



MEETING MINUTES

CITY OF SANTA BARBARA

TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION COMMITTEE (TCC)

David Gebhard Public Meeting Room
630 Garden Street, Santa Barbara, CA
Thursday, February 10, 2011, 6:00 PM

CALL TO ORDER: Chair Bradley called the meeting to order at 6:03 PM

ROLL CALL:

TCC MEMBERS

Hillary Blackerby
Mark Bradley
Keith Coffman-Grey
Edward France
Susan Horne
David Pritchett
David Tabor

Attendance

Present
Present
Present
Present
Present
Excused
Present

CITY STAFF PRESENT :

Browning Allen, Transportation Manager
Robert J. Dayton, Principal Transportation Planner
Kim Thaler-Strange, Administrative Specialist

LIAISONS PRESENT

Deborah Schwartz, Planning Commission Liaison

OTHERS PRESENT:

Ralph Fertig, Bicycle Coalition
Jeff Bard

CHANGES TO THE AGENDA: None.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

Ralph Fertig : Gave a handout to staff about a survey from Google Analytics. Data showed 70% of the people who go to the web site seek info on bicycle tours. The Coalition created a web site for people looking for bicycle tours. www.Bicycle-santabarbara.org. The web site gives information about bicycle activities. Information was gleaned from sites that talk about do it yourself rides on the South Coast and Santa Ynez Valley, as well as bicycle tours that are offered within the county. The site also includes information about mountain biking from other states down the Pacific Coast, etc. There is also a list of various routes and bicycle maps as well as bicycle shops and bicycle rentals. There is also a listing of hostels and bicycle friendly inns and places to get beach cruisers. Education that bicycles bring in can bring in money for the County

Chair Bradley asked if many people ask about bicycle rental. Mr. Fertig replied that there is a link on the pull down menu

Jeff Bard Commented on bicycles and bus-bicycle interfaces. He also mentioned bicycle speed limits. He sent an email to MTD about hobo tours. He also mentioned that the MTD drivers need public interaction training. The service is lousy and the policies are inconsistent. The drivers are also rude. The problem at the terminal is if you have a bicycle and are waiting for the No. 11 bus, there is no indication where to wait. He believes that these issues can be worked out, but there needs to be more policy.

Browning Allen asked if Mr. Bard had talked with MTD. He has talked with Ms. Fisher about this. Mr. Allen remarked that we have no control over MTD. They have their own board.

CONSENT CALENDAR:

1. Approval of Minutes from the October 23, 2010 meeting where a TCC quorum was present.

Motion: Approve the Minutes from the October 23, 2010 meeting.

Motion made to approve the minutes by Mr. Coffman-Grey, seconded Ms. Blackerby

Ayes: 6 Noes: Abstain: Absent: 1

REPORTS

2. MTD Annual Report,

Chair Bradley asked if there were any comments.

Mr. Allen indicated that staff would ask someone to come to the meetings.

Mr. Coffman-Grey indicated that there is lower ridership, and the Crosstown Shuttle is struggling a bit. There were not as many people using the shuttle, though ridership increased in December, possibly due to the weather. He also noted an interesting anomaly: people who lived by the Micheltorena Bridge would jump on the shuttle.

Mr., Bradley indicated that there was a lot of holiday shopping as well.

Mr. Tabor stated that if the theory about the weather was true, the numbers would go up in January.

Mr. Bradley asked if City-supported services going to be supported under Measure A. Mr. Allen replied that the City would continue to support the waterfront and commuter lots. The Mesa Loop and Lines 1 and 2 will be getting money directly from Measure A.

Ms. Blackerby asked if Money is being freed up because of that. Mr. Allen replied that the money we were getting from Measure D is now going to come from Measure A.

Ms. Horne asked if people are happy with the ridership numbers. She wondered if there were any ups and downs. Mr. Allen replied that people are happy with the ridership. The Waterfront Shuttle is not tourist based. The Downtown Shuttle was put in as a mitigation measure for the Redevelopment Agency. There are 550,000 rides per year give or take. When the economy was good there was incredibly high ridership. After 9/11, there was a decrease; however it has been consistent.

Mr. Coffman-Grey indicated that the shuttles were free at one time. Mr. Allen replied that there were over 1 million people riding at that point, and the City started charging a quarter.

Mr. Bradley indicated that MTD has been doing well. Mr. Allen stated that revenues are lower than projected so MTD cut back on revenue hours. It is not looking good for next year. The Measure A estimate from SBCAG is \$350,000 less for next year.

Ms. Schwartz recalled that one of MTD's presentations stated that they were early adopters for the clean energy buses. Mr. Allen affirmed that Santa Barbara was the first city to adopt electric shuttles and the first to buy hybrids in the state. We piggy-backed on the order of some agencies back east. Ms. Schwartz asked what percentage of the buses are clean energy. Mr. Allen replied that there are 8 hybrid electric buses, and all the 30 ft. buses are clean diesel buses. The rest of the buses are moving to biodiesel fuel. Ms. Schwartz indicated that we should be proud of that fact.

Ms. Blackerby pointed out that the shorter hybrids are used in Isla Vista.

Mr. Coffman-Grey commented that MTD wanted to do more energy-efficient buses, but it was not cost efficient for the ridership. Mr. Allen added that MTD had tried to acquire 22ft electric buses for the shuttle, but could not find a manufacturer that can produce a reliable battery. They are still looking for replacements; but are still keeping the buses working.

Mr. France commented that if Plan SB foresees growth in traffic congestion, the travel time and frequencies that have already decreased will worsen.

Mr. Bradley remarked that the frequent systems come after Plan SB as part of the implementation, and asked if it was in the Circulation Element. Mr. Dayton answered that Dru Van Hengel was working with MTD to have bus priority. It's an operations issue, not a Plan SB issue. Mr. Allen said that there would be a bus priority on Upper State Street, and it would be maintained by MTD. Chris Andersen has signed the MOU. Mr. Dayton replied that this will keep the light green until the bus goes through. Mr. Bradley asked if this was a trial program. Mr. Allen replied that this will stay on State Street. Mr. Dayton indicated that this could impact the timing, and indicated that it is tricky to balance, but the Phasing will be the same.

4. Selection of Chair and Vice Chair

Chair Bradley indicated that traditionally, the Vice Chair becomes the Chair, and the most senior member becomes the Vice Chair. Ed would be Chair.

Motion: Make Ed France Chair of the TCC for 2011

Motion made Mr. Coffman-Grey, seconded by Ms. Blackerby

Ayes: 6 Noes: Abstain: Absent: 1

Mr. France asked if Mr. Bradley wanted to stay on as Chair. Mr. Bradley indicated that he was ready to step down.

Motion: Make Hillary Blackerby Vice Chair of the TCC for 2011

Motion made Mr. France, seconded by Mr. Tabor

Ayes: 6 Noes: Abstain: Absent: 1

Mr. Allen indicated that the positions would change at the next meeting

5. Change of Meeting Days/TCC Calendar for 2011

Mr. Allen said that the Gebhard room would be available. The meeting date is changing because Mr. Pritchett has work that will take him out of town, and he requested the move to the 2nd Thursday for 2011.

Ms. Thaler-Strange indicated that the Gebhard is open for the rest of the year

Mr. Bradley asked if the meetings will still be quarterly. Mr. Allen said there may be a meeting in March because the residents of Brinkerhoff are petitioning to keep the diagonal parking.

Mr. Bradley asked if there will be a study. Mr. Allen indicated that this was already reviewed by Transportation Operations. The residents want it. They will come to the TCC to have them recommend this idea to Council. Mr. France reiterated that they wanted to make it one-way. Mr. Allen indicated that it is currently one-way. When the project is done, it will go back to the original configuration with parking on both sides of the street.

Motion: Move the TCC meetings to the 2nd Thursday of the Month

Motion made Mr. Coffman-Grey, seconded by Ms. Blackerby

Ayes: 6 Noes: Abstain: Absent: 1

6. Update on Transportation Projects

Carrillo/Anacapa: Plans are 90% Complete. Carrillo/Anacapa went to Council last fall. There were originally going to be curb extensions on east side. Council directed staff to redesign the project without curb extensions. Mast arms are going in instead.

Ms. Horne asked what a mast arm was. Mr. Allen described mast arms to her, and indicated that the HLC didn't want the mast arms, so the directed staff to make the design with curb extensions. Council does not like curb extensions, so the requested that they be taken out. Mast arms are necessary because Carrillo is a wide street and a lot of vehicles run the red light going towards State Street. He indicated that the plans are 90% complete, and the archaeological study was being completed. The project will be out to bid before the end of the fiscal year and in construction this summer. The redesign did not change the schedule, because the archaeological study had to be done. This project is funded by grant money.

De La Vina/Figueroa

Mr. Allen indicated that MNS is working on a conceptual design and signal warrant. Before a signal is put in, a warrant is required. The warrant consideration includes, intersection history, number of accidents, etc. The intersection does not meet warrant for a traffic signal, so there is a dilemma. An all way stop can be put in, but there are signalized intersections before and after. Curb extensions would need to be installed to make the stop signs visible, or parking needs to be removed. Staff will be going to Council for policy direction. The Transportation Engineer came up with the suggestion of a pedestrian refuge with a stop sign, but this could be problematic. The funds are there to do the project, but staff is looking at grant funds, etc.

Mr. Coffman-Grey said the he saw a bicyclist get killed by a car that was making a left. It's a major walkway to the Carrillo lot, and it's frustrating to fight to get it done, but then have it not meet warrant. He referred to the Boysel project; how quickly that was done. The City had the funding. This is similar to the situation at Canon Perdido/De La Vina. How many fatalities do we need to be able to get a signal? A signal was put in at Ortega and De La Vina, and there were stop signs. He acknowledged that there is a lot of skepticism about bulb-outs, but there are a lot of different ways to do things. He commended MTD for moving bus routes, even though it delays the buses. Could get Council direction, and put a curb extension on the Figueroa side, and none on the left turn. Mr. Allen indicated that three warrant analyses were done by staff, MNS and a Transportation Engineer. All three indicated that the intersection didn't meet warrant, and the City can't put a signal in if it doesn't. Staff is considering closing the south side crosswalk, like Carrillo/Chapala, and direct pedestrians to the north side. Per Sherrie Fisher, MTD is not pushing for traffic signal, as they believe it is better for the buses to go to Anapamu. Mr. Coffman-Grey pointed out that commuters park there, and the Vista bus parks there to unload.

Ms. Blackerby agreed that Anapamu is a better way for the buses. She pointed out that as long as vehicles are allowed to go through the intersection, people will get hit. She understands that the intersection does not meet warrant, but does not understand how the project got funded without knowing that. Mr. Allen replied that money for the project came from a TCRP grant. The City applied for two grants and got both. The City also assigned leftover monies to MTD for next bus technology. They were unable to make that happen, and we need to use the money. Tully Clifford came up with this project. There were complaints about Canon Perdido/De La Vina, and he compiled a list of intersections. It was an amendment to the grant so staff needed to do the warrant analysis. Ms. Blackerby asked when the grant expires. Mr. Allen indicated that it will expire in a couple of year, and noted that they over-extended their money. TCRP can make a request when the project is ready to go. Ms. Blackerby said she would have liked next bus, and wants to move forward for policy direction. She hopes that we can learn from that intersection and hope that Council will be presented with a number of options. She believes that this is the best place for curb extensions, and suggested the refuge island, as it's not all about the buses; it is a safety issue. Blocking off the south side would be a good idea. Mr. Allen said that curb extensions, refuge islands, or curb extension and stop sign, or no project. He hopes that Council will approve it. Mr. Allen also pointed out that when Santa Barbara/Ortega was done, it met the warrant, but they moved the school. There is now an alternative high school. They put the stop sign in to get the vehicles used to stopping, but there was a delay and the HLC didn't want mast arms. Ms. Blackerby asked about the day-glo yellow on the street in old town Goleta, which she thinks is horrifying. She wondered if pedestrian lights were feasible. Mr. Allen replied that we have looked at that option and done the research, and it was decided that they give the pedestrians a false sense of security. They are more effective at night; however, most incidents happen during the day. They are also expensive to install and maintain. Ms. Blackerby wants to think of alternatives if we can't do stop signs or traffic signals.

Mr. Bradley asked what would happen if Council hated the alternative but wanted the traffic signal. Mr. Allen replied that the City Attorney had to weigh in on that to determine any legal ramifications. Is there a potential liability? Mr. Bradley indicated that there was less signal traffic on Figueroa than Anapamu.

Mr. Tabor said that the warrant criteria leans towards the signal not being warranted because it would be potentially more dangerous to have the signal there? It would be interesting to see the numbers. He said that safety was important on streets like Cliff Drive. Caltrans was not warranted because there is no pedestrian activity. Mr. Allen replied that he doesn't have the numbers off the top of his head, but they were not unusually high. There were some bicycle vs. vehicle collisions, but not enough collisions to bring up to warrant. MTD was using that road when the study was

done. There were 15 busses per hour, but it didn't meet the warrant even when the buses were using that road.

Ms. Horne asked if they had only counted vehicles. Mr. Allen replied that they counted vehicles and collision types, broadside, turning movements. Speed was also a factor. They could not count the pedestrians because they were counting vehicles and the warrant analysis gives the right of way to vehicles. Ms. Horne asked if there was a strip. Mr. Allen replied that there is a hose.

Mr. France said that if signalized intersections were not warranted perhaps a stop sign could be. If cars or moved or a curb extension is put in, the visibility would be poor with a stop sign. He reiterated the options available – a pedestrian refuge, curb extensions alone, curb extension with stop sign, pedestrian flasher, or no project. He asked if there is an example of a pedestrian refuge. Mr. Allen replied that there is one on Carrillo and Garden. Mr. France indicated that he dislikes the idea of blocking the crosswalk on the south side, especially since it is a high pedestrian area. The challenge is that we have a tool that is not explicitly, but implicitly taken off the table (Curb extensions). Council directed the Chapala Guidelines. He also asked about any examples where curb extensions have been pulled at the Council level. In the last week, 6 pedestrians have been hit after the City Council Meeting. There are a lot we probably haven't heard about. There is no better example of a place that needs a curb extension. Mr. Allen replied that staff is in a difficult position with Council. It is staff's job to put forth to Council that for the specific project, we don't favor the no-project option and we need to make the case for curb extensions because it is a tool appropriate for this case. If it's the best option, the committee should make a letter to Council.

Ms. Schwartz asked about traffic speed in addition to visibility. When the lights are timed right it's easy to get up to speed. Is there a way through light timing to help cars pace themselves to make up for visibility? Mr. Dayton replied that it has been done, and it was timed at 25 mph for years. When a car is going 50 mph it can make the lights. Mr. Allen added that we will have our traffic signal guy take care of it. It is a 30 mph street. He also pointed out that the police will not cite someone for going a couple of miles above the speed limit. Tickets will usually get kicked out of court if they are given for speeds that are not unsafe for the traffic conditions. His concerns about the stop sign is that it will make it hard to stop and some may blow through the stop sign, which creates a hazard.

Mr. Coffman-Grey reiterated that he believes a signal is needed. He likes the curb extensions, but considering the current council makeup, they would be laughed off. A signal might be looked at, and a stop sign won't work. The Committee needs to send a letter pushing for the signal option. Mr. Allen expressed his concern about a traffic signal without a warrant. If the Committee sends in a letter, and Council agrees to put it in, there will be complaints about another intersection, and we set a dangerous precedent. The best thing to do is to put the curb extension in.

Mr. Bradley asked if Council intends to do nothing, could this be reopened in January. Mr. Allen replied that if there is a new Council, the Committee can revisit it.

Ms. Horne said that it keeps going back to the warrant, which has no validity. Do fatalities and accidents not have enough weight to reach a level of concern? Mr. Allen replied that there are not a lot of vehicle vs. vehicle accidents. He would have to look at the segment of time. Unfortunately, one fatality doesn't justify it. The study has to look at volume, number of collisions, type of collisions, etc. Over the time period that was looked at, there were only 7 accidents.

Mr. Coffman-Grey repeated his opinion and asked if the study looked between the 5:00 and 6:00 in the evening. He indicated that traffic is still backed up in the winter, and the commuter lots are backed up as well. Mr. Allen said that a 24 hour analysis is done, so the study is aware of the peak hour. The City is faced with the same problem on Las Positas and Cliff. It doesn't meet warrant because the problem is only during peak hours. There are no problems during the rest of the day.

Mr. Bradley asked if a signal that only operates during specific hours could be installed. Mr. Allen replied that we don't have them in town, and that they can be problematic with computer malfunction.

Ms. Schwartz asked if staff had talked to the City Attorney about reverse legal liability. If we have done studies and Council takes no action and something else happens, does the City face liability for not acting? Mr. Allen said that the City is not vulnerable. He talked to the City Attorney who says that if the analysis has been done, and a signal is not justified there is no liability. Ms. Schwartz asked if the warrant was State requirements. Mr. Allen said that it was. He indicated that there were talks about taking out a lane of traffic, but they didn't go anywhere.

Ms. Blackerby asked if it doesn't meet warrant and we can't get around that, if there was policy direction would it impact the grant. Mr. Allen replied that we would need to check with Caltrans to see if they would pay for something else. They will not approve us using the money to put in a signal that doesn't meet warrant. We may not see the money for years.

Mr. Bradley asked if a warrant was done for Canon Perdido. Mr. Allen said yes, and the intersection doesn't come close.

Mr. France asked when this would go to Council. Mr. Allen replied sometime in March. Mr. France then asked that even if Council makes a decision, could it be revisited. Mr. Allen said that the project could be suspended at the staff level. Mr. France said that the Committee should push for this to go to Council, stressing funding and legal challenges for some sort of pedestrian safety measure and let them sort it out. It's a discussion that needs to happen, and if they make a decision going against public safety, then Council should be held responsible.

Mr. Tabor asked if we need a motion for that. Mr. Allen replied that he won't hold off on it. He's not hearing the Committee say to hold off. MNS is saying not to put the signal in; they are recommending curb extensions with a stop sign. Parking may have to be removed.

Ms. Blackerby asked if there was parking heading towards Carrillo. Mr. Allen said that there was parking only on the right; he was referring to upstream. Ms. Blackerby asked how many spots would be lost. Mr. Allen replied that parking between De La Vina and Anapamu would have to be removed.

Mr. Bradley indicated that people would be angry with the stop sign.

Ms. Schwartz asked how close the intersection is to meeting the threshold. Mr. Allen replied that the City isn't even close. Ms. Schwartz asked if the stats would be brought to Council. Mr. Allen replied yes; that the Committee was only receiving an update about the project because of where the project is right now.

Mr. France indicated he was working on the motion. In accordance with the Circulation Element, something needs to happen. Mr. Allen said that staff could put it in our report and suggested that the TCC not use the Circulation Element.

Mr. Tabor suggested using bicycle and pedestrian maps.

Mr. Fertig suggested a new crosswalk. Mr. Allen replied that we could do that but they don't necessarily work. They often give pedestrians a false sense of security.

Ms. Blackerby pointed out that they can't be seen at night.

Motion: That the TCC write a letter to urge Council to address the public safety concern at the intersection De La Vina and Figueroa Streets and the need to address the problem.

Motion made Mr. France, seconded by Mr. Tabor

Ayes: 6 Noes: Abstain: Absent: 1

Mr. Allen said that he will let the Committee know when this goes to Council.

Mr. Allen reported that he and Mr. France talked about the Safe Routes to School Grant for Modoc and Portesuello. The changes will be made permanent. It is supported by the principals of both the elementary and junior high schools, and the resident next to the corner.

Mr. Tabor indicated that junior high kids walk slower.

Mr. Bradley asked about the Entrada, which was recently purchased, and if the project still includes widening the sidewalk and one less lane. Mr. Allen indicated that it still does. Mr. Bradley asked if that was going to move forward. Mr. Dayton indicated it was already approved. Mr. Allen said that the project needs financing, but the project will be done as approved. The permit is good for two years. If it gets sold, all bets are off. The project does not include narrowing State Street. Mr. Bradley asked about the grade at the bottom of State with the pedestrian scramble. Mr. Allen said that the answer has always been no.

Mr. Allen indicated that Ms. Thaler-Strange would finalize the Committee's letter for signature. Please send it to her when it is completed.

Ms. Horne asked if the Committee would see the letter before Council. Mr. Allen said no because of the Brown Act rules. He advised the Committee to keep it simple.

Meeting was adjourned at 7:40 PM