



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND
CITY COUNCIL

FROM: James R. Helmer

SUBJECT: SAN PEDRO STREET AND
BLEWETT AVENUE TRAFFIC
CALMING PILOT PROJECTS

DATE: 10-10-07

Approved

Kay Wener

Date

10/10/07

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 3, 6

RECOMMENDATION

Adoption of resolutions:

- 1) Amending the exemption approved for the San Pedro Street Traffic Calming Pilot Project at the June 5, 2007 Council meeting to provide for traffic calming measures other than road lumps.
- 2) Exempting the Blewett Avenue Traffic Calming Pilot Project from the Traffic Calming Policy 5-6.

OUTCOME

The recommended actions would result in traffic calming pilot projects to:

- 1) Test traffic calming devices on San Pedro Street in an effort to reduce speeding.
- 2) Test road lumps on Blewett Avenue in an effort to reduce speeding and cut-through traffic.
- 3) Allow the Departments of Transportation, Fire and Police the opportunity to test physical traffic calming devices and processes not yet tried in San Jose while the Traffic Calming Community Hearing process is underway.

BACKGROUND

The current Residential Traffic Calming Policy 5-6 was approved by the City Council in June 2001. The policy outlines the different types of traffic calming measures and provides a process

for neighborhoods experiencing “adverse traffic conditions” to work with the City for the installation of comprehensive traffic calming solutions. The policy also provides for traffic calming installations to be incorporated into development projects that may result in adverse traffic conditions in existing neighborhoods.

San Pedro Street

On June 5, 2007 the City Council exempted the San Pedro Street Traffic Calming Pilot Project (installation of up to six road lumps) from the Traffic Calming Policy 5-6; and from the petition process contained within the policy. This exemption came after years of the community and the Department of Transportation attempting to address neighborhood concerns about speeding while working within the bounds of the Policy. The City Council also directed staff to return within 12 months to provide a status report on the outcome of the pilot project.

Road lumps are a variant of road bumps, with the difference being that multiple road lumps are spaced across the roadway, providing gaps that accommodate the wheelbase of most fire trucks. Motorists in passenger vehicles that have much narrower wheelbases would need to drive over the road lump with at least one set of tires. Road lumps have not been installed in San Jose, although they have been used in other cities and counties, and have experienced a mixed degree of success.

During the summer, the Department of Transportation (DOT) worked with the Fire Department and the Traffic Committee of the Vendome Neighborhood Association (VNA) to view sample road lumps of similar size and configuration of the intended lumps for San Pedro Street. On August 27, San Pedro Street residents were invited to a meeting at the Fire Training Center to view the sample road lump layout, associated signs and pavement markings, and to provide input on the proposed road lump locations. Subsequent to this meeting, the VNA’s Traffic Committee informed the Office of Council District 3 of their desire to explore alternative physical devices for San Pedro Street in lieu of road lumps.

Blewett Avenue

Blewett Avenue is primarily a residential local street that experiences some instances of high speeding and cut-through traffic. Blewett Avenue is parallel to, and located one block east of, Lincoln Avenue. A survey conducted on the street by DOT in June 2007 indicated approximate average daily volumes of 1,250 vehicles with average speeds of 26 miles per hour (mph). Blewett Avenue is posted at 25 mph. While the volume and average speed is consistent with data collected in years past, Blewett Avenue experiences speeding vehicles using the neighborhood as a bypass, especially during peak commute periods and during major events on Lincoln Avenue in downtown Willow Glen.

ANALYSIS

San Pedro Street and Blewett Avenue have many similarities, in that they are long, straight streets lined with residences and narrow driveways. Each is posted at 25 mph. San Pedro has higher volumes, contains a stop sign, has a traffic signal at one end and is a neighborhood collector due to numerous local side streets connecting to it. Blewett Avenue is a local street, located between two busy arterials. No stop sign exists, but truck prohibitions are in place.

The current Council Policy has proven to be reliable, and a useful tool for staff and neighborhoods to use throughout the City. However, it does not provide opportunities for streets that experience speeding, high volumes and/or cut-through traffic, due to their proximity to congested arterials or freeways. San Pedro Street and Blewett Avenue residents also cite many more near-miss incidents or minor mishaps than either the Police or DOT records indicate.

The Council's Policy on Residential Traffic Calming (Policy 5-6) is under review as a result of an audit conducted between 2005-07, and because of staff's determination that it is not serving the community as effectively as it could. In addition, new technologies and tools have been developed that could be applied in the traffic calming "toolkit" today that did not exist in 2001. In some cases, technologies such as NASCOP (neighborhood speed radar) that were available in 2001 are not available today. A series of ten Traffic Calming Community meetings have been called for by the Mayor, and will be conducted in October and November of this year. The meetings will be chaired by Councilmember Oliverio, and the Transportation and Police Departments. The results and possible recommended actions will be reported out to the Transportation and Environment Committee in December.

Finding the right set of solutions for calming traffic in neighborhoods can take a long time and in some cases cause friction among neighbors. In some instances, a simple installation of signs or periodic enforcement can solve a problem, and in others a comprehensive set of physical devices to force slowing or diversion of traffic is needed. San Pedro and Blewett are examples of two streets where the solutions have been hard to come by while operating within current policy. There is strong resolve though, on the parts of the residents of each community and staff to find the right solution(s).

While the VNA Traffic Committee has decided to not pursue road lumps as a desirable solution to slowing traffic on San Pedro Street, the residents of Blewett have shown an interest in testing the devices. The Department of Transportation is seeking a neighborhood to test the devices to determine if they should ultimately be added to the traffic calming "Toolkit", as a possible option for community representatives and staff to consider. It is also important to gauge their level of impact on emergency response of the Fire and Police Departments.

Given that Blewett Avenue residents have again seen unfavorable traffic conditions rising on their street, they have informed the District 6 Office of a desire to petition for these devices. Staff supports this action and has sufficient funding and resources in 2007 to conduct such a test.

At the same time, staff intends to continue working with the VNA Traffic Committee to find a solution for San Pedro Street.

If the City Council approves an exemption to City Council Policy 5-6 for the Blewett Avenue pilot road lump project, and the residents successfully petition for their installation, the timeframe to collect traffic data, coordinate road lump locations with affected residents and/or business owners, and install the road lumps would be 60 to 90 days.

A 6-12 month trial period would also be proposed to test the road lumps on Blewett Avenue. During this period, traffic data would be collected to determine their effectiveness and to obtain input from the neighborhood, and the Fire and Police Departments.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

For both the San Pedro Street and Blewett Avenue pilot projects, DOT would provide a status update to the Transportation and Environment Committee in Spring 2008. The testing of these devices on these streets has the added importance of determining their usefulness throughout the City in any neighborhood.

POLICY ALTERNATIVES

Alternative #1: City Council not amend the exemption provided to the San Pedro Street Traffic Calming Pilot Project. If road lumps are not tested on San Pedro Street, no further action would be taken on this roadway.

Pros: Would enable the prior direction provided by City Council to test road lumps to proceed.

Cons: The VNA's Traffic Committee does not want to pursue road lumps, and the associated signage and markings on San Pedro Street.

Reason for not recommending: The original request for installing road lumps on San Pedro Street was to respond to concerns raised by the VNA regarding speeding. Amending the exemption previously provided for the San Pedro Street pilot project to include traffic calming measures other than road lumps will provide for options to address concerns raised by the VNA.

Alternative #2: City Council not approve an exemption to City Council Policy 5-6 to install up to four road lumps on Blewett Avenue.

Pros: This would prevent further precedence for future exemptions to the Traffic Calming Policy where currently defined and documented adverse traffic conditions do not exist.

Cons: Does not respond to Blewett Avenue residents' requests for immediate traffic calming measures to address speeding and cut-through traffic.

Reason for not recommending: Road lumps have not yet been tested for their effectiveness as a traffic calming device and for potential inclusion in the Traffic Calming Toolkit. In addition,

although Blewett Avenue does not experience “adverse traffic conditions” as defined by the Traffic Calming policy, the street does experience substantial cut-through traffic and some levels of high speeding.

PUBLIC OUTREACH/INTEREST

- Criterion 1:** Requires Council action on the use of public funds equal to \$1 million or greater. **(Required: Website Posting)**
- Criterion 2:** Adoption of a new or revised policy that may have implications for public health, safety, quality of life, or financial/economic vitality of the City. **(Required: E-mail and Website Posting)**
- Criterion 3:** Consideration of proposed changes to service delivery, programs, staffing that may have impacts to community services and have been identified by staff, Council or a Community group that requires special outreach. **(Required: E-mail, Website Posting, Community Meetings, Notice in appropriate newspapers)**

While this action does not meet the \$1 million threshold for Criteria 1, this memorandum will be posted on the City’s website for the October 23, 2007 Council agenda.

Prior to the August 27 meeting, flyers were distributed to all residents on San Pedro Street inviting them to the meeting. In addition, DOT staff and VNA members encouraged residents immediately adjacent to the proposed road lumps locations to attend.

During 2007, there have been several meetings with Blewett Avenue residents regarding their concerns about traffic conditions on their street.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the Department of Planning, Building and Code Enforcement, the Attorney’s Office and the City Manager’s Budget Office.

FISCAL/POLICY ALIGNMENT

The recommended actions amend the exemption provided to the San Pedro Street Pilot Traffic Calming Project and exempts the Blewett Avenue Pilot Traffic Calming Project from City Council Policy 5-6.

COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS

The cost to install additional traffic calming measures on San Pedro Street would be dependent on the type and size of device installed. The funds to install the additional devices would be provided through an existing developer contribution from the Taylor Towers/Vendome Place project for traffic improvements in the vicinity of the development.

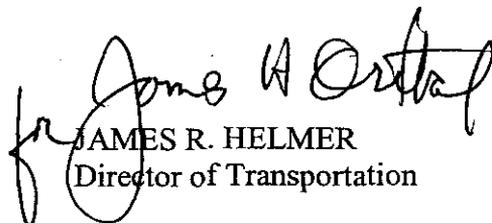
The estimated cost to install the test road lumps and associated signs and pavement markings at up to four locations on Blewett Avenue is \$20,000. Funding for the temporary pilot project would be provided for by Traffic Calming capital funds.

BUDGET REFERENCE

Fund #	Appn. #	Appn. Name	Total Appn.	Cost of Project	2007-2008 Adopted Capital Budget Page	Last Budget Action (Date, Ord. No.)
465	5315	Vendome & 7 th Street Traffic Calming	\$195,000	\$100,000	V-1103	6/19/07
465	5486	Traffic Calming	\$780,000	\$20,000	V-1155	6/19/07

CEQA

Exempt, File No. PP06-171.


for JAMES R. HELMER
Director of Transportation

For questions please contact Laura Wells, Division Manager, at 975-3725.