



Memorandum

TO: BUILDING STRONGER
NEIGHBORHOODS COMMITTEE

FROM: Stephen M. Haase
James R. Helmer

SUBJECT: VEHICLE ABATEMENT AND
STREET SWEEPING PROGRAMS

DATE: April 13, 2004

Approved

Date

BACKGROUND

At the November 17, 2003 Building Stronger Neighborhoods Committee meeting, the Planning, Building and Code Enforcement (PBCE) Department provided an overview of Vehicle Abatement policies and services. The Department of Transportation (DOT) provided a report on the City's Street Sweeping services. The Committee accepted the reports and requested that PBCE return with an updated report on the Vehicle Abatement Program before the 2004-05 budget hearings to provide additional information addressing the following:

- Establishment of clear priorities to improve service to neighborhoods.
- What is an effective role for the Council offices?
- Identify partnership opportunities between neighborhood associations, City departments and the Vehicle Abatement team.
- Summarize the coordination between Vehicle Abatement and Street Sweeping programs.
- Summarize the funding mechanism for the Vehicle Abatement Program.
- Survey of surrounding cities in the county on their timeline for response and their population size. Include other California cities of similar size.

In addition, the committee requested information about the Street Sweeping Program addressing the following:

- Collision cleanups and debris left from a vehicle accident
- Glass in the curbs and gutters
- Accurate information about the Street Sweeping program in newsletters in different languages
- Distribution of sweeping schedules by the community

ANALYSIS

Establish Clear Priorities to Improve Neighborhood Service Delivery

Code Enforcement Division staff has reviewed the historical vehicle abatement service delivery model and has concluded that establishing partnerships with the community, Council offices and other departments are necessary, and coordinating citywide vehicle abatement should be pursued. Improved coordination between the City's street sweeping, parking compliance and community policing programs needs to occur if the programs are to achieve desired service levels without increasing resources.

Furthermore, the Vehicle Spotters Program (VSP) and the "Hot Spots" Initiative represent two new efforts to improve vehicle abatement response times in neighborhoods.

Vehicle Spotters Program

At the 2004 State of the City Address, Mayor Gonzales identified citywide expansion of the Vehicle Spotters Program as a key initiative for the City to expand. The Vehicle Spotters Program, which was established in Council District 1, was developed to engage neighborhood residents in an effort to deploy vehicle abatement services more efficiently.

The Vehicle Spotter reports alleged abandoned vehicles in their neighborhood and within 1 to 2 days, a Vehicle Abatement Officer marks the identified vehicle. The Vehicle Spotter reports, within 3 days, those vehicles that have not been moved. The Officer reinspects the area within 1 day and either issues a citation or tows the subject vehicle. PBCE staff conducted a training and recruitment program for interested neighborhood associations and residents on March 25, 2004. This training opportunity was featured in the print media and invitational fliers were sent to all community coordinators, neighborhood advisory committees (SNI), Council Offices, the Call Center, the City Volunteer Coordinator and others for distribution via e-mail groups. Forty residents, representing Council Districts 1 through 7 and District 9, attended and thirty-two residents completed volunteer agreement forms and designated the area they would adopt. The training provided an overview of the volunteer program and covered issues such as performance, safety and communication. In addition, a second training session is being planned for April 2004.

Code Enforcement Division / DOT "Hot Spots"

In addition, PBCE has recently teamed up with DOT to forge a collaborative partnership, entitled "Hot Spots," which will combine the resources of the respective units to mark, tag, cite, and tow vehicles in Council District neighborhoods where high incidents of abandoned vehicles have been identified. PBCE, in partnership with the Council Offices, will identify neighborhoods for enhanced compliance efforts. This initiative is scheduled to begin in May 2004. In an effort to assess workload impact, PBCE recently deployed Vehicle Abatement Officers and Code Enforcement Inspectors to a "Hot Spot" in the Mt. Pleasant neighborhood, at the request of the residents. The resulting sweep led to the towing of 18 vehicles and the issuance of 4 citations in a four-block area.

Review Opportunities to Improve Departmental Coordination

PBCE and DOT have been discussing opportunities to coordinate efforts towards improving vehicle abatement response times. Currently, the Code Enforcement Division manages the Vehicle Abatement Program while the Transportation Department provides on-street parking compliance. Although some coordination does occur between the departments, the two teams largely focus on their respective services. The two departments are exploring the possibilities of working more closely and strategically toward improved vehicle abatement service response times to resident complaints. A revised business plan, with combined team efforts, is being prepared with the following performance outcomes in mind:

- Reduce the average response time to an initial complaint by 75% (from a current average of twelve days to an average of three days).
- Respond to marked vehicles within 72-96 hours 90% of the time.

A recent example clearly states how closely aligned parking compliance and vehicle abatement services can generate greater efficiencies and enhance effectiveness.

DOT recently added street sweeping signs along approximately nine curb miles in several neighborhoods in the vicinity of Capitol Avenue and Capitol Expressway in East San Jose. During the first monthly sweep, the Parking Control Officer's issued 110 warning notices to vehicles left parked on the street. Of the 110 warnings issued, Officer's reported that 20% of the vehicles appeared to be inoperable, abandoned or stored. In an effort to ensure that sweepers have an opportunity to get to the curb during sweeps, the Officer's marked and tagged approximately 24 vehicles for removal. After the 72 hour waiting period, the Officer returned and towed nine vehicles. This clearly illustrates the importance that vehicle abatement activities have in maintaining clean streets.

Street Sweeping Program

As requested by the Committee at its November meeting, the following information is provided on specific street-sweeping related questions:

Collision Cleanups and Debris

Vehicle collisions that occur on City streets are typically responded to by the Police Department. When accidents occur that require one or more vehicles to be towed from the scene, the towing company is responsible for completely clearing and cleaning up any debris that is left as a result of the accident. In cases where towing services are not required and debris is present, the responding Police Officer will contact his/her dispatcher and request that DOT respond and perform the cleanup. After the initial response and cleanup effort from DOT maintenance staff, a sweeper will be routed or scheduled to sweep the area, if necessary. In cases where the Police Department is not requested to respond to an accident, DOT relies upon reports from the public and will respond as described above.

Glass in the Curbs and Gutters

All arterial roadways and bike lanes are swept either weekly or bi-weekly, depending on need, and all residential streets are swept monthly. Unreported cases of broken glass or other small debris that exists in the curbs and gutters are supposed to be removed during these regular sweeps. DOT will also dispatch maintenance crews, and sweepers, if necessary, to respond to reports of glass or other debris in the curbs and gutters.

As reported in the Street Sweeping Report presented to the Committee in November, the City is taking several measures to improve the cleanliness of City streets and reduce cases where glass and other debris exist in the curbs and gutters. Implementing additional parking prohibitions, performing enhanced sweeps, and increasing efficiencies in the entire program through improved inspection, routing changes, and workforce scheduling, are three of the major improvements underway.

Street Sweeping Information in Newsletters and in Different Languages

The Environmental Service Department (ESD) and DOT are currently coordinating efforts to increase public outreach and provide greater information to the public about street sweeping. ESD is providing information articles for neighborhood newsletters upon request and is proactively involved with DOT in getting this information out to organized SNI groups in English, Spanish and Vietnamese. Current street sweeping materials and graphical information are available on the Recycle Plus website and on the websites of the sweeping contractors. Links to these sites are also being offered for use on other websites, such as SNI or neighborhood association websites.

Flier Distribution by the Community

Along with other outreach efforts, ESD and DOT staffs are working with SNI groups and other community groups to organize flier distribution informing residents when sweeping will occur. Individual contacts from participating groups are educated and requested to ensure that fliers with accurate sweeping schedules are distributed to the proper areas and that they do not become a litter problem. It was determined, through several recent efforts, that providing fliers in neighborhoods with high parking impacts, where above 50% of the curbs were blocked by parked vehicles, is not successful. In these neighborhoods, it was found that when someone moved his/her vehicle as requested by the flier, another person would take the empty spot. This does not create an incentive for residents to move their vehicles on sweep day. It is staff's conclusion that parking prohibitions are the best alternative to achieve clean streets in these areas. However, the use of fliers in less impacted areas, where 50% or less of the curbs are blocked by vehicles, can be successful.

Council Office Participation

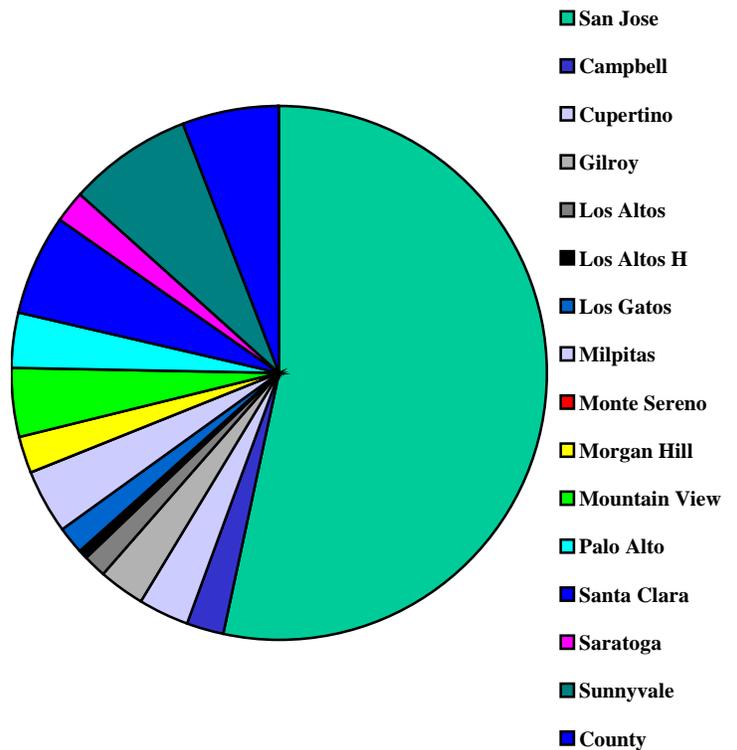
As noted in the previous sections, the Council Offices are valued partners to the ongoing success and promotion of new vehicle abatement services and initiatives. The Mayor and Council Offices maintain an extensive list of associations and individuals within their districts and understand the needs and desires of their constituents. PBCE and DOT staff values the opportunity to attend community and neighborhood events to provide outreach on available vehicle abatement services.

Neighborhood and Police Partnerships

As stated above, the expansion of the Vehicle Spotters Program citywide will provide an excellent opportunity for increased interaction and partnership of interested individuals and neighborhood associations. The Code Enforcement Division will pursue opportunities to engage the Police Department, similarly to the efforts with the DOT, in an attempt to expand vehicle abatement services.

Funding

The vehicle abatement services in the City of San Jose are General Funded programs that receive partial reimbursement from the Abandoned Vehicle Trust Fund (AVASA). The revenue for this fund stems from a one-dollar fee that is imposed on all registered vehicles at the time of registration. These funds are distributed from the State Controller to the County of Santa Clara, for dispersal to Cities within the County. These funds are allocated to the Cities based on Population (50%) and Performance (50%) as more fully described in the November 17, 2003 report provided to the Committee. The amount of available funds and percentage of reimbursement is dependent on the number of vehicle registrations within the County. The City of San Jose is entitled to approximately 53% of the 50% funds set-aside by population based on the City's population being approximately 53% of the County.



BUILDING STRONGER NEIGHBORHOODS COMMITTEE

April 13, 2004

Subject: Vehicle Abatement and Street Sweeping Policies

Page 6

The remaining 50% of funds available for reimbursement is based on performance. Each of the 16 agencies submits claims to support their vehicle abatement services and receive a percentage return based on their share of the total funds available. For example, in the first quarter of FY 2004, the City of San Jose received 49% of the total performance funds available. The only way that the City of San Jose could increase the percentage of funds received would be if other participating jurisdictions were to decrease their vehicle abatement services and/or San Jose increase its services.

Municipal Survey

A survey was conducted of Vehicle Abatement programs in the surrounding communities and of three larger cities including San Diego, Oakland and San Francisco. The intent of this survey is to determine the number of staff dedicated to Vehicle Abatement and volume of service provided.

Jurisdiction	Population	# of Complaints Annually (approximate)	# of Tows	Complaint Method	Response Timelines	SC County AVASA Allocations
County of Santa Clara	99,900	513	424	911	Same Day	59,738.84
Campbell	38,300	1,100	130	24 Hr. Hotline	7 Days	45,434.96
Cupertino	52,200	280	30	Phone	N/A	28,902.59
Gilroy	45,000	1,146	354	Phone	2-3 Weeks	52,470.38
Los Altos	27,700	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	14,060.93
Los Altos Hills	8,225	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3,931.34
Los Gatos	28,900	700	N/A	24 Hr. Hotline, Phone	3 Days	23,701.55
Milpitas	65,000	400	100	Phone	N/A	65,588.59
Monte Sereno	3,500	See Los Gatos	See Los Gatos	See Los Gatos	See Los Gatos	1,862.17
Morgan Hill	34,900	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	30,414.12
Mountain View	72,000	200	0	911, 24 Hr. Hotline, Email	N/A	40,464.51
Palo Alto	60,500	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	47,309.42
San Jose	925,000	28,000	4,100	24 Hr. Hotline, Web, Email, Phone, Call Center, Fax, Mail	6-8 Days	694,693.53
Santa Clara	105,800	N/A	1,300	24 Hr. Hotline	4 Days	90,170.25
Saratoga	30,500	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	15,298.02
Sunnyvale	132,500	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	217,947.81
Oakland	399,000	14,122	7,223	24 Hr. Hotline, Web, Email, Phone, Fax	5 Days	N/A
San Francisco	795,000	N/A	N/A	N/A	2-3 Weeks	N/A
San Diego	1,250,000	24,000	3,000	24 Hr. Hotline, Phone	9 Days	N/A

CONCLUSION

Through close review of the Parking Compliance and Vehicle Abatement programs being performed in two different departments and exploring the creation of one homogeneous team, the vehicle abatement services will see substantial benefits in terms of improved response time, higher compliance of parking regulations, cost savings and much cleaner streets. This will in turn result in enhanced “quality of life” for San Jose residents.

COORDINATION

This memorandum has been coordinated with the offices of the City Manager and City Attorney.

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