corner of Fremont Drive and Fernside Boulevard. He has traversed the



Gibbons Drive intersection on foot and by bicycle for many years and he does not believe the intersection needs to be modified. He walks his grandchildren to and from Edison Elementary School, and he believes there is more congestion from children and parents at the Cambridge Drive and Northwood Drive intersection than at Gibbons Drive. Thus, he does not believe Gibbons Drive to be a Safe Routes to School issue. He explained a new crosswalk has been added at Harvard Drive and Fernside Boulevard and that will impact the route that he uses. He requested that the grant funds be returned.

*Warren Vegas* resides on the corner of Fernside Boulevard across from Mike Kelly and reported that a lot of people do not have an issue with the intersection. When he spoke with the Alameda Police Department, they found no pedestrian or vehicle accidents there. As a citizen residing in the vicinity and as a parent with two children attending Edison Elementary, he does not believe parents and children cross at that intersection. The solution misses some key areas where people actually cut across and he would like to see the grant money applied to areas such as Fernside Boulevard and Central Avenue.

*Jim Strehlow* stated that there was no mention of the first meeting and how there was a 95 percent opposition to the project in the report. Nor was there any mention to the public that a grant had been awarded for the project. He felt it was unfair of staff to take quantities of the attendees' opinion at the first meeting when it was aimed as a fact-finding meeting. He believes a particular community member acquired a number of signatures to modify the intersection and the City received a grant for a project that the majority of residents surrounding Gibbons Drive do not want.

*Gordon McConnell*, Alameda resident, echoed Jim Strehlow's sentiments. He went to the second meeting where a roundabout was proposed as the traffic-calming solution. The roundabout would lose 19 parking spaces; the cost was estimated at \$220,000 with \$600 per month maintenance. The solution did not go over well with the public and there was some discussion on who would bear those costs. A police officer was present at the meeting and explained that there was not enough traffic to implement traffic calming measures. There were also issues regarding cars making donuts and conducting sideshows at the intersection, but the donuts and sideshows were infrequent. Apparently, a resident who lived in the neighborhood and caused the incidents either moved away or discontinued the activity. Overall, the majority of the attendees did not want any part of the project and they assumed the project was killed. However, when the third public meeting was held in February attendees found that the project process would continue because the City was able to secure funds under the guise of a Safe Routes to Schools issue. Ultimately, he and those who attended the meeting felt that the money should be sent back.

*Marilyn Bowe* felt that the project is tearing the neighborhood apart. She believes there are a couple of proponents that want to stop regular traffic from entering Gibbons Drive. In 2010, she attended the City's preliminary discussion about a traffic-calming proposal and comments were published. By the third meeting, the street's design proposal was over engineered and the overall intention of the grant is not what this intersection is about. She would rather see the sidewalks fixed along Gibbons Drive so the children could walk safely or return the funds. Lastly, she exclaimed that only a select number of residents have been allowed in closed-door meetings, knew about the grant and have been part of the design process.

*Carol Gottstein* stated this traffic-calming measure has infuriated everyone she knows and she never heard of any problems with this intersection. She has not heard of Edison Elementary School needing traffic calming and there are other projects in Alameda that need funding.

*Paula Kaneshiro* explained the grant included misleading information such as there are eight accidents within less of a 0.25 of a mile of the intersection. There is a two-mile radius around Edison Court and Lincoln Avenue, but there has not been one accident. Regarding the donuts and sideshow activity that was mentioned earlier, the activity occurred during the late evening. The student fatality mentioned in the report was located on Everett Street and Santa Clara Avenue, which is nowhere near the project's intersection. She also mentioned that the project is not on the approved school route. The approved school route is near the Lincoln Avenue and Gibbons Drive intersection.

*Warren Vegas* wanted clarification on the Park Street Bicycle project. He wanted to know how staff came up with the number of bicycle racks to install and he wanted to know if a lot of parking meters that were once used as bicycle parking would be taken out.

*Staff Khan* replied that staff is not just installing 32 bicycle racks, but they are trying to get more racks. The number and the location depend on the needs and demands of bicyclists. Thus, staff is trying to provide bicycle parking near main attractors. Regarding the parking meters issue, staff had a discussion with Bike Alameda to see if there were clear counts or numbers available to conduct a survey to collect the necessary information to see how many bicyclists use the meters. Staff will continue to work with Bike Alameda and the Park Street Business Association to see what the needs and demands are.

*Commissioner Miley* wanted to know if Gibbons Drive issue will come before the Commission in May and if public will have ample time to discuss the issue.

*Staff Khan* referred to the Sunshine Ordinance since the item was not on the agenda nor was there a quorum present to fully discuss the item. The issue will be discussed during the May meeting.

*Mike Kelly* asked if the Commission would accept letters from the public.

*Commissioner Moehring* stated that letters are accepted and at the May meeting, the Commission will make a recommendation on the issue.

*Staff Khan* stated that under Alameda's Municipal Code, the Public Works Director can make a decision on certain items and their decision can be appealed to the Transportation Commission. The Transportation Commission's decision can be taken to the City Council, which is the last stop. In this instance, the Public Works Director has the option to refer an item to the Transportation Commission. If the public does not agree with the Transportation Commission's decision then the item can be appealed and sent to the City Council.

*Marilyn Bowe* felt that it was unsettlingly to have the project addressed without the

neighborhood's input and she would not want to wait until May.

*Staff Khan* assured Ms. Bowe that staff would not proceed with the project until it goes before the Transportation Commission in May.

*Commissioner Bertken* asked Staff Khan to send a copy of the report and the grant to the Commissioners.

## **5. Staff Communications**

### **• *Alameda Paratransit Program Modification Update***

Regarding the MRTIP Program, the City will begin charging \$2.50. At the last meeting, the Commission asked about charging \$3.00, but given that the Premium Taxi service uses \$2.50 coupons, it would be easier to implement the \$2.50 charge. Staff received feedback from the Mastick Senior Center and they preferred the \$2.50 charge. Staff will take this decision for approval to the next City Council meeting scheduled in May.

### **• *Estuary Crossing Shuttle Update***

*Staff Khan* presented a report on the Estuary Crossing Shuttle Update. Overall, ridership has spiked, but bicycle usage has remained steady and staff is working with Bike Alameda to increase the numbers.

### **• *Safe Routes to School Submittal Update for Grand Street at Wood Middle School***

Staff will submit the grant application on Thursday, March 29th. There is a minor tweak of the design, meaning the southbound bulb will either be eliminated or reduced. AC Transit found that without implementing the design modification, their southbound operation would be compromised. Therefore, a parking space would have to be removed and if there is public opposition to the reduction of parking spaces, the bulb-out will be eliminated.

### **• *AC Transit Line OX Local Restrictions***

Staff received an email in February from AC Transit regarding a new policy to limit local transit riders on the OX Transbay line because the local commuters were reducing space for Transbay Commuters. Students make up the local ridership during the peak morning hours between Park Street and Encinal Avenue. In September, AC Transit will incorporate changes to the school route (Line 631) to better serve students.

### **• *Future Meeting Agenda Items:***

In April, staff will bring up an appeal of an all-way stop at Fourth Street and Santa Clara Avenue, and the proposed San Antonio Avenue closure at Franklin School. The Shoreline Drive and Westline Drive Bike Lane design details also will come before the Commission. The Alameda County Transportation Expenditure Plan will come before the Commission next month.

*Commissioner Miley* requested to have the Alameda CTC staff come to the April meeting to respond to questions.

*Staff Khan* will provide information on Webster Street SMART Corridor Project in the Staff Communication section.

In May, there will be a continuation of the discussion of the Safe Routes to School project on Gibbons Drive.

*Commissioner Bertken* asked for the fare price difference between AC Transit Transbay and student riders.

*Linda Morris*, Transportation Planner for AC Transit, found that AC Transit drivers were having issues with school children overwhelming the bus capacity. Transbay riders were unable to board. Therefore, AC Transit drivers charged students the Transbay youth fare rather than the local fare. Ultimately, the local fare is much cheaper than the Transbay Fare.

## **6. Announcements**

None.

## **7. Adjournment**

10:00 PM