

# MINUTES OF REGULAR TRAFFIC COMMISSION MEETING

CITY OF LOS ALAMITOS  
3191 Katella Avenue  
Los Alamitos, California

February 12, 2014

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

A Regular meeting of the Traffic Commission was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on February 12, 2014, in the Council Chambers, 3191 Katella Avenue, Los Alamitos, Chair Emerson presiding.

2. **ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:** COMMISSIONERS                      Biri, Emerson, Mejia, Patz, Schleuter,  
Vardeman, Wilhelm

**ABSENT:**      COMMISSIONERS

**PRESENT:** STAFF                                      Dave Hunt, City Engineer  
Sharon Nowell, Department Secretary  
Bruce McAlpine, Captain

3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Schleuter.

4. **ORAL COMMUNICATIONS**

None

5. **MINUTES**

None

6. **STAFF REPORTS**

**A. Review of Draft Engineering and Traffic Survey for Speed Limits**

Dave Hunt introduced Jerry Stock, of Hartzog & Crabill. Hartzog & Crabill performed the speed limit survey to determine whether any modifications to the survey were needed. Mr. Hunt gave a summary of the staff report and the information contained therein. In summary, changes were recommended for the following segments:

- Bloomfield Street – Cerritos Avenue to Katella Avenue – increase speed limit from 35 mph to 40 mph

- Cerritos Avenue – Bloomfield Street to East City limits – install 40 mph speed limit sign westbound west Santa Clara Street (east City limit)
- Katella Avenue – Lexington Drive to Siboney Street – install 40 mph speed limit sign for westbound direction

The Traffic Commission is being asked to review and approve the Draft Engineering and Traffic Survey for Speed Limits, which will then be forwarded to City Council for their approval. Mr. Hunt then turned the meeting over to Chair Emerson for questions and comments from the Traffic Commission.

Commission asked for clarification of the Radar Speed Survey Field Sheet and the Radar Speed Distribution Sheet. Mr. Stock explained the information contained on the sheets. He stated that the criteria contained in the Vehicle Code and MUTCD (Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices) states that the speed limit should be posted within 5 mph of the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed. A compelling reason (reasons not readily apparent to the motorist) would be needed to post outside of the 5 mph threshold.

Mr. Stock explained that he tries not to change speed limits as long as they are able to stay in compliance the Vehicle Code & MUTCD. Motorists are dictating the speed limit, based on the premise that the average motorist is safety conscious and drives at a safe speed. Speed limits are consistent with driver behavior.

The first item discussed was the recommendation to increase speed from 35 mph to 40 mph on Bloomfield Street from Cerritos Avenue to Katella Avenue. Commission is concerned with recommending a 40 MPH speed limit on Bloomfield Street between Cerritos Avenue and Katella Avenue. With McAuliffe and Los Alamitos Elementary school located there, kids are present on and around campus more than just during the day. What consideration was given for the fact that there are two schools on that street? Mr. Stock explained that there are signs posted alerting motorists that there are schools in the area. The definition of “not readily apparent” to motorists is not met and there is no justification for deviating from 40 mph; therefore, we are compelled to stay within 5 mph of the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile.

Commission inquired about time and conditions for the data collection for Bloomfield Street. Mr. Stock stated that the data was collected for the segment recommended for change, on November 14, between 1:00 p.m. and 1:30 p.m. He stated that the data collector sits in an inconspicuous position

on each side of the roadway for a duration of time needed to collect data on a statistically representative number of vehicles. Mr. Stock stated the 25 mph speed limit applies to areas contiguous to schools within a specific time period and a specific geographic location. He also explained that the data collection was conducted outside of the sphere of influence of schools, which is why the greatest number of vehicles was traveling 33-42 mph.

Commission noted that the accident history showed one accident in a 24 month period; and felt that was fairly low.

Commission was concerned that once you cross Katella Avenue the speed limit changes to 25 mph for the residential area and felt that is the one place where the base speed should be raised. Feel that it seems more prudent to err on the side of caution because of the two schools and a park. Mr. Stock stated that there were "no compelling reasons" to justify maintaining the speed at 35 mph, which is below the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile. He stated that there are no factors "not readily apparent" to the motorist; i.e., high rate of collisions, areas of limited site distance, vertical curve. He believes that if a citation was challenged in court it would not hold up. Based on the statistical data, motorists are slowing down traveling southbound on Bloomfield Street; north city limits to Cerritos Avenue speed data shows the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed as 44.8 mph, Cerritos Avenue to Katella Avenue is 41.0 mph, Katella Avenue to Farquhar Avenue drops to 25.2 mph. He stated that, as reflected in the statistical data, the characteristics of the roadway and adjacent land uses are compelling the motorists to alter their driving.

Commission asked Mr. Stock if, in his view, and in studying other cities, how often the decision is made not to go with the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile and stay with the current speed limit. Mr. Stock stated if that was the case City Council would have to adopt an ordinance. However, if it is contested he does not believe it would hold up in court as there is no compelling reason to maintain the 35 mph speed limit and it is inconsistent with the Vehicle Code and MUTCD guidelines.

Mr. Stock likened the Vehicle Code and MUTCD guidelines to a recipe. The traffic engineers are required to follow that recipe, which means staying within a 5 mph window of the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile unless there is a compelling reason. He prefers personally to be consistent with what the existing posting is, and not to change postings unless his hand is forced.

Commission questioned why this did not apply to maintaining the 35 mph on Bloomfield Street between Cerritos Avenue and Katella Avenue. Both Mr. Hunt and Mr. Stock explained that the survey data shows a 6 mph higher speed, which is outside the 5 mph cutoff. Mr. Stock stated that guidelines of the Vehicle Code and MUTCD must be followed. To keep the speed limit at 35 mph there must be a reason or justification that meets the definition of 'not readily apparent' to the motorist. Bloomfield Street is straight, flat, has good lateral visibility, a low accident rate, and the adjacent land use is clearly visible. In doing due diligence, data did not show a compelling reason that would meet the test of 'not readily apparent' to a motorist. That is the basis of the recommendation to raise the speed limit to 40 mph.

Commission questioned whether using radar is the most effective method to obtain vehicle speed data. Mr. Stock answered that the data reflects the percentage of vehicles in pace is 75% – 90%, which is a tight spread resulting in good statistical data.

Commission inquired about the location of the tester gathering speed data; are they positioned midblock? Mr. Stock stated that is what is required by the MUTCD; the tester is in an unmarked vehicle, in an inconspicuous location, using a calibrated device.

Commission questioned whether tubes across the pavement are more accurate for measuring speed than radar. Mr. Stock stated tubes are used to obtain speed profiles but are not accurate enough for this application. He stated that tubes are also more conspicuous, which could alter driver behavior.

The Commission then discussed raising the 35 mph speed limit on segments of Katella Avenue currently 35 mph to 40 mph. The following points were raised:

- 40 mph would be consistent with other segments on Katella Avenue.
- Does measuring speed at off-peak traffic periods introduce a bias? Mr. Stock stated that the guidelines require 'off-peak' optimal flow.
- Citizens have complained that most vehicles do not drive at the posted 35 mph speed limit on Katella Avenue.
- Would be interesting to see how many vehicles have been cited for excessive speed on Katella Avenue. Mr. Stock stated that it is not a factor of consideration for this analysis.

- Katella Avenue can be perceived as a speed trap, as the speed drops from to 35 mph from 40 mph coming from Cypress and 45 mph from Long Beach.
- Question was raised as to whether or not on-street parking is a factor in determining speed. Mr. Stock stated that the presence or absence of on-street parking is not a factor.
- If the speed limit is raised to 40 mph, perhaps the speed indicator placed going westbound on Katella Avenue can be moved to another location.

Commission consensus was to increase the speed limit on the three segments on Katella Avenue from 35 mph to 40 mph. Mr. Stock stated that this change was within guidelines and could be made by the Traffic Commission and taken to City Council for approval; or the Traffic Commission could approve the survey as presented and let City Council recommend the increase. The Commission was in favor of making the changes and forwarding it to City Council.

**MOTION: FIRST/SECOND: Emerson/Biri**

Accept the Draft Engineering and Traffic Survey for Speed Limits as presented, with the recommendation to revise the speed limit survey to increase the speed limit from 35 mph to 40 mph on the three segments on Katella Avenue prior to City Council review. Motion passed unanimously.

**B. Removal of Green 24-Minute Parking in Front of 4582 Katella Avenue**

Mr. Hunt informed the Commission that a dental surgery complex is planning to occupy the building at 4582 Katella Avenue. He stated that they currently have ample onsite parking that meets required code, and were aware of green 24-minute parking when they purchased the site. He stated that the property owner desired unrestricted parking for convenience of parking in front of their place of business. The current 24-minute parking restriction guarantees that the parking spaces are empty most of the time which helps with visibility when pulling out onto Katella Avenue. Mr. Hunt is not recommending changing the 24-minute parking. He provided the Commission with previous staff reports pertaining to this subject.

Commission inquired who will pay for the changes requested. Mr. Hunt stated that the City will pay for costs associated with changes. Concern was raised about delivery trucks unloading curbside presenting an impediment to eastbound traffic. Mr. Hunt stated that he felt that this area and issue have

been considered enough times in the past that the current 24-minute usage is best left as is.

**MOTION:** Patz/Vardeman: Deny request to remove 24-minute parking restriction located in front of 4582 Katella Avenue. Motion unanimously carried.

**C. Request for Loading/Unloading Parking on Lexington Drive from Katella Avenue to the First Southerly Alley**

Dave Hunt gave a summary of the report and information contained therein. Mr. Hunt talked to the manager of Katella Deli, who then talked to the owner, and they are in favor of the proposed change. They agreed to ask delivery trucks to use curb loading and unloading before using the alley. Mr. Hunt stated that he is recommending approval of the request for the loading/unloading parking. He then turned discussion over to the Commission.

Concern was raised about parking being transferred into the neighborhood. Mr. Hunt stated that it would be a loss of three spaces, and those spaces are usually occupied by Katella Deli employees who will be encouraged to park in the parking lot.

Commissioner Mejia noted that there was some work being done in the alley and was concerned that trucks traveling over the speed humps may have caused deterioration of the alley. He also noted that after the trucks unloaded their vehicles they would have to proceed south on Lexington Drive to come out on Noel Street.

Mr. Hunt stated that this parking restriction would have to be taken to City Council for approval. Prior to Council consideration he would notify everyone within 500 ft. of the proposed restriction.

Commission inquired if it would be possible to have parking for loading and unloading for specified hours during the day. Mr. Hunt does not recall seeing signs for specific hours for loading and unloading.

Discussion ensued about taking away residential parking. The possibility of implementing loading/unloading parking with a time limit was a consideration because it would not restrict parking all the time. Mr. Hunt stated that the

Commission could make that recommendation and he will look into time restricted loading/unloading zones.

**MOTION: FIRST/SECOND Patz/Biri:** Set up loading/unloading only parking on Lexington Drive for 100 ft. from Katella Avenue to first southerly alley between the hours of 7 AM – 4 PM. Motion carried unanimously.

## 7. ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

Mr. Hunt reported the following:

- Public Works crew has been busy finishing up 'to do' list.
- Mr. Hunt has met with the school traffic safety consultant and the maintenance and operations person regarding the School Traffic Study. They did not have many comments about the study.
- Medical Center will be doing construction of median islands and signal installation on Katella Avenue. Construction tentatively scheduled to start in March. Advance notice of construction will be conveyed via message boards and flyers to schools, residents and businesses. The schedule for this work was blessed years ago, and there is no deviating from it.
- Items F-5 and F-8 on Status List are still pending.

## 8. TRAFFIC COMMISSION INITIATED BUSINESS

Commissioner Schleuter:

- Requested that future traffic counts include Howard Avenue from Lexington Drive to Bennington Street, as those streets are used as a thoroughfare.
- Asked if there is any signage that could be installed to deter cut through traffic on streets such as Siboney, Midway, and Enterprise. Mr. Hunt will look into it.

Commissioner Mejia:

- Noticed right-turn only striping and bots dots on Florista and Sausalito were done.
- Verified that painting around speed humps will be painted after current construction being done is finished. Mr. Hunt confirmed.

Chair Emerson:

- Modify traffic count map showing Lexington Drive as going through.
- Resident approached him and said that northbound Lexington Drive, left-turn onto Katella Avenue only allows 3 – 4 cars through. Needs to be set to allow more to go through, or possible allow left-turn from two lanes. Mr. Hunt stated that due to the synchronization of the signal, the left-turn does suffer. That intersection has a three-party agreement with the City of Cypress, Cottonwood Church, and the City of Los Alamitos. No modifications to the intersection can be made without agreement from all three parties, which can

make it difficult to get anything done. Mr. Hunt will see if any adjustment can be made and will report back to the Traffic Commission.

- Agendize priorities for Traffic Commission to focus on for the upcoming year. Mr. Hunt stated that he will also be bringing 7-Year Capital Improvement Plan to the Commission for their review in March.

## 9. ADJOURNMENT

### **MOTION/SECOND: Patz/Schleuter**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:05 p.m. to the next regularly scheduled meeting on March 12, 2014, at 7:00 p.m.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Hunt", written over a horizontal line.

Dave Hunt, City Engineer