

CITY OF CORONADO

TRAFFIC OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

MEETING MINUTES

September 23, 2010

A meeting of the Traffic Operations Committee (TOC) was held on Thursday, September 23, 2010, at 2:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers. Ed Walton was present. Ed Hadfield represented the absent John Traylor; Kim Godby represented the absent Scott Huth and Jesus Ochoa represented the absent Lou Scanlon. Rachel Hurst was absent and unrepresented.

1. Minutes of the August 26, 2010 Meeting – Approval – Mr. Walton moved to approve the minutes, Mr. Hadfield seconded the motion and they were approved unanimously.

2. Oral Communications – None.

3. Recommendation Regarding a Request for Installation of “Keep Clear” Pavement Legends at the Intersection of Orange Avenue and Loma Avenue – Mr. Johnson said the Engineering Department had received a request via the Mayor’s office in September 2009 stating that a resident, Millie Creager, was concerned about the amount of time that southbound vehicles on Orange Avenue block vehicles exiting Loma Avenue and felt that this situation could be made better by installing pavement legends that say “Keep Clear.”

Mr. Johnson said “Keep Clear” legends can be used in areas where there is a chronic blocking of an intersection and cross traffic is not allowed to flow. City staff contacted Caltrans; this is in the Caltrans right-of-way and it would ultimately be its decision, along with the City’s cooperation, to have these installed, and asked if they would recommend the “Keep Clear” stencils. Caltrans said that in an intersection like this, because of its width, typically it’s not necessary to have a “Keep Clear” stencil, so they said they would not recommend installing one here.

This issue went to the Traffic Operations Committee (TOC) last year with a recommendation to not install pavement stencils. The TOC agreed with the staff recommendation but asked that staff conduct more field surveys in the summertime because the others were done in December 2009. It was felt that surveys done in the summer may show different results. This was done and Exhibits B and C of today’s staff report show the different surveys. Staff found that while blocking of the intersection can occur, it doesn’t occur that often. The hours looked at were the morning peak hour from 6:30-7:30 a.m., the noon lunch hour, and the afternoon peak hour from 4:30-5:30 p.m. These hours coincide with traffic counts so it is known that these are the peak vehicle hours. Staff counted the number of cycles that occurred in each hour (a cycle is the number of times the southbound Orange Avenue traffic gets a green light) and was able to determine the number of times the traffic backed up into the intersection. It was found that in the morning peak hour it only backed up three times to block the intersection; at the lunch time hour, out of 24 cycles, it backed up five times and blocked the intersection; and in the afternoon hour, out of 22 cycles, it backed up four times. Staff looked at this on a percentage basis and during the survey times it appears that 12% of the time the

intersection is getting a traffic blockage. Staff didn't notice much of a vehicle queuing on Loma as a result of any blocking; the most vehicles seen queued on Loma, trying to exit onto Orange or cross Orange, was six vehicles during this survey period. Therefore, with the surveys done in the winter and summer times, staff does recognize that blocking can occur, but doesn't feel it is a chronic problem nor that it happens so frequently that it warrants a "Keep Clear" pavement stencil. The recommendation, again, is to not install pavement stenciling at Loma and Orange.

Mr. Walton asked if queued vehicles got stuck for more than one cycle and Mr. Johnson said he didn't believe the observers were instructed to note that.

Millie Creager thinks this is a safety issue. She is aware of the data, but said the data were not obtained during the peak summertime. The summer is dramatically different from the rest of the year. The data mentions queued vehicles but doesn't mention the vehicles that dodge out, weaving and trying to get through, bicycles that are dangerously weaving, and mothers pushing baby carriages that are stuck midway. The data doesn't talk about the chaos that starts just before the Fourth of July and happens all of July and August. For those months she is amazed that there have been no fatalities. When she listened to the information that Caltrans says the road is too narrow to warrant the pavement markings, she doesn't think the street width has anything with the traffic flow. To her, it's a no-brainer. Because of the curve, people aren't aware there's a light at R. H. Dana and they go across the street thinking they'll be allowed to go and it's sort of like they're trapped. That happens all summer long because of the tourists. She said in 1985 she started driving on a regular basis to La Jolla and in La Jolla they have "Do Not Block Intersection" stencils and in seven years of driving to La Jolla she did not see one single instance of anybody violating the "Do Not Block Intersection" stencil. Putting a stencil at Orange and Loma would be the right thing to do.

Susan McMillan said it's a very easy fix. There are people dodging traffic, people don't realize they should stop, then they do stop and someone's going to rear-end them. People don't know what they're doing at that intersection, but if a "Keep Clear" marking was there they would know that they need to stop and let the cross traffic go through. Many times she'll sit there two and three times for the light and people don't stop the whole time.

Mr. Hadfield asked if other intersection studies had been done and Mr. Johnson said there used to be marked crosswalks along this stretch of Orange Avenue. It predates his time with the City, but he believes there was a fatal accident and Caltrans subsequently removed the crosswalks and has not been agreeable to reinstalling marked crosswalks at uncontrolled intersections. Mr. Johnson said that the *Manual on Uniform Traffic Devices*, which guides the City in installation of traffic control devices, states that signs are the regulatory device that are used for things like this. You could put in a sign that says "Do Not Block Intersection" which could be supplemented by pavement markings that say "Keep Clear." Mr. Johnson said he believes pavement marking without signage is unenforceable; if someone blocked the intersection they couldn't be ticketed. If there is a sign in conjunction with pavement markings, they could be ticketed. Mr. Ochoa said the Vehicle Code regulates blocking intersections, so they can be cited for blocking an intersection whether it says "Keep Clear" or not, but he agreed that markings on the road cannot be enforced without signage. It's not a moving violation; it generally leads to a parking type of ticket. It's difficult to enforce because you have to cite them where they're stopped and there's no place to pull them over, so the enforcement is a little difficult; however, it is possible and it can be done with or without pavement markings. He agrees that traffic during the summer is heavier and that's all the way down Orange; he believes that there are probably other methods to move traffic through the business district faster before

we should consider “Keep Clear” traffic markings. He’d like to evaluate other possibilities such as adjusting lights because we’ll have to make the argument for other intersections that are not signalized, like Ninth and Orange which is also heavily backed up. He would like to continue to evaluate this.

Ms. Godby observed that pedestrian traffic at Orange and Loma creates another barrier to being able to cross, so if we do continue evaluating this we should take that into consideration.

Mr. Walton said that message boards saying “Do Not Block Intersection” were placed at this intersection between the time the request was initially denied and the second review, and he asked Ms. Creager if she felt they’d been effective. She indicated that they had been, but a week or two after the sign was taken down compliance abated.

Mr. Walton said he sees this as a problem that occurs during the heavy summer months; the survey Engineering staff did was in late June when it’s getting into that period. He believes more positive reinforcement through the message board, which is put out there when it’s needed, should be done and he doesn’t think anything permanent is needed right now when it is a problem during specific time frames.

Mr. Hadfield agreed that during the times the City is impacted, based on commuter traffic, it would be more effective to utilize positive signage and reduce the permanency of markings in the roadway.

Mr. Ochoa said if the signage is left up too long it begins to be ignored at some point, so it needs to be in and out.

Ms. Creager agreed that Seventh and Ninth on Orange are congested, but people don’t block them the way they block Loma because there’s no light that backs traffic up. She thinks pavement marking is a perfect solution; it’s there 24/7. She thinks it’s cumbersome to bring in the message board.

Mr. Hadfield said that pavement markings are unenforceable unless combined with stand-up signage and he knows the community, as well as the City Council, is hesitant to add more stand-up signage on Orange for any particular reason. He thinks that placing anything permanent on the road, which Caltrans has already indicated they don’t want to do and staff has recommended against, and which is something that’s not enforceable by law, really doesn’t provide us with the solution that we’re looking for. He doesn’t know if there is a perfect solution, but he thinks one step in the right direction is to utilize the message board and to continue to evaluate this intersection. His recommendation is to agree with staff’s recommendation not to put permanent markings on the street and to continue to evaluate as we utilize the temporary signage.

Mr. Walton seconded the motion and added that, as discussed, the message board is effective for a little while and then people tend to block it out of their minds. He also thinks that signage and markings on the road would be similar and that people would tend to block that out of their minds. He thinks the message board is more effective; people are not used to seeing it so they are more cautious and pay more attention.

Mr. Ochoa said he doesn’t think this needs to go away, no matter what today’s vote is. The issue needs to be evaluated on an ongoing basis and he thinks the City does need to take into consideration that the heaviest traffic is in July and August. He’d like to come back and look at it next July or August to evaluate if there’s more of a need there. He said he’d like to say that the Police will go out there and enforce it but the reality is that when they do, a bigger mess is created and he’d rather that the message board control it than the officers standing there and

stopping cars. It sends a great signal; however, based on the traffic impact that we have in that area, it may not necessarily be the smartest idea at the peak travel time.

The motion passed, 4-0, with Rachel Hurst absent.

Ms. Creager asked if she could appeal this decision and Mr. Johnson said she should write a letter to the City Manager saying that her request was heard by the TOC and denied, and she'd like the City Council to reconsider it.

4. 2009 Annual Traffic Report – The TOC did not have any questions about the report so Mr. Walton moved that it be forwarded to the City Council; Mr. Hadfield seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.