

CITY OF CORONADO
TRAFFIC OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Thursday, September 24, 2009

A special meeting of the Traffic Operations Committee (T.O.C.) was held on Thursday, August 27, 2009, at 2:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. Scott Huth, Rachel Hurst, Lou Scanlon and Ed Walton were present. Ed Hadfield represented the absent John Traylor. Assistant Engineer Dave Johnson was also present.

1. Minutes of the August 27, 2009 Meeting – Approval – Mr. Scanlon moved to approve the minutes, Mr. Hadfield seconded the motion and they were approved unanimously, with Ms. Hurst abstaining.
2. Oral Communications – None.
3. Recommendation Regarding a Request to Accommodate Valet Parking for a New Restaurant at 1126 Orange Avenue – Mr. Johnson reported that a proposed tenant is looking to lease the space at 1126 Orange Avenue and change the use to a restaurant. The City's zoning policies require that a new restaurant have a minimum of five on-site parking spaces. Because this location does not have any on-site parking available they are proposing to use a valet service that would take customers' cars and park them at the parking structure adjacent to the Bank of America. The hours of operation are proposed to be from 6:00-9:30 p.m., Monday through Sunday. Engineering has been asked to look at this based on a traffic safety standpoint.

He said that in the past valet parking operations have been approved. There is one at Vigilucci's and one at Miguelito's. There was approval for one at Chez Loma although it appears they haven't been utilizing it for some time.

Engineering looked at the accident history in this area and other criteria applicable to this request. The collision history along this section of Orange Avenue is fairly significant; there have been 10 collisions in the vicinity of Orange Avenue between B/Loma and C Avenues, where the valet parking is proposed. Two of the accidents involved pedestrians. It appears that most of the collisions were caused by improper turns and unsafe speeds. This raises two concerns. It is proposed that the valet parking be located adjacent to 1126 Orange; this would require southbound vehicles to enter the valet zone and the valet would need to pull out into traffic, travel southbound to the median crossing at B Avenue, make a left across the median and then across northbound Orange Avenue onto B Avenue and to the parking structure located on B Avenue at the end of Ynez. A lot of accidents in this location are broadside accidents that occur when vehicles cross the median. The other concern is that when valets drop off a vehicle in the parking structure the valets would have to cross Orange Avenue on foot. At night this could be a precarious operation. Southbound Orange Avenue before Tenth Street is a straight section of roadway. Once they cross Tenth Street and head farther south toward B Avenue and Loma Lane, Orange Avenue becomes a sinusoidal street. That condition has manifested itself as a high accident location.

Mr. Hadfield asked if the accident times had been looked at and Mr. Johnson said he believed they were interspersed throughout the day, most during the southbound peak hour which is 2:00-6:00 p.m.

Scott Quan, 907 Turquoise Street, San Diego, and his brother are the applicants for the valet parking. He said that the Bank of America has withdrawn their offer to lease the parking spaces based on the covenant required to be recorded designating the parking spots in the parking structure for their use only, as well as the negative staff recommendation.

Paul Swerdlove, the owner of the Spreckels building, suggested some alternatives. The Loma Avenue parking lot is available; the problem is we can't designate. It would be acceptable for valet parking. Parking is difficult because of the age of the building which was built in 1914 and there is no way to provide more parking for the tenants. He feels it's a hardship to refuse a person to rent the stores if parking is something that is going to be an objection. He feels that the law doesn't really apply in this case; people are there for only a few minutes with the type of business Mr. Quan wants to open. It's not a sit-down type of establishment; people will get a wrap or a yogurt and get in and out quickly. He asked if there could be some type of allowance for the use of the parking lot on Loma that would satisfy the City's requirements. Failing that, is there an exception to the Orange Avenue corridor plan for a good cause ordinance? The huge loss of rent is a hardship for his building. There is a line up for stores, but mostly for food services. He's wondering if an exception can be made because of its historical designation and its age. He's had 30 or 40 potential tenants contact him and most of them want to do food. Some who don't do food are in conflict with the other tenants; there can only be so many dress stores, so many jewelry stores, so many paper good stores or gift shops in the same building because they would be taking business away from the other tenants. The leases state that they can't go into conflict with other tenants.

Mr. Walton said the purview of this committee is to look at traffic operations; some of the issues such as parking requirements that have been brought up fall beyond this committee's purview and would have to be brought up before the Planning Department.

Mr. Huth said there might be an opportunity to go back to the Planning Department, look at the whole building and its activities, as well as looking at Chez Loma restaurant and some of the other needs in the area. Generally speaking, a good system of valet parking can work for a lot of buildings and a lot of activities. Maybe this is a good time to look at this since this building is so big and has multiple uses. There's also another lot behind the surf shop and there may be an opportunity to maximize that at certain times of the day.

Ms. Hurst said that if there is to be more food space in the building than there is now there has to be more parking identified for the expanded restaurant use. Or existing restaurant space could be reduced to expand into the vacant space.

Mr. Scanlon said some of the restaurants in the Gaslamp District have formed partnerships so that one valet service serves multiple locations. This committee doesn't have purview over how many parking spaces per restaurant are required.

Mr. Huth moved to accept the staff recommendation to deny the valet parking proposal; it was seconded by Ed Walton and passed unanimously.

4. Recommendation Regarding the Request to Install a Speed Hump at the Alley Entrance to Vons Supermarket, 868 Orange Avenue – Mr. Johnson said that as part of Vons' tenant improvements they plan to improve the main ingress/egress of the building which is accessed from the alley. They are planning to make on-site improvements to the ingress/egress that will provide an ADA-accessible ramp leading up to the store entrance.

That will allow pedestrians to be seen better by vehicles rather than as it exists today where they come out of a nearly blind corner and surprise drivers as they come out. Pedestrians will be required, as they come out of the building, to make a left and go down a ramp to an open area where vehicles will see them better. In 2000, the TOC approved the use of a stop sign in front of the ingress/egress and also approved some pavement delineators which influence traffic to travel away from the edge of the building so there is more buffer space between pedestrians and cars. Vons has proposed a speed hump on the alley just prior to the stop sign. The City has a warrant for speed humps but it does not specifically address locations on alleys. The policy is typically for residential roadways. The requirements of the speed hump warrant are whether a critical speed is being exceeded and pedestrian safety purposes. In this case they'd be looking at pedestrian safety issues. Some low speed speed hump devices were installed in the golf course parking lot because vehicles were traveling in and out of the parking lot faster than they should have been. These speed humps have different dimensions than those used on public streets. Speed humps on public streets are designed to allow vehicles to travel comfortably at a 25-mph speed limit. In the case of the golf course they wanted to get the speeds down to 15 mph so they used a speed hump that is shorter and more abrupt. Now drivers cannot go faster than 15 mph without some uncomfortableness. The speed limit on an alley is 15 mph, so a speed hump at this location would need to be something similar to those at the golf course clubhouse. Staff feels that the installation of a speed hump at this location would increase and enhance safety without increasing liability for the City.

Mr. Hadfield said that from the Fire Department point of view those types of devices are extremely disruptive to apparatus and more importantly, when they're transporting patients, should they strike those types of devices it is extremely disruptive to the patient in the rear. The humps on Pomona jar ambulance patients and the Fire Department tends to deviate away from that. They do not like to see these types of devices unless there is an absolute clear need for it. From what he's heard, there are a lot of other items going in for the protection of citizens ingressing and egressing into the structure and this is just adding on top of it.

Mr. Scanlon asked if humps can be constructed so that the width is wider than the wheel track of standard sedan, however, narrower than the width of the fire apparatus or ambulance and Mr. Johnson said that does exist. It's called a speed pillow, but they haven't been used in Coronado. A regular passenger-size vehicle cannot position itself to miss it, but the wheel paths of larger emergency vehicles can travel over the obstruction and don't get the effect of a regular speed hump. This location is constrained to width but it's possible to do something like have three sections in the alley with a couple of open wheel tracks so emergency vehicles could travel through the area.

Mr. Johnson observed that with the type of speed hump profile needed to keep speeds down it might be difficult for people to push carts over it.

Mr. Hadfield said that with the revitalization of the theater he's been involved in the exiting requirements for that. Concerns will be faced from patrons going in and out of the back of the theater and if we put one speed hump in we're going to end up putting four or five in and that's very concerning from his standpoint. It would be hard to tell the theater that it couldn't have a speed hump while allowing someone else to do it.

Mr. Huth is not in favor of it. There is a stop sign there; there's crosshatching; and people who shop there know it really well. He agrees, a speed bump would force someone to recognize it because they'll be bouncing over it if they're not familiar with the area.

Mr. Walton said if a bump or hump is put in here it would probably have to be similar to what has been used at the golf course. He thinks the Vons improvements with opening that up will really improve visibility. Now when patrons come out they're right against the wall so it's very difficult to see them. It looks like they've opened that up so there will be at least a 20-foot gap. He is concerned about the relocation of the stop sign; there are two stop signs within very close proximity. There is a stop legend right before the crosshatching, just to the north of it, and then there is a stop at Ninth Street. He's thinks there's ample time to revisit the speed hump after seeing how the new opening works. He's more concerned about the stop signs and doesn't think there will be compliance with the first stop.

Ms. Hurst said that unless the City is going to do alley improvements in the future we may not have the opportunity of Vons being the initiator to put in a speed hump if we wait until after the construction is complete because the hump is part of their remodel and approval process.

Ms. Hurst moved to not install a speed hump in the Vons alley; it was seconded by Mr. Huth and passed unanimously.

5. Discussion Item: Bike Path/Cays Entrance Interface – Mr. Walton reported that he attended the Cays Homeowners annual meeting and this was the biggest item of concern he heard. There are not a lot of accidents but there is a lot of potential.

Mr. Johnson said there is a wall that separates the Cays neighborhood from the highway which extends out to the stop bar. For the most part, cyclists and motorists cannot see each other until they're right at the crosswalk.

Mr. Huth says he sees an issue with vehicles going northbound and coming off the highway. He's also noticed that cyclists don't like to stop at the two stop signs in the intersection. Mr. Johnson agreed and said he believes it's a cyclist behavior issue mainly.

Ms. Hurst asked if there's a pavement marking that would be the bicycle equivalent of "Railroad Crossing Ahead" to warn cyclists that a traffic conflict is coming up and Mr. Johnson said there are types of delineation.

Mr. Scanlon said that some bicyclists who have to unclip their shoes when they come to a stop have said that this is a more dangerous situation. He heard a proposal to install a rumble strip along the bike path so that cyclists have to slow down. He's also heard some cyclists advocating changing the stop signs to yield signs. Also proposed is some sort of traffic light at the bike path. Some Cays residents said that the Cays security guards will sometimes wave them through the stop signs. Mr. Scanlon said yield paddle-type signs like those used at the schools could be placed in the middle of the bike path.

Mr. Johnson said the professionals hired for the bike master plan will have ideas about what is most effective for traffic controls. San Francisco, for instance, has a lot of different controls that aren't being used in San Diego.

Mr. Huth said it would be nice to have something to put your hand on to balance yourself if you're required to come to a stop on a bike.

Mr. Walton said he'd heard a suggestion to put something in to physically stop bikes. But when you do stop you take longer to get across and your exposure time is longer.

John Freeman said that the wall is definitely a safety issue. If you're coming southbound at anything over five miles an hour it's extremely difficult to see a car coming parallel to the freeway and turning right.

Mr. Hadfield said this is a behavior and accountability issue. We can try to implement as many safety items as we possibly can to provide safety to the bicyclists, drivers

and people in that area. Increasing visibility for everybody will be the primary thing. Short of that, people need to take responsibility for their actions.

Mr. Huth liked the idea of looking into the wall adjustment with the homeowners' association.

Mr. Walton said the first meeting of the Ad Hoc Bicycle Committee is October 1 and he's sure this is one of the items they'll be looking at with keen interest and hopefully get some ideas generated by that committee.

The meeting adjourned at 2:52 p.m.