

## **Transportation Commission Minutes: Wednesday, March 26, 2014**

*Commissioner Jesus Vargas* called the Transportation Commission to order at 7:00 p.m.

### **1. Roll Call**

Roll was called and the following was recorded:

Members Present:

Jesus Vargas (Chair)

Thomas G. Bertken

Christopher Miley (Vice Chair)

Eric Schatmeier

Members Absent:

Michele Bellows

Gregory Morgado

Staff Present:

Liam Garland, Deputy Public Works Director

Virendra Patel, Public Works Transportation Engineer

Gail Payne, Transportation Coordinator

Sergeant Ron Simmons, Police Department

### **2. Agenda Changes**

*None.*

### **3. Announcements / Public Comments**

*Commissioner Vargas* said he spoke with *Will Kempton*, Executive Director of Transportation California, and he may not go forward with this year's ballot measure to raise funds for transportation. The consequence of it will now put pressure on cities, counties and transportation agencies. He explained that this issue will be addressed through the Alameda County Transportation Commission seeking more funding through Measure B reauthorization. Nevertheless, there are projects that are funded from existing Measure B and prior Measure B monies.

#### **4. Consent Calendar**

A quorum was not met to approve the minutes. So, the minutes will be carried over to the next Transportation Commission meeting.

**4A. Meeting Minutes – Wednesday, December 11, 2013**

**4B. Meeting Minutes – Wednesday, January 22, 2014**

#### **5. New Business**

**5A. Update on I-880/23rd Avenue/29th Avenue Interchange Project (Alameda County Transportation Commission)**

*Staff Patel* gave an update on the project and introduced the speakers.

*Stefan Garcia*, Alameda County Transportation Commission, presented the report.

*Garrett Gritz*, Design Manager and Consultant for Environmental Planning and Final Engineering Phase, presented the existing conditions and the intended changes.

*Val Ignacio*, Caltrans Project Manager, presented *Scott McCrank*, Caltrans Senior Project Corridor Manager and *RocQuel Johnson*, Caltrans Public Information Officer, to explain more about the project.

*Commissioner Vargas* asked if the information on the website included the rerouting of traffic.

*RocQuel Johnson* replied yes.

*Scott McCrank* presented the stages of the project and projected reroutes.

*Commissioner Miley* asked if any of the stages would overlap.

*Stefan Garcia* said this project is designed linearly, but because of the area's uniqueness of traffic and demand, the stages would be followed very clearly. There are phases within each stage, but there should not be much overlap.

*Commissioner Bertken* said when staff spoke of the stages, he assumed they were talking about traffic stages and there could be construction stages that overlap.

*Stefan Garcia* stated that there are only minor portions that will have overlapping.

*Commissioner Vargas* opened the floor to public comments.

*Jim Strehlow*, Alameda resident, explained that the city of Alameda would suffer for five years, Alameda businesses would suffer for the next 20 years and the project was based on the city of

Oakland's needs. Additionally, he stated that the bridges for San Leandro would become wider and Ford Street at 29<sup>th</sup> Street would become a major choke point. Moreover, he felt that there was not a mitigation plan for Alameda. Fruitvale Avenue and High Street should contain extra lanes. Overall, he felt Alameda has been totally neglected in this plan.

*Commissioner Miley* said his comments echoed *Jim Strehlow's* and felt that the Fruitvale and High Street traffic counts are not as high as Park Street. Moreover, he felt Fruitvale Avenue has enough traffic capacity that is not being used. He also believed the light at Elm Avenue is a hindrance and he would like to see something done about the light cycle. He also recommended that there should be a second northbound to I-880 lane at High Street and if there will be a lot of detours he would like staff to look at how to improve traffic flow on Fruitvale Avenue and High Street bridges. He was concerned about the amount of outreach conducted for the project and the fact that mailers were only sent to residents around the corridor rather than throughout the island. However, he commended staff that a committee was put together and the initial outreach was made. Moreover, he wanted to know if signage would be erected to alert commuters about the traffic conditions.

*Scott McCrunk* replied that the overhead signage on the freeway would display the changes, but for local traffic changes, they would have changeable message signage such as "This Bridge closed use 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue".

*Commissioner Miley* replied that traffic was light on the Fruitvale Avenue bridge. At Elm Street, they should restripe to allow two lanes going northbound to improve capacity.

*Scott McCrunk* replied that they would have to work with both cities to see if changes could be made.

*Commissioner Bertken* replied that having a seven-day period to see what happens is a very reactive approach and he wanted to know what staff was doing to locate the traffic patterns now to know what will occur.

*Garrett Gritz* said analysis was conducted for the intersections of Oakland and Alameda. He explained that staff incorporated the detours and used the numbers from the traffic analysis and everything worked and a contingency plan was in place if changes occur such as from the economic improvement.

*Commissioner Vargas* wondered if the new CTMP group met regularly.

*Scott McCrunk* said they met during the design phase and they are at a lull right now because the contract was going through the bidding process and more meetings will occur as the schedule is defined. All project information including changes would be presented to *Staff Patel*.

*Commissioner Vargas* explained that when accessing I-880 southbound from Park Street, there is deteriorating pavement and he wondered who would rehabilitate that now.

*Stefan Garcia* replied there was not much they could do until they get the contractor on board.

The responsibility would be directed to the city's maintenance department depending on the jurisdiction.

*Commissioner Vargas* asked if the TMP document could be made available to the Commission.

*Stefan Garcia* replied that the document has been circulating since 2012 and the addendum has been circulating since last year.

*Commissioner Vargas* requested that staff send the documents to the Commission.

*Commissioner Vargas* asked if more money were made available for the project would there be more enhancements that could benefit Alameda.

*Stefan Garcia* replied that the project is coming from a state bond specifically from the infrastructure corridors fund. So, they are limited in construction from that funding source and the project was under tight scrutiny from the state-bonding program.

*Garrett Gritz* explained that they looked at a number of alternatives and they were told by the Alameda business community that they tell their customers to use High Street. Thus, this project will allow customers to exit off of 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue and arrive at the Park Street triangle. He communicated this project to the business community and they felt that it was a positive change. Additionally, he explained that some of the components that were not implemented were for AC Transit bus queue jumps within the corridor. He said that it was talked about in the early planning stages but these transit components were not part of the funding source.

*Commissioner Schatmeier* asked staff if there was a post project evaluation that would take place to see if they had accomplished what they set out to do because the High Street project made the queues longer and the signal timing is worse.

*Stefan Garcia* explained that the concern was concentrated on the movements on the local streets and street light timing. There will be scrutiny during and after the construction by the two cities.

*Commissioner Miley* seconded *Commissioner Schatmeier's* comments and asked about the metering lights, which he felt was an Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTC) function. He also asked if anyone reviewed the function of the metering lights near I-880 and the fact that they may not be necessary at 98<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Davis or Marina, particularly because the lanes are narrow and the delays are difficult.

*Stefan Garcia* said that the 98<sup>th</sup> Avenue corridor was under construction and generally the ramp metering lights and intersections nearby are controlled by Caltrans. However, the metering lights have to be coordinated with the city lights and that is not always a perfect fit. They would have to coordinate with local jurisdictions to persuade them that a change would be needed.

*Scott McCrank* replied that he communicates with the ramp metering groups often and he could go back and talk with them to see if adjustments could be made.

*Commissioner Miley* stated that the project's website address is hard to remember and suggested the URL be shortened.

*RocQuel Johnson* explained that the website [www.dot.ca.gov](http://www.dot.ca.gov) was a state website and brought the public to all the projects listed within District 4. It was not feasible to shorten the website address. She also suggested that people can enter "I-880 overcrossing" into Google and the project would pop up.

*Commissioner Bertken* replied that Caltrans' project reports should not only identify what is under construction, but report the public benefits so the project could be monitored after completion.

*Stefan Garcia* said that there are detailed summaries and reviews by the operations staff to meet the end goal.

*Staff Patel* stated Caltrans would present their report to the City Council, but the date has not been set.

#### ***5B. Park Street Pedestrian Safety Project***

*Staff Patel* explained that they conducted a series of community meetings with the business district and residents around the location between Lincoln Avenue and Buena Vista Avenue. He also introduced the project consultants *Joy Bhattacharya* from Stantec Consultants and *David Mahama* from DKS Associates to present.

*Joy Bhattacharya*, Stantec Consultants, presented.

*Commissioner Schatmeier* asked how the bulb-outs proposed compare to the existing bulb-outs on Park Street near Santa Clara Avenue.

*Joy Bhattacharya* replied that the protrusion of the bulb-out remains the same.

*Commissioner Miley* asked staff if they needed approval from the Commission to move the project forward.

*Staff Patel* replied that they are in the conceptual design stage, but they would like the Commission to approve the concept so they can move to the construction phase.

*Commissioner Vargas* opened the floor to public comments.

*Robb Ratto*, Park Street Business Association Executive Director, thanked staff and the consultants for conducting a raucous public meeting at the library on October 2013. He explained that he was in support of the project and appreciated that parking spots were spared, which is important to the small businesses on Lincoln Avenue and Park Street. He said his board looked at the project design and supported the project. Additionally, he looked forward to the corner where the Chevron Station is located becoming a real corner.

*David Burton* of the Planning Board spoke before the Commission as a local resident and architect. He thanked staff for the public process, but was not completely happy with the design. The Buena Vista Avenue intersection is an improvement and created pedestrian access. The biggest concern is at the Lincoln Avenue and Tilden Way intersection. Although it is a modest improvement, the design does not go far enough to create a pedestrian friendly environment. The Planning Board rezoned the area north of Lincoln Avenue with the intent to revitalize the area and make it a pedestrian friendly environment. The intersection was crucial to making a successful bridge with the southern stretch of Park Street and the northern stretch. The alternatives studied were much more favorable because they narrowed the intersections and slowed traffic. Moreover, he referred to the General Plan, which states that biking and transit have priority over vehicles and this design ignores the directive. He encouraged the Commission to approve a plan that is consistent with the General Plan and that this intersection needs further development.

*Commissioner Vargas* asked *David Burton* which area he wanted to narrow.

*David Burton* replied all four sides of the intersection specifically travelling along the Park Street direction because it is not a comfortable environment for pedestrians.

*Lucy Gigli*, President of BikeWalk Alameda, thanked staff for working diligently on the project and organizing the outreach meetings. The proposal indicated that it would be the final part of the Park Street Streetscape Plan, which confused her because she thought they would continue to improve the streetscape north of Lincoln Boulevard. The changes at Buena Vista Avenue and Pacific Avenue are good because the intersection reduced the crossing distances. She is disappointed with the north end of Lincoln Avenue because of the lack of improvements. She also explained that the Walgreens and the Marketplace area will have a new parking lot and that parking lot should be shared by all modes of travel. The Mayor recently stated that the City needs to make bold and daring decisions, which is not shown here with the Lincoln Avenue/Park Street proposal.

*Audrey Lord-Hausman*, pedestrian advocate and member of the Commission on Disability Issues, said overall there are a lot of good concepts in the project. She also felt the Walgreens and Marketplace parking lot works well for those who need to make multiple trips to different stores in the area. She has been working with *Staff Patel* on placing the light signal push buttons in an accessible place for elderly and disabled pedestrians on Webster Street, which also is needed here on Park Street. Additionally, she suggested having upright flashing lights placed at the pedestrian crossings for motorists to see pedestrians and not the recommended in-pavement lights as recommended at Park Street/Pacific Avenue.

*Commissioner Miley* asked staff about the funding source and time constraints for the funds.

*Staff Patel* replied that the funding was part of the transportation, community, safety and preservation funds. He also explained that staff started the process in 2012 and when staff received the funding for the preliminary engineering they have two years to complete the project.

*Commissioner Miley* asked staff if the funds have to be allocated or spent at a certain date.

*Staff Patel* replied within 2-3 years.

*Commissioner Schatmeier* referred to the Lincoln Avenue and Tilden Way interchange and the five alternatives that were considered. He wondered if any of the alternatives addressed the north side of the intersection in terms of bulb-outs and modifications.

*Staff Patel* replied that staff reviewed the north side of the intersection and construction of the Walgreens store was underway. He said the store planned to improve the light standards and the poles, which are getting hit by trucks making right-hand turns. He said the area would be safer with the changes, but there are challenges with the area because it was not laid out on a true 90-degree angle.

*Commissioner Schatmeier* said staff made several safety improvements, but nothing similar to the north side and based on staff's response that was due to the Walgreens project. He wanted to know if they could look at the north side. He felt a review was important because the area encouraged vehicles to make fast turns from Park Street onto Lincoln Avenue.

*Staff Patel* said staff would review the area.

*Commissioner Bertken* said he looked at the diagram (westbound) and he is familiar with the intersection going up Tilden Way crossing Park Street. He explained that motorists have to merge in and they effectively lose a lane when crossing over, but the diagram showed the following three lanes: a straight lane, a turn lane and an unknown lane near the curb.

*Joy Bhattacharya* replied that the unknown lane is a continuous bike lane. He said staff reviewed the options for bulb-outs on the north side, but the lanes on Lincoln Avenue and Tilden Way, plus the left turn movements prohibit staff from creating a bulb-out at that location. He explained that Park Street on the north and south sides do not have a left turn lane, so that allows staff more space to work.

*Commissioner Miley* referred to Lincoln Avenue and asked staff if the two lanes headed westbound could merge onto Tilden Way and become one lane on Lincoln Avenue. He also wanted to know if the traffic counts would prohibit this type of configuration.

*Joy Bhattacharya* replied that they reviewed that option, but the traffic counts were too high. Also, one of the lanes becomes a left turn lane at the next intersection.

*Commissioner Vargas* asked *Sergeant Simmons* to talk about accident and fatality counts on Park Street.

*Sergeant Simmons*, City of Alameda Police Department and Traffic, stated that within his 22 years with the Alameda Police Department he does not know of any fatality collisions at these intersections along Park Street. However, he said there were pedestrian collisions, but he does not have the data available.

*Commission Bertken* said they talked about the markings on the pavement for pedestrian crossings for example near Lum Elementary School. Yet, he wanted to know how well motorists understood the markings and actually stopped for pedestrians.

*Sergeant Simmons* said drivers do adhere to the limit lines or markings and they have crossing guards to make sure motorists yield to pedestrians at Lum School.

*Commissioner Berkten* would like to see more public information on traffic control devices presented to the public.

*Sergeant Simmons* said that as they become more apparent within the City, then community outreach will increase.

*Joy Bhattacharya* replied staff reviewed data at the intersections of Buena Vista Avenue and Park Street as well as Lincoln Avenue and Park Street over the last five years. They concluded that four injuries involving pedestrian collisions occurred and along Tilden Way, five accidents occurred.

*Commissioner Miley* asked what cross time improvements were made at Lincoln Avenue at Park Street, specifically where the bulb-out is implemented on the west side.

*Joy Bhattacharya* replied that there is a 5.6 feet reduction, so pedestrians walking at 3 feet per second or an elderly person walking at 2.5 feet per second would gain 2-3 seconds. He also stated that the opposite direction would be 12-feet with a 4 second reduction. Moreover, the signal light would include longer countdown times.

*Commissioner Schatmeier* referred to the north side on Tilden Way and found conflicting responses from staff. First staff said they would look at the area once the Walgreens project was complete and then staff said the area was impractical for aggressive enhancements. So, he felt there are two conflicting answers to his question. Also, he did not hear staff address the same issue on the north west side, where the automobile lanes are merging into one. Ultimately, he wanted to know if staff was still looking at the area to make further enhancements to pedestrian safety.

*David Mahama* replied staff conducted a template analysis to place bulb-outs in the area, but they had to figure out how vehicles and pedestrians would navigate the intersections safely. He pointed out that a few delivery trucks use the area during the daytime hours and it is not feasible to put a bulb-out at the two corners.

*Joy Bhattacharya* replied what came out of the community meetings was a concern for lost parking spaces. Staff could revisit the north west corner and draw a bulb-out and then provide the information of how many parking spaces would be lost.

*Commissioner Schatmeier* said he would like to see the analysis of the area.



*Staff Patel* said that staff would come back to the Commission and report their findings.

*Commissioner Bertken* made a motion to approve the intersections presented, with the exception of the Tilden Way and Lincoln Avenue intersection, which would be reviewed later. *Commissioner Miley* seconded the motion. The motion was approved 4-0.

### ***5C. Informational Report on Parking Meter Study***

*Liam Garland*, City of Alameda Deputy Public Works Director, presented the report.

*Commissioner Vargas* opened the floor to public comments.

*Robb Ratto* said *Liam Garland* presented at their board meeting and felt the extra signage to drive people to the parking lot was a great idea. However, he stated that the metered equipment ties into the rates and *Liam Garland* said the rate of \$1.50 was too high for Park Street. Yet, he felt the biggest complaints that come to him were the inconvenience of carrying so much change to park. He believed that smart meters using credit cards are needed, especially within the 1400-1600 block of Park Street and the side streets. He also stated that he would meet with *Sergeant Simmons* to request for more aggressive enforcement because many motorists stay at one meter and feed it throughout the day.

*Commissioner Miley* asked what is the cost differential between the smart meters and kiosks.

*Liam Garland* replied that the smart meters are less costly than the kiosks. However, staff must conduct an analysis on how many meters per kiosk are needed and then establish the fee structure. He pointed out that one company dominates the smart meter market and they are offering a competitive per credit card meter rate.

*Commissioner Miley* asked staff since one company dominates the market would they be locked down into a contract where the rates could possibly change.

*Liam Garland* said staff was concerned about this issue. The company is working with a number of cities such as Berkeley, Los Angeles and Santa Monica. Additionally, the company can provide this competitive cost because they come from the telecommunications sector and they are currently entering the parking sector.

*Commissioner Miley* asked in the short term what will be done.

*Liam Garland* replied on Park Street that there are kiosks and they are exploring to expand them, but they need public input. Also, he stated that it is not just about the costs, but also street aesthetics.

*Commissioner Miley* said bicyclists tend to park their bikes at the meters and he would like to see more bike parking if the City removes the meters. He also pointed out that if people are parking all day then the parking rates are not high enough.

*Commissioner Schatmeier* stated that when he reviewed the study he wondered if staff looked at a demand-based parking strategy and referred to city of San Rafael's success at implementing such a strategy. He stated that if the parking spaces are filled then the City needs to charge more for them.

*Liam Garland* explained that the City of San Francisco has implemented a demand-based parking strategy (SFPark) and many parts of the city have different rates and the rates vary based on the time period. Regular meters require a lot of labor to change the rates, but the kiosks and smart meters could be easily changed.

*Commissioner Bertken* asked staff if they have reviewed whether people would avoid the meters if the parking rates increased.

*Liam Garland* said that he has some data from the cities of Berkeley and San Francisco suggesting that it took a year or two for the price signal to sink in so the City will not see people's behavior change until that time.

*Commissioner Bertken* asked staff if they reviewed whether people would shift their shopping behavior due to the parking increase to South Shore Center where parking is free.

*Liam Garland* said staff was concerned about the potential loss of business from Park Street to the South Shore shopping center because they have free parking. Yet, staff had evidence from the City's sales tax receipts that both locations have done well year after year and each location was vastly different.

*Commissioner Schatmeier* stated that if you raised rates too high then people would go away, but the key is to price it to have available parking and keep the demand there.

*Commissioner Vargas* wanted to know if there is a maintenance component to the smart meters versus the kiosks.

*Liam Garland* said the City would have to contract out to troubleshoot and repair the kiosks, but the City's maintenance team could be trained to switch out the top of the smart meters.

*Commissioner Vargas* asked about the implementation.

*Liam Garland* explained that staff is waiting for data from the parking occupancy survey. Once they receive data, they will begin the implementation process.

#### ***5D. Grand Street at Wood School Intersection Improvement Project – Final Design***

*Staff Payne* presented the report.

*Commissioner Vargas* asked if the plants are native or low water plants.

*Staff Payne* replied both and she asked the Commission to approve the design. Also, the next steps were to put together the specifications and bring the plan before City Council in order for the project to go out to bid for construction. Once staff selects the contractor, they would go back to the City Council and then begin construction. She estimated that the project would be completed by December of this year.

*Commissioner Bertken* questioned the purpose of the bulb-out on the west side as opposed to the two bulb-outs on the east side.

*Staff Payne* replied that the purpose was to constrain vehicle movements because motorists are passing other motorists in the bike lane.

*Commissioner Vargas* called for a motion.

*Commissioner Bertken* made a motion to approve the item. *Commissioner Miley* seconded the motion. The motion was approved 4-0.

## **6. Staff Communications**

### **6A. Potential Future Meeting Agenda Items**

- Special Transportation Commission meeting will be held Wednesday, April 23<sup>rd</sup>
- Draft Transportation Demand Management for Alameda Point
- Transportation Grant Applications
- Regional Transit Access Study / Federal Transit Administration Project Next Steps

*Commissioner Schatmeier* stated that he would like a representative from Water Emergency Transportation Authority (WETA) to present to the Commission and speak about the increase in demand on Harbor Bay and Oakland/Alameda ferries.

*Commissioner Miley* replied that he would like the topic to be included in the May Transportation Commission meeting's agenda.

*Staff Payne* replied that staff would bring back the meeting minutes for approval and the parking study would be brought back in May. She also will contact WETA staff requesting a presentation at the May meeting.

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

*Staff Payne* made an announcement about two events taking place in April. The citywide Earth Day event will take place on Saturday, April 26 at Washington Park and the next day on Sunday, April 27, will be the Alameda Bike Festival from 12:30-4:00 pm at Henry Haight Elementary School.

## **8. Adjournment**

9:29 pm