

Approved Minutes

Transportation Commission Meeting

Wednesday, November 18, 2020

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Location: Due to Governor Executive Order N-29-20, Transportation Commissioners was 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.

1. Roll Call

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

2. Agenda Changes - none

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

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4692141&GUID=8D171B30-7FE5-4F69-9740-AC133A1D805E&Options=&Search=&FullText=1>

3A. Vacancy on Transportation Commission – To apply, please complete online form:
<https://www.alamedaca.gov/GOVERNMENT/Boards-Commissions/Online-Application>

3B. Willie Stargell Complete Street Survey - www.Alamedaca.gov/stargell

3C. Potential Future Meeting Agenda Items

1. Annual Report on Transportation
2. General Plan Update
3. 10-Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP)
4. Active Transportation Plan Update
5. Intersection Access Equity – Traffic Signal Policy
6. Citywide Roundabouts Analysis

3D. Update on the Subcommittee for the General Plan Update and 10-Year CIP

3E. Future Meeting Dates for 2021 – Meetings start at 6:30 p.m.

1. Wednesday, January 27
2. Wednesday, March 24
3. Wednesday, May 26
4. Wednesday, July 28
5. Wednesday, September 22
6. Wednesday, November 17

3F. Alameda Active Transportation Plan: Latest info at www.ActiveAlameda.org

3G. Alameda County Safe Routes to Schools online resources, activities and webinars during coronavirus pandemic: <http://www.alamedacountysr2s.org/covid-19>

3H. Alameda Slow Streets program web page: <http://www.slowstreetsalameda.org/>

3I. Alameda Commercial Streets program web page: www.alamedaca.gov/commercialstreets

3J. COVID 19 Get Around Safe Pledge: www.alamedaca.gov/AlamedaPledge

3K. Vision Zero Program: www.alamedaca.gov/VisionZero

3L. Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) 2020 Trainings:

<https://www.alamedaca.gov/Departments/Fire-Department/Alameda-CERT>

- 3M. Emergency Alerts for Alameda – Subscribe at AC Alert web page:
<https://www.acgov.org/emergencysite/>
- 3N. Regional Emergency Transportation Alerts – Subscribe:
<https://511.org/alerts/emergencies/511Alert>
- 3O. Clipper Card (adults) – order on line or at Walgreens or set up Autoload to add value automatically: <https://www.clippercard.com/ClipperWeb/getTranslink.do>
- 3P. Clipper Card Discounts for youth, seniors and people with disabilities -
<https://www.clippercard.com/ClipperWeb/discounts/index.do>
- 3Q. FasTrak or new toll tag for upcoming I-880 Express Lanes scheduled to open late summer 2020: on line or at Walgreens (except not Park Street location) and then register on line:
<https://www.bayareafastrak.org/en/signup/signup.shtml>
- 3R. City Adaptation Project – web links
www.alamedaca.gov/ShorelineWebsterPoseyTubes
www.alamedaca.gov/ShorelineDoolittleDr
www.alamedaca.gov/ShorelineVeteransCt

4. Announcements / Public Comments

No public comment.

4A. Transportation Commissioner Appreciation of Service Resolution for Commissioner David Johnson (Information Item)

Chair Soules recognized former Commissioner David Johnson’s work on the Transportation Commission by reading the Appreciation Resolution as shown here:

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4692142&GUID=6E20E869-87B5-4AAA-9151-CF52B01073CF>

5. Consent Calendar

5A. Approve Special Meeting Minutes - October 28, 2020 (Action Item) as shown here:
<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4692143&GUID=6C38C6E2-F113-44B3-B7A4-0FBC34881B33&FullText=1>

No changes proposed. Commissioner Nachtigall moved to approve as is. Commission Yuen seconded. The motion passed 5-0.

6. Regular Agenda Items

6A. Recommendation to Approve the Central Avenue Safety Improvement Project Final Concept (Action Item)

Gail Payne, Senior Transportation Coordinator and Stefan Schuster of CDM Smith, gave a presentation. The staff report and attachments can be found at:

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4692144&GUID=26A3562E-9A47-432D-9624-973193AA0BF0&FullText=1>

Stefan Schuster also introduced:

- Jennifer Cheung of CDM Smith
- Michael Bjork of CDM Smith
- Szu-han Chen of CDM Smith
- Jake Gunther of CDM Smith

Commissioner Clarifying Questions for #6A

Commissioner Weitze asked questions about the plan overall.

Chair Soules asked staff to clarify the current stage of the plan and what comes next.

Staff Payne responded that the 35 percent drawings are complete. Staff is looking to obtain overall project approval before spending effort on developing detailed designs.

Mr. Schuster added that more details will be developed for roundabouts with all stakeholders. At this time, the City is looking for approval of the corridor-wide concept with the roundabouts.

Commissioner Weitze stated that there are points of friction that are not totally addressed such as in front of Encinal High School and at the transitions from two-way bike path to single-sided paths, and he is not sure why these choices were made.

Staff Payne responded that Encinal School area is confusing today because drop off/pick up is under construction and there will no longer be a parking lot there. This project will create room for a center turn lane, and a bus pull-out for a bus to wait out of the traffic lane, just west of the jet and so we expect it to function better than it does now. The City team is coordinating with the school on the design. As for why there is a change from a two-way to bike lanes at Eighth Street, this was analyzed in 2015, and there are too many driveways east of Eighth St, which creates a visibility issue and takes away a lot of parking. The number of driveways also means the center turn lane is more valuable here. Also, this is Caltrans right of way, so the City needed to be more conservative.

Mr. Schuster added that the width is constrained and there are large heritage trees that need to be protected.

Commissioner Weitze clarified that he was talking about the change at Central/Pacific from two-way protected bike lanes to standard bike lanes.

Staff Payne stated that on Main Street, one can use bike lanes or the multi-use pathway on the west side of the street.

Staff Wikstrom added that the two-way cycle track does merge into a multi-use path. The longer-term plans are for the cycle track to continue north of Pacific Avenue along Main Street.

Commissioner Hans asked what the estimated construction period is.

Mr. Schuster stated that he estimates six to eight months, depending on weather, time of year and other changes.

Chair Soules stated that she has heard that traffic circles can be problematic for the visually impaired and wanted to clarifications on the accommodations. She questions whether the lower operations and maintenance costs include the landscaping maintenance and irrigation systems.

Mr. Schuster responded that accessibility measures are included for people with visual impairments, including tactile domes, refuges within the splitter islands, and shorter, high visibility crossings. He agreed that landscaping and irrigation would include operations and maintenance costs but less than signals. Landscape costs would be mitigated with carefully selected native plants and water efficient irrigation design. but any plants will still have an establishment period when watering is needed of up to the first three years.

Staff Wikstrom added that while there are long term costs of roundabouts, the traffic signals have many more regular maintenance and replacement costs, like traffic signal bulbs.

Commissioner Weitze asked why we are keeping some of the all-way stop intersections given the benefits of roundabouts.

Staff Payne and Mr. Schuster responded that the roundabouts take up more space, so the City cannot install them in more constrained locations such as Fifth Street, Webster Street and Eighth Street. The City is considering one at Fourth Street but the budget needs to be considered.

Commissioner Yuen asked what the planned treatment of trees is along the corridor, about the school coordination and concerns and about the selection of intersections for pedestrian-activated beacons.

Mr. Schuster responded on the trees that it is a priority to save and protect the existing trees. Contractors will be required to protect the trees to avoid damage. The team is in the middle of a tree study, which is an inventory of every tree, including species, condition and protection needed. Limited tree removal is anticipated, and primarily will be on the western end of the project because of the cycle track. The project will replace these trees, it is anticipated to have a net gain of trees in the corridor.

Staff Payne responded about the school interactions, which have been positive with the schools, district and principals. For Maya Lin School, students cross at Ninth Street, so the project will install a flashing beacon at this intersection. At Paden, the principal participated in a bike tour of the project area, and is in favor of the concept. Originally, the project had included a flashing beacon in front of the school, but the team believes it is safer for kids to cross at the signalized intersections at Fourth Street and Fifth Street. For Encinal School, the team was concerned about a roundabout in front of the high school, but found examples of successful roundabouts in similar locations. Also, the west end has charter schools and ASTI whose students may use these new facilities.

Commissioner Yuen asked why there are no beacons at Fourth and Fifth Streets.

Staff Payne responded that the project is hoping to include a roundabout at Fourth Street and that it is currently signalized. The Fifth Street intersection will be simplified and will include new curb extensions, high visibility cross-walks and refuge islands. At Ninth Street, the new beacon, as explained, is for Maya Lin students. St. Charles has been selected to have a flashing beacon since it is a future bike boulevard. Page Street will have a flashing beacon at the consolidation bus stop location. Lincoln Avenue by Encinal School will have one to give students a safer crossing.

Vice Chair Nachtigall asked if the City is planning any pedestrian crossing improvements along Lincoln Avenue since the project is showing that traffic will divert to this street.

Staff Payne responded that the City is having Kittelson Associates do a citywide review of roundabouts, and may add roundabouts to Lincoln Avenue since it is a wide street. In the Transportation Choices Plan, there is a corridor-long improvement project planned for Lincoln Avenue.

Staff Wikstrom added that Lincoln Avenue is identified for short-term improvements since it is a high injury network corridor, which includes daylighting intersections, and possibly high visibility crossings.

Mr. Schuster added that a flashing beacon and a high visibility crosswalk will be added where Lincoln Avenue and Central Avenue intersect.

Chair Soules had a general question about diversion and what has been studied and how will that study continue during the design phase particularly for Webster Street given the planned limited turn options at Central Avenue/Webster Street intersection.

Mr. Schuster stated that the diversion is covered in detail in the TOAR exhibit of the staff report, and it shows some diversion maps. Webster St. and Eighth St. to Constitution Way are the most preferred routes in the morning for those motorists trying to leave the island. The project may cause additional motorists to re-route from Central Avenue to Eighth Street, rather than using Webster Street. No significant impacts to the intersections along that corridor are expected. On other potential diversion routes, there would be fairly limited amounts of diversion such as on slower parallel residential streets, which have less time savings. The team is looking at traffic calming measures at the cross streets to deter cut-through traffic.

Public Comments for #6A

Denyse Trepanier thanked staff for their work, which has come a long way, and has taken a lot to work with all stakeholders. She stated that she is on the Board of Bike Walk Alameda, and expressed her gratitude that this project prioritizes what we as a community have said we want to prioritize: safety and climate. She is heartened that tonight's dialogue is not centered on traffic and parking. It is easy to say that we want safety and climate, but often it devolves to discussing parking and having it become a chief criterion. She is thrilled about roundabouts and the cycle track.

Ruth Abbe stated that she is with Community Action for a Sustainable Alameda, and is active on CASA's transportation committee. She is very supportive of this project both for its safety and climate benefits. She really thinks the emphasis on increased safety for walking and biking, and on reducing this as a corridor for traffic is great. She wants to commend staff and to provide full support.

Christopher Buckley stated that he is a City planner and a tree advocate. He wants to go to bat for preserving the maximum number of trees and for adding more trees. He understands that trees will be planted, and discussed options for adding trees even at narrow sidewalk locations with Staff Payne. He wants to ask the Commission to support these efforts that staff and consultants are doing for tree preservation and to maximum tree plantings, and to recommend them to Council.

Amos White stated that he is the Founder of 100,000 Trees for Humanity. He is committed to planting this many trees in Alameda, and to help Alameda meet its 2030 climate goals. He commends the work that the Commission is doing on this project. He stated that there is no indication in the concept plans of where trees will be located, but there is talk in the staff report of removing trees, which is concerning. He asks the Commission to emphasize maximizing tree planting, such as at roundabouts and landscaped areas, and to minimize any tree removal. He asked the Commission to avoid or minimize as much as possible the removal of trees and to maximize planting of new trees to support CARP.

John McCabe thanked staff and the consultants. He thinks that this will be a great project. He runs and bikes in the area. The bike lanes will help him drive less, and the students will be able to bike to school instead of being driven. The increase in visibility is a big issue for turning on and off Central Avenue. He is looking forward to the project. The roundabouts are new, and he lives close to a proposed one. These intersections proposed for roundabouts are really messed up right now, and are really confusing for motorists, and worse for pedestrians. Roundabouts will make traffic flow better, and will make businesses more accessible to pedestrians. His only concern is the timing of the project, and he wants to see this get done faster.

Cynthia Cooper stated that she lives at the corner of Encinal Avenue and Sherman Street. She is pro bike and trees; however, she is a renter. She expressed that it is very challenging to park. When the economy was doing well, parking is more difficult. Eight people live in the building, and there are many apartments and condos in this vicinity. She loves the idea of bicycling but she works in Livermore so she needs to drive. The project is very concerning. She has lived here since 1994, and has had to sometimes park 2-3 blocks away, which is hard with groceries and at night. It makes for a difficult lifestyle. She requested to please consider this more. The project is eating up too much parking, and she wanted to know if there is a way to do this without losing so much parking.

Trish Spencer thanked the Commissioners for comments about the visually impaired people using roundabouts and does not think it was adequately answered. Regarding impacts on Webster Street and Central Avenue, she is interested in changes here due to COVID. She is not sure if any changes were made in the bike/pedestrian/transit/car projections for the project because of COVID. She would like to know more about the assumptions. She would like to see the increases in bike and pedestrian use and the decreases in transit be considered and is wondering about changes in driving due to people working at home now.

Jeannine Gravem stated that she is a resident on Sherman Street. She is extremely concerned about the roundabout at this intersection and is unclear why the project is reducing traffic on Sherman Street with a

cul de sac or right turn only. The project will cause confusion and congestion in that there is a lot of traffic coming through here. Compressing to one lane in each direction will slow people down and she does not think a roundabout will work. She is very concerned about parking, too. There are many apartment buildings in this area, and some do not have garages or driveways. Some households have multiple cars. She thinks decreasing parking by 23 percent is pretty extreme.

Cyndy Johnsen stated that it is a fantastic project and can't be built soon enough. It has safety for all, more efficient traffic and less engine idling. It is a win for everyone. She is glad the project is prioritizing safety and climate over parking. She commends staff on the virtual open house and hope to see more of these in the future.

Jim Strehlow stated that earlier AC Transit said Webster Street and Central Avenue intersection would not work for them and asked why there is not more public input on it. Sherman Street looks horrible. He stated that motorists will become trapped in the middle of the roundabout with pedestrian crossings. He asked if all the residents have been notified, if the Fire Department has approved, and if the side streets been notified. The PDF on page 9 lists lost parking spaces as 70, but the PowerPoint shows 122. The numbers are misleading. The scanned text cannot be searched, and one font is not supported. He wants more public workshops. There is no participation panel during this meeting so it is unclear how many people are participating tonight.

Christy Cannon stated that she supports roundabouts in that there would be less idling and less pollution.

Commissioner Comments and Discussions for #6A

Chair Soules stated that Staff should take steps to increase transparency and watch the fonts and to confirm community engagement. She asked if AC Transit and WABA have worked on this project in that they were not talked about in the presentation, and should be looped back in. She wants to see data on traffic diversions and the impacts of parking loss. She wants to hear about the Webster Street traffic impacts.

Commissioner Weitze stated that roundabouts are an opportunity to do public art and not just landscaping, and wants to know what the City has learned from the Shoreline project.

Staff Payne replied that the project could either include art or work it into the design as a future phase. She stated that the project includes eight-foot wide parking and travel lanes that accommodate trucks so that it is less cramped than Shoreline. AC Transit supports the project because the lanes are wider than initially planned, and is fine with consolidating bus stops, which helps them make the turn at Webster Street. WABA wanted and got a left-turn lane into the foot of Webster Street.

Mr. Shuster added that the project provides space for future potential bus service from the Alameda Point area near the Pacific Avenue/Main Street roundabout and the Fifth Street intersection. AC Transit also provided design input on bus stops on the eastern part of the corridor, which have been incorporated. He feels the project has satisfied AC Transit's requests.

Commissioner Hans stated that he is proud of City staff in that they have worked hard on this project, including community engagement, working with WABA and considering schools' needs. He fully supports the project.

Commissioner Yuen stated that she is a big supporter of this project, and appreciates the focus on multiple goals: safety, Vision Zero, High Injury Corridors, climate, stormwater management, pedestrian and bicycling. She supports the roundabouts. The issues of parking and diversions should not slow down this project. She would like a chance to comment on the tree survey in the final concept.

Staff Payne clarified that this is the final concept for approval, but staff will come back during next steps to talk about trees. About outreach, staff has done notifications to properties within 300 feet three times since 2015, and there are over 500 people on the Central Avenue email list serv. For parking, the project opens up some street parking west of Sherman Street where none currently exists. The 2045 projections are worst-case scenario, pre-covid, so they probably are accounting for more traffic and they include cumulative impacts from new development expected in 2045.

Chair Soules stated that if any Commissioners have concerns like parking, trees, diversions, we can request Council to address them. She requested a friendly amendment to have the tree survey come back to the Transportation Commission. She asked how many other east-west corridors are planned for a road diet.

Staff Payne replied that there is a proposed project on Lincoln Avenue.

Chair Soules expressed concerns about Lincoln Avenue also getting a road diet in that having road diets in multiple places could increase commute times, and we need to maintain service levels for transit. She requested before/after data to show that safer routes allow people to shift modes.

Staff Payne stated that the cycle tracks on both Fernside Blvd. by Lincoln Middle School and on Shoreline increased bicycling.

Chair Soules stated that high schoolers should be encouraged not to drive.

Staff Payne stated that Encinal School is removing the student parking lot making it more difficult for students to drive. The countywide Safe Routes to School program is increasing outreach to high schoolers, as well as free bus passes and Island High School currently receives them.

Chair Soules is concerned about public engagement because the project has been going on for so long that some people have moved away, and new people have moved in. She asked if there has been outreach over the last few years.

Staff Payne stated that there have been five public workshops since 2013 with the last two in the past few years: one in December 2018 and another one was one month ago in October as a virtual open house for multiple weeks, which still exists on the Central Avenue web page. The City has done notifications to adjacent properties three times, and provided postcards to Webster Street all the way to Santa Clara Avenue and to the block of Sherman Street south of the roundabout for the recent virtual workshop.

Vice Chair Nachtigall thanked City staff for a comprehensive staff report. She supports the project's safety improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists, the roundabout recommendations and minimizing tree removals.

Chair Soules stated that Commissioner Kohlstrand expressed a concern about increased traffic on Eighth Street, which would get heavy traffic diverted from Webster Street. Chair Soules also stated that the public street is not there for private parking storage. She expressed concerns about diversions and outreach to renters.

Staff Payne replied that all residents along the corridor including renters received notifications as well as property owners.

Public Comments for #6A

Jeanine Gravem stated that the notification was not done well for Sherman Street in that she first heard of the project when she received the postcard for the recent workshop.

Donna Gravem stated that the City should take into consideration the age of the Sherman Street area. Many of the houses were built before cars were common, so there is not a lot of off-street parking. Please take that into consideration.

Cynthia Cooper appreciates that Chair Soules heard the parking concerns and she supports a parking permit idea. She agrees that Eighth Street can be challenging, and it can be tough to get off the island.

Commissioner Comments and Discussion for #6A

Vice Chair Nachtigall made a motion to support the final concept

Chair Soules added the following friendly amendments: to minimize tree removals and maximize tree plantings, to look at ways to mitigate parking loss, to ensure that the outreach is sufficient, to mitigate traffic diversion and transit performance issues and to bring back traffic diversions, parking and the landscaping plan to the TC.

Commissioner Hans seconded the motion.

The motion passed 5-0.

7. Announcements / Public Comments

Jim Strehlow stated that the current Atlantic Avenue and Constitution Way light timing is bad and need to wait a long time as a pedestrian and a bicyclist so the loop detectors need to work better.

8. Adjournment

Chair Soules adjourned the meeting at 9:24 p.m.