



Memorandum

TO: BUILDING BETTER
TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

FROM: James R. Helmer
Robert L. Davis

SUBJECT: SAN JOSE GRAND PRIX
TRAFFIC AND PARKING
MANAGEMENT

DATE: 08-31-05

Approved

Date

8/31/05

RECOMMENDATION

Accept this report on Traffic and Parking Management for the inaugural San José Grand Prix.

BACKGROUND

From July 29-31, the Taylor-Woodrow Grand Prix of San José successfully completed its inaugural running, exceeding attendance projections by attracting 153,000 race fans over the three-day event. The transportation element of the San José Grand Prix was among the most significant, given the nature, location, and magnitude of the event. The transportation element of the Grand Prix consisted of:

1. Track Planning and Development
2. Track Construction and Associated Traffic Management
3. Development of a Traffic, Parking and Transit Access Plan
4. Transportation Operations For the Event
5. Post Event Results and Restoration

ANALYSIS

1. Track Planning and Development

The first step in planning for the Grand Prix called for detailed reviews of alternative tracks and a complete understanding of the race venue itself in terms of its benefits and impacts. This required a first hand look at the landscape of the proposed racecourse. Staff from DOT, Public Works, Planning, Police, Fire, Economic Development/Cultural Affairs and Redevelopment walked the entire racetrack to identify challenges and determine ways to address them.

From a transportation perspective, it was important to assess the potential impacts to downtown traffic, business and residential access, potential maintenance impacts and the effect of the race on downtown transit operations. Other impacts were also assessed including: street closures and conditions, median islands, curb, gutter, and sidewalks, and storm sewer facilities.

2. Track Construction and Associated Traffic Management

Once the specific track configuration was identified, the Department of Public Works, in conjunction with the Grand Prix and its contractors, designed and constructed significant roadway modifications and re-paving work on the racecourse. This construction activity required detailed planning of street closures, the provision of alternate traffic routes, and on-going communication with downtown stakeholders affected by the activity.

3. Development of a Traffic, Parking, and Transit Access Plan

Based upon experience from managing events at HP Pavilion over the last decade, staff determined that a comprehensive Traffic and Parking Management Plan (TPMP) was needed to effectively manage the transportation system before, during, and after the event, and to properly deal with the many issues that surfaced in advance of such a major event. The San José Grand Prix retained the services of Hexagon Transportation Consultants who, with the assistance of DOT and SJPD staff, developed a detailed Traffic and Parking Management Plan. The plan addressed a broad spectrum of issues including:

- Street Closure Location and Timing
- Traffic Management
- Traffic Officer Deployment and Staffing
- Transit Access and Operations
- Signage Identification and Placement
- Parking Venue Identification

The TPMP served as the working document to manage transportation access during the event. The consultants and staff that developed the TPMP have strong working knowledge of downtown transportation management and events. As a result, the plan was practical and flexible and was largely executed in a manner consistent with its major elements. As with any major event and plan, a flexible approach was used to adjust to unforeseen developments to ensure smooth and responsive management of the event.

4. Transportation Operations For the Event

Traffic Operations

Two weeks prior to race, the actual racecourse installation was initiated. The process was dynamic, and required traffic control and street closure plans on a rolling basis. DOT and SJPD worked with the Grand Prix to accommodate the placement of grandstands, block fencing, perimeter fencing, pedestrian bridge construction, and the deployment of race equipment. Each

of these elements required temporary street closures and traffic detours. For the most part, track installation went smoothly. In certain instances though, track implementation required the acceleration of some street closures and the delay of others, resulting in some inconvenience to surrounding residents and businesses.

The DOT Traffic Operations Team actively managed traffic during the street closure process and throughout the entire race weekend. Staff developed advanced traffic management, signal coordination, and signage plans to manage and direct traffic to minimize congestion. Overall, even with the major influx of visitors and the major street closures, traffic flowed extremely well all weekend. The most significant challenge came on Thursday, July 28, when, due to safety considerations associated with the final track installation, street closures were accelerated. That combined with Music in the Park created heavy traffic, but gridlock was never reached. SJPD's active and full deployment of officers at key locations throughout downtown was critical to keeping traffic flowing during the most congested time on Thursday evening. Much of the remainder of the weekend, the officers effectively directed traffic according to plan, resulting in a smooth flow of traffic for an event of this magnitude.

DOT and SJPD staffs were able to identify several valuable lessons from this year's event that are being incorporated into the planning for the 2006 race. The most significant one is addressing the difficulties associated with final track installation and street closures being spread over a week long period with the last occurring so close to the actual event itself. These modifications will include a strategy to ensure that all road closures occur as close to simultaneously as possible. This will minimize confusion commuters may have experienced due to changing roadway conditions. SJPD will also plan to elevate the staffing for traffic control during street closures. At the same time, staff will seek to improve roadway and pedestrian signage to better facilitate movement in and around the race venue. In general, the Grand Prix went very well from the Traffic Enforcement Unit (TEU) perspective. DOT and SJPD received extremely positive feedback from the community regarding crowd control, traffic management, and overall neighborhood protection.

VTA Transit Service

An important step in identifying the effects of the Grand Prix on Downtown San José was determining the effect that crossing the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority's (VTA) light rail tracks would have on transit service and the race itself. The Grand Prix course required crossing the light rail tracks at both San Carlos and Almaden Boulevard and San Carlos and Market Street. Working with VTA staff and representatives from the San José Grand Prix, DOT staff was able to facilitate an agreement for the closure of the light rail tracks during the race while providing after hours access for trains to be returned to the VTA maintenance yard.

Once light rail access to Downtown was restricted, staff had to ensure that traffic operations during the race were able to support increased bus operations, including the addition of a bus bridge from Diridon Station to the Transit Mall for light rail passengers.

The San José Grand Prix and VTA Marketing Departments joined forces to encourage transit use during Grand Prix weekend. As a result, light rail ridership experienced significant increases during the San José Grand Prix weekend. Data reported by VTA staff showed that light rail ridership increased significantly over the three-day race period. The increases were in all fare categories (Adult, Youth and Senior/Disabled) for Single Ride tickets and Day Pass sales.

VTA estimated the increase in light rail passengers/boardings over a normal Friday, Saturday, and Sunday related to the race to be as follows:

- Friday -- Increased by approximately 5,000 passengers or 10,000 boardings over an average weekday ridership of 21,436 boardings, an increase of 47 percent.
- Saturday -- Increased by approximately 10,000 passengers or 20,000 boardings over average Saturday ridership of 13,496 boardings, an increase in boardings of 148 percent.
- Sunday -- Increased by approximately 15,000 passengers or 30,000 boardings over average Sunday ridership of 10,575 boardings, an increase in boardings of 284 percent.

In addition, all other rail services into the Downtown Diridon Station, including Caltrain, Altamont Commuter Express (ACE), and the Capitol Corridor, reported increases in their weekend ridership.

Parking Management

An important part of preparing for the expected increased traffic in downtown was to identify a sufficient number of parking facilities to accommodate not only race patrons, but also downtown residents, workers, hotel and restaurant guests. DOT staff put together a comprehensive parking program which included identifying public and private parking facilities that could provide adequate supply during the event, developed parking wayfinding signage and deployed adequate parking staff to provide customer service to existing users and race patrons.

Grand Prix and City staff negotiated accommodations with the downtown hotels directly affected by the location of the race to relocate and provide additional parking for their employees and guests. In addition, staff worked with the San José Grand Prix to implement the following accommodations:

- Established alternative parking locations and shuttle service for downtown employees, hotel employees and guests during race weekend.
- Coordinated with private parking facilities/operators to open for the race weekend and increase the available parking supply for the event to approximately 30,000 spaces.
- Amended parking agreements with private building/property owners and several hotels to accommodate race weekend activities.

- Negotiated with San Jose State University (SJSU) for use of the SJSU parking facilities to allow for public use and provide alternate parking for City employees and hotel guests/employees.
- Developed parking accommodations for wedding parties holding ceremonies at St. Joseph's Cathedral during race weekend.
- Established parking fees at public parking facilities during race weekend to help recapture operational costs incurred by the event.
- Coordinated with DOT-Signal Central regarding the status of available parking (occupancy) at both public and private parking facilities. This ensured that DOT-Signal Central directed motorists to available parking via the City's Changeable Message Sign (CMS) system.
- Introduced the Parking Guidance System (PGS) - Phase I signs at the Market Street Garage. The PGS signs displayed electronic text messages at the entrance of the garage informing motorists of the parking rate and if parking was available or direct them to other parking facility that had availability.
- Strategically placed parking staff at various locations throughout the downtown core to assist motorist/pedestrians with parking and event information. Staff waved "checkered flags" and distributed informational parking/event maps ("The Way to San Jose").

Community Coordination

Organizing the Grand Prix required significant community outreach efforts. Residents, business owners, and neighborhood organizations were invited to several community meetings where race organizers and City staff made presentations on the planning of the Grand Prix. The meetings offered an opportunity for the community to learn more about the event and ask questions about its potential impacts. The meetings were generally positive and went a long way toward generating a level of understanding about an extremely complex event.

As part of our community outreach efforts, DOT staff developed "The Way" (Attachment A), a detailed information sheet and map that gave directions to the race, along with parking and access information to downtown residents, businesses, and race patrons. In addition, DOT staff distributed regular e-mail updates to downtown residents and business owners affected by the race, informing them of everything from street closure schedules, to parking availability.

Post Event Results and Restoration

Broad coordination by City departments with the community and media paid significant dividends in the planning of this year's San José Grand Prix. While attendance was higher than projected, staff's effective planning helped result in transit ridership that was at an all-time high, the operation of traffic in the downtown that was steady but manageable and the availability of parking facilities that provided more than enough capacity. All of this was accomplished with a planning horizon of barely six months.

City staff completed a similar comprehensive walk-through of the racecourse following the event as we did preceding it. Staff documented damage to City streets and some of the physical infrastructure in and around the race venue. City staff is working with the San José Grand Prix to repair or replace any and all damage to the City's infrastructure and staff will be working with the Grand Prix to ensure that similar damages are avoided in 2006.

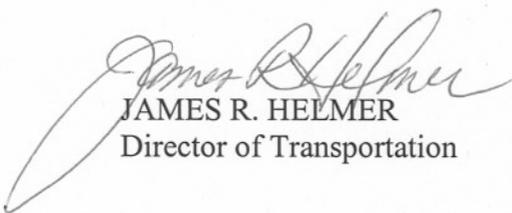
Lessons Learned

It should be noted, however, staff did encounter issues that need to be addressed prior to next year's Grand Prix. First and foremost, planning an event of this scope and size requires more time to plan, which we will have for the 2006 race. Second, community outreach was invaluable to the success of this year's event. City staff should plan to expand both community and business outreach and invite broader participation from community stakeholders.

Several concerns were raised about the race venue itself that need to be addressed for the 2006 event. These include but are not limited to the following:

- The size and number of pedestrian crossings throughout the race venue.
- The number of gates providing access to the racetrack.
- The overall pedestrian access and movement inside the race venue.
- Timing of street closures for track placement.
- Impacts of VTA light rail tracks and the movement of block fencing.

City staff will continue going through a detailed debriefing process, which is aimed at identifying any and all problems with this year's Grand Prix and developing a strategy to address those problems. A full report to City Council will be forthcoming in the next few weeks. At the same time, City staff has already begun working with the San José Grand Prix and VTA to plan next year's race.



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Attachment