



NORTH PARK PLANNING COMMITTEE
PUBLIC FACILITIES, TRANSPORTATION, PARKS, AND PUBLIC ART SUBCOMMITTEE

www.northparkplanning.org

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, July 13, 2011, 6:00 p.m., North Park Recreation Center/Adult Center
2719 Howard Avenue, San Diego, CA 92104

Attendance:

Seated Board Members: Dionné Carlson (Chair), René Vidales (Vice-Chair), Vicki Granowitz, Cheryl Dye, Peter Hill

Community Voting Members: Rob Steppke, Ernie Bonn, Kitty Callen

Board members not seated: None

Also present: None

Parliamentary Items

Call to order. The meeting was called to order at 6:09

Approve July 13, 2011 Agenda. Motion: Approve Agenda. Granowitz/Dye 8-0-0

Chair's Comments.

Regarding the Juniper Street Sidewalk improvement Project, Gaetano Martedi from Engineering and Capital Projects Division emailed: "We are able to meet your request and install the green vinyl fence. Regarding additional lighting on Juniper, this project would not include lighting as a project component. In the future, this area will be assessed for lighting by the streets division. We have initially been told that the area may qualify for two added lights. However, in the future, the streets division would permit and construct those lights as part of their budget and work program."

Approve June 8, 2011 Minutes. Motion: Approve June 8, 2011 minutes. Bonn/Dye 7-0-1 (Granowitz abstained)

Announcements:

1. SANDAG 2050 RTP EIR public review period ends August 1.
2. NPCA summer concerts series at Bird Park on July 16, July 30, and August 13
3. University Heights CDC summer concert series at Trolley Barn Park on July 15, July 22, July 29, and August 5.
4. Next Post-Map Redistricting meeting will be on July 14. Peter Hill attended a previous meeting where the 3 draft plans were presented; about 50 people spoke in testimony; representatives from Peninsula and Eastern were in support of keeping planning areas intact; chairs of planning groups clarified that were not speaking on that behalf. Vicki Granowitz will be sending out the 3 maps.
5. Plaza de Panama Memorandum of Understanding vote by City Council to be held July 19.
6. North Park Clean & Safe overlay MAD results of mail ballot were not in support of forming the district.

Non Agenda Public Comment: None

New Business

A. Request for modification of the traffic signal at the intersection of University Avenue 32nd Street to provide protective left turn phasing for University Avenue eastbound and westbound vehicular left turns and to provide a safe walk phase for pedestrians

René Vidales made a presentation regarding the intersection of University Avenue and 32nd Street and handed out a detailed letter describing the issue, background, findings, summary of conflicts, possible solution, and conclusion.

Issue:

There are a number of conflicts between pedestrians and eastbound left turns as well as westbound left turns due to current traffic signal configuration and due to the offset geometric configuration of the intersection.

Part of the problem is the number of unprotected left turns with high volumes of upcoming traffic and concurrent pedestrian walk phases.

A pedestrian walking on University Avenue crossing 32nd Street with a walk phase has a high potential for collision with a vehicle making an unprotected left turn against a high volume of oncoming traffic within an atypical intersection configuration.

Background:

The intersection of University Avenue and 32nd Street has an offset configuration, where the centerlines of 32nd street north and south of University Avenue are separated by approximately 50 feet.

The existing traffic signal is currently configured to provide for the following:

- Northbound through-left lane with red phase for pedestrians on the west side of 32nd St.
- Northbound right-turn lane yielding to pedestrians with walk phase on the east side of 32nd St.
- Southbound through-left lane with red phase for pedestrians on the east side of 32nd St.
- Southbound right-turn lane yielding to pedestrians with walk phase on the west side of 32nd St.
- Eastbound through lane
- Eastbound through-right lane yielding to pedestrians with walk phase on the south side of University Ave.
- Eastbound left turn lane yielding to both vehicles and pedestrians with walk phase on the north side of University Ave.
- Westbound through lane
- Westbound through-right lane yielding to pedestrians with walk phase on the north side of University Ave.
- Westbound left turn lane yielding to both vehicles and pedestrians with walk phase on the south side of University Ave.

The intersection of University Avenue and 32nd Street is located in a corner that has experienced extensive redevelopment in the last few years. This corner is specifically very busy with transit riders and pedestrian who live in the area. Project names and events that currently contribute vehicular traffic and pedestrians to the intersection in question are: Walgreens/Starbucks commercial, completed in 2006; La Bohème mixed-use (224 Residential units plus commercial space), completed in 2007; Fresh & Easy/US Bank/AT&T Store/UPS Store strip mall, completed in 2010; Farmers Market every Thursday afternoon in the CVS Pharmacy parking lot, re-started in 2008; Ray at Night Art Walk, 2nd Saturday of the month; 30th on 30th Restaurant and Bar event on 30th Street on the 30th day of the month. A high number of restaurants and bars have opened in previously vacant spaces, and therefore North Park has now become an arts and entertainment destination within the San Diego metro area.

Findings:

The request complies with the University Avenue Mobility Plan (UAMP), where the intersection is described as exceeding the threshold requirements for protective left turns.

The volumes of traffic and pedestrians have increased since the UAMP was drafted based on recent developments previously listed.

There have been near collisions between pedestrians and vehicles during eastbound and westbound left turns.

A protective left turn with a protective walk phase allows pedestrians and vehicles to cross paths in a predictable manner. However unprotected left turns with conflictive walk phases along with an offset intersection configuration add complexity to crossing movements.

Due to the proximity from this intersection to the I-805 on-ramps down a steep street (University Avenue), a majority of vehicles crossing the intersection heading down to the I-805 on-ramps are exceeding the speed limit, increasing the risk to pedestrians.

There is reduced sight distance due to the vertical curvature of University Avenue east of 32nd St. which causes drivers making eastbound left turns to speed up the turn trying to avoid possible upcoming traffic and possibly hitting pedestrians with a walk phase.

Traditionally, offset intersections without adequate signalization pose barriers for mobility to pedestrians.

Summary of conflicts:

The high volume of turning vehicles in the same walk phase as pedestrians is creating conflicting pedestrian crossings.

An accident can easily occur where a pedestrian on the corner with a walk phase steps into the crosswalk, a vehicle attempting to make a right turn does not see the pedestrian due to the offset configuration; the view of a driver can be blocked because the location of the right turn is not the same as the location of the left turn. Despite the driver's legal responsibility to ascertain that the crosswalk is clear for him/her to proceed, some motorists erroneously assume that, no matter how obscured their view, if the green phases is present, then there are no potential conflicts.

An accident can also easily occur where a pedestrian on the corner with a walk phase steps into the crosswalk, a vehicle attempting to make a left turn tries to avoid upcoming traffic and does not see the pedestrian.

A number of cars have been observed to start the turn and stop abruptly to yield to a pedestrian in the cases above.

Additionally a vehicle making an unprotected left turn is already stressful for the driver without any pedestrians.

Possible solution:

A possible way to mitigate for the effect of the unprotected left-turn lanes is to add a left-turn arrow phase to be activated at the beginning of the cycle for eastbound and westbound vehicles (protected/permitted left turn phasing) and an exclusive lead walk phase for pedestrians to avoid conflicts with the left-turn lanes. The signal configuration can be the same as it currently exists on University Ave. and 30th St.

Conclusion:

The suggested modifications would improve the existing facilities by improving the unprotected left-turn lanes on University Avenue at 32nd Street and reversing the negative trend of designing for motor vehicle traffic over the needs of pedestrians. This intersection is heavily used by pedestrians in addition to a number of vehicles, therefore additional measures need to take place to ensure safety of all users.

MOTION: Request for modification of the traffic signal at the intersection of University Avenue 32nd Street to provide protective left turn phasing for University Avenue eastbound and westbound vehicular left turns and to provide a safe walk phase for pedestrians with countdown and sound system for ADA compliance. Vidales/Callen 8-0-0.

B. Discussion of MTS Open House presentation on the feasibility of constructing a streetcar line between Downtown (City College Trolley Station) and Balboa Park.

Chair Carlson, René Vidales, Rob Steppke and Ernie Bonn attended the presentation.

- Different options were presented showing different cross sections for Park Boulevard and Presidents Way
- Some street segments may lose parking
- The existing pedestrian bridge is currently not ADA compliant and creates a conflict in height for the streetcar
- The feasibility study will be done in September and MTS would like feedback from the public

A discussion followed in order to distinguish between trolleys, light rail, and streetcars. A suggestion was brought up to lay out terms and definitions in order to continue the discussion. Cheryl Dye and Peter Hill will bring definitions to the next meeting.

A separate pilot project is currently in the works, it will run approximately one mile along C Street in Downtown and MTS has published a brochure to get people excited. This pilot project will operate on weekends and holidays only. René Vidales asked about connectivity between the pilot project and the area of the feasibility study in the presentation but there was not a good plan in place.

A suggestion was made to make the budget for the Mid-city a priority by having more TransNet money be directed to Mid-City for transit community based projects, streetcar projects, and pedestrian enhancements.

The motion from last month's meeting was that *"the NPPC recommends revising the list of phased transit services within the revenue constrained plan to give a higher priority of implementation to projects that include the Mid-City area in order to add more transit within the urban core of the city due to future projected densities."* A letter was sent from NPPC to Sandag regarding the 2050 RTP. René Vidales will email a copy of the letter to Leo Wilson and Mary Wright.

Old Business

A. Texas Street Improvement Design.

Money for endowment fund has been set aside by Sudberry Properties and is in an account with the City earning interest. Acorn lights are on order and awaiting set up process for the endowment fund. Agreement with the city includes provision that should balance of endowment fund fall below 10K, the City may remove down the acorn lights and use the 10K for the effort.

B. Plaza de Panama – Balboa Park (Project No. 233958). Proposed project includes an amendment to the Balboa Park Master Plan; an amendment to the Central Mesa Precise Plan; and a Site Development Permit. Discussion of parking, pedestrian & vehicular circulation.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is going to City Council on Tuesday, July 19. The wording has not changed from the original MOU. The first part of the memo states that the City does not become responsible for anything, but in the second part of the memo requires the City support the project in every way possible.

Letters were sent from some Balboa Park institutions to their members asking for support of the project. However these letters do not explain the whole project.

The cost of the proposed parking structure does not include cost of the property or design, and therefore projected parking fees may not cover all of this. May need additional information on City bonds and financing; a suggestion was made to ask Ross Lopez. The total bond amount does not include the 50% debt service coverage requirement.

(Vicki Granowitz leaves at 7:50)

C. Mid-City Rapid Bus Project.

Rob Steppke reported that the City Council meeting will be on July 18 at 2 p.m. for the parking mitigation component of the project. Only CPG chairs received notification. UHCDC coordinated the collection of at least 300 signatures from Uptown and North Park in opposition to the relocation of parking on Park Blvd. and the closure of Polk Avenue. NPPC previously voted to oppose the Park Blvd. segment of this project.

Information Items:

A. South I-805 off-ramp into North Park Way and South I-805 off-ramp into Madison Avenue. No update

Future Agenda items: Kitty Callen requests a future agenda item: Pershing Dr./25th St./Florida St. intersection

Next meeting date: Wednesday, August 10, 2011.

Adjournment. Motion: To adjourn meeting. Hill/Bonn. 7-0-0. Meeting adjourned 8:12 p.m.