

Title: Safe Streets Initiative Review	Item No. _____
Meeting date: 6/6/17	
Agendized by: David Voss	
Contact person: same	Phone number: 310.306.0515
Committee Vote (if appropriate): None	
Does this item have a fiscal impact on the Neighborhood Council? ____ Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No	
Additional documents attached? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes ____ No	

RECOMMENDATION: No committee action taken.

BACKGROUND:

Over many years there has been concern for pedestrian safety in lower Playa del Rey, rush hour traffic generally there and throughout the community and cut through traffic already existing in upper Playa del Rey and Westchester. There have been information gathering meetings over the years and a survey; however, prior to the information only oral presentation of the Safe Streets Initiative to the Board, NCWPDR was not given any opportunity to see, review and comment on the final proposed Initiative prior to the commencement of lane closures the week of May.

There was an immediate and generally negative (with a few exceptions) response to the lane closures and a number of positive suggestions made by residents that should be considered by the City as part of this Initiative.

DISCUSSION:

As a result of the Safe Streets Initiative, recent lane closures on Vista del Mar have caused what has been observed anecdotally as an apparent (and anticipated) increase in cut through traffic in upper Playa del Rey and Westchester. The reduction of 50% of the traffic formerly travelling on Vista del Mar and Culver Blvd has pushed that traffic from those dedicated secondary roads in lower PdR (where there is no residential cut through traffic) into residential neighborhoods in upper PdR and Westchester.

FISCAL ANALYSIS: N/A

ATTACHMENTS:

Further discussion and Selected Comments from the Playa del Rey Yahoo Newsgroup are attached.

MOTION:

That the Neighborhood Council: 1) Requests the implementation of mitigation measures designed to lessen the impact of the lane reductions on Culver Blvd. and Vista del Mar on the areas of upper Playa del Rey and Westchester; and, 2) Requests that the Los Angeles Department of Transportation and/or the CD11 Council Office immediately provide a copy of any traffic study done in advance of the commencement of the lane closures included in the Safe Streets Initiative; and, 3) Provide any available data regarding traffic on the community streets impacted by the Safe Streets Initiative for the area bounded by Sepulveda to the East, Imperial to the South, Culver to the North and Vista del Mar to the West; and, 4) Provide a detailed plan for traffic enforcement for the next 90 days; and, 5) Provide written explanation of the feasibility of reducing Vista del Mar to one lane each way commencing South of Imperial Highway; and, 6) Respond in writing to all community suggestions and questions given at this meeting; and, 7) Such other items as the Board may add to this motion at the time of the meeting.

Further Discussion:

At the May Board meeting, representatives of the CD11 Council office promised that mitigation measures and enforcement would be in place before lane closures for lower Playa del Rey were implemented so that the traffic pushed off Vista del Mar did not just move from lower PdR to upper PdR but would be diverted onto Westchester Parkway.

Instead of taking action to mitigate the impact on upper PdR, the reverse occurred with detour signs put out instructing traffic blocked on Vista del Mar to go to Pershing instead! There were no temporary or permanent left turn signs off northbound Pershing installed, nor was there any sign of law enforcement to handle the increase in the already pre-existing cut through traffic problem ignoring the signage already in place. They don't have the resources (we don't have enough patrol cars) and any enforcement will be temporary at best.

This Neighborhood Council has been saying no to the "freeway to the south bay" since meeting with Bill Rosendahl about it. But pushing the traffic up the hill, off Culver that's a designated arterial roadway so that it can flow through Earldom, Rees and Montreal isn't the answer.

Attached is a selection of comments posted on the Playa del Rey Yahoo Newsgroup which may only be accessed by verified residents of Playa del Rey to see the immediate response from the Playa del Rey community.

Had there been a thorough vetting of the proposed Safe Streets Initiative here in our committees prior to starting with the lane closures, there were a number of issues that could have and should have been addressed such as those raised on the newsgroup. Such things as signage to reduce cut through traffic and the expectation to have data from DOT to look at before and after (including the oft promised but never delivered meeting with them). Different suggestions for using the space created by lane closures on Culver to reduce the parking shortage by angled parking, etc. Ways to control the illegal use of the new center turn lanes as though they were carpool lanes to shoot up to the front and cut in.

Clearly some of the Initiative has great merit! But the problem is that there are different issues being lumped together and not all of the "solutions" being offered relate to the problems they are purportedly designed to fix. Agreed moving parking to one side on VdM will hopefully end pedestrian fatalities there! But that safety concern has absolutely nothing to do with the mess being creating on Pershing and the adjacent residential streets at rush hour. During rush hour, traffic isn't going fast enough to endanger pedestrians!

At least Culver was a designated secondary thoroughfare unlike Earldom, Rees, Montreal or any of the residential streets now carrying the cars once going down Culver. There was zero cut through the Jungle or any of lower PdR because there was no shortcut there to be had.

And of course there is the already existing dedicated bicycle path running alongside Ballona Creek that avoids at grade crossings so why would they ever opt to ride a bicycle on Culver when there is already a fully dedicated bicycle path only a few hundred yards to the north running parallel to Cover? Wasn't the whole point of that bike path to take the bikes off Culver etc and give them their own safe route?

Unlike other circulation changes in other parts of the city, this situation is unique in that it is bounded by the ocean to the West, the Marina to the North, the Wetlands to the West and LAX to the South. Unlike other parts of the city there is a very small and finite number of options for the traffic to choose if it is cut in half on Culver which makes it much easier here than elsewhere to effectively capture before and after data.

Because of the finite number of places for the traffic to go in the alternative, we know in advance that the streets that will be impacted most are Culver, Pershing and Vista del Mar. It is not acceptable to burden one part of the community to the detriment of another.

So where is the detailed traffic plan that analyzed in advance of taking action exactly how the proposed Initiative and lane closures will impact the community? Is there anyone reading this who can honestly say that they believe that shutting down on of two lanes in lower Playa del Rey will have no impact on traffic in upper Playa del Rey and we need to wait and see?

Of course, history repeats itself:

“The city argues that road diets make streets safer. Taking away traffic lanes creates **congestion**, which means vehicles will be going slower and any accidents that do happen will be less harmful due to reduced speeds. The argument that lowering vehicle speed lowers the severity of injuries makes sense – but, on the other hand, purposely exacerbating congestion to achieve this goal evokes the law of unintended consequences. This is the case of the Rowena road diet: it has created cut-through traffic on parallel streets and moved the danger there.

In short, the city reduced the risk on Rowena by transferring it to adjacent, much narrower, residential streets.

The Rowena road diet has proven to be no different than any kind of diet – people find ways to cheat. The cars that used to travel on Rowena now attempt to avoid the new congestion by using Waverly Drive and Angus Street. These streets have been overwhelmed by bumper-to-bumper traffic.”

<http://citywatchla.com/archive-hidden/97...>

The City should not act to just move a problem from one part of the community to another and from secondary arterial roads into residential streets.

To truly cut down on commuter traffic coming through ALL the communities served by this Neighborhood Council, the solution is to start narrowing to one lane BEFORE the traffic gets to Imperial thereby cutting the volume in half BEFORE it gets to any of our streets! Then we will be able to get in and out of our houses without being run over.

Planners built millions of square feet of office space in Santa Monica while tearing down thousands of housing units and those employees like to live in the South Bay. This should not be a choice between improving things for lower PdR at the expense of upper PdR and Westchester. The battle should be with the commuters burdening all of us - not pit our communities against each other.

Selected Comments from the Playa del Rey Yahoo Newsgroup

- 1) I wish I were more optimistic but I fear that on weekday mornings we'll see LOTS more cars cutting through residential streets on The Hill unless there's a consistent police presence. Westbound Culver already backs up to Lincoln (or the Marina Freeway) during evening rush hour. I suspect that reducing it from two westbound lanes to one lane will be such a nightmare that commuters will find other routes, again through residential neighborhoods.
- 2) It certainly is likely to increase cut-through traffic through *neighborhoods* – *with little regard for speed!* El Segundo and Manhattan Beach newsgroups have already noted on their local e-groups that the traffic is SO bad south of the airport on Sepulveda and the 405, that it's worth cutting through the PDR.
- 3) traffic calming: another way to say we are removing lanes and going to make everyone's drive crazy worse. just wait!
- 4) you think these people did a traffic analysis on what will happen after they reduce these lanes? no chance.
- 5) As someone who travels those streets on a daily basis, they are already impossibly slow during morning and evening rush hours, so I find it ironic that the council office rationalizes that slowing the streets even more will somehow make them safer and magically prevent speedy commuter cut-throughs. One thing I'm certain of is that Playa residents better allow extra time to get anywhere outside their neighborhood if they need to travel as peak hours.
- 6) I think this will take significant police enforcement during the initial period.
- 7) I trust that Mike's office has done all the proper research with the traffic experts?!
- 8) It would be helpful to understand the clear plan that will redirect traffic out of neighbors and off of Pershing, along with what the DOT is doing to help manage the additional flow on Lincoln, Sepulveda that this will create? This deserves clear communication.
- 9) Are they coordinating at all with the planned construction of the new sewer lines which will severely impact Pacific Ave., entrances and exits to the Jungle, and Vista de Mar on down the coast? What's the timing there? As it is now, four lanes of traffic coming north from the South Bay (two on Vista del Mar, two on Pershing) funnel down to two lanes on Culver at Nicholson, then down to one lane east of Jefferson. So we've always funneled four lanes down to one lane. Re-stripping lanes to narrow Pershing and Vista del Mar down to a single lane will simply shift where the traffic jams up a bit further south. However, until South Bay commuters get accustomed to the locations of new bottlenecks, they're likely to try to shortcut by taking residential streets over Hill. They'll mostly go onto Pershing at Rees, backing up onto Earldom and maybe Trask. Once things settle down, restriping northbound roadways will just move the location of the bottlenecks but not fundamentally change the traffic.

However the evening rush hour traffic going west on Culver, if it's narrowed to a single lane, will turn into a nightmare and elicit unseemly behavior from people at a time of day when they're already tired and irritable, the time of day when accident rates are the highest. It'll back up

traffic on westbound Jefferson going onto westbound Culver. A fair number of those people will look for alternate routes and they'll take westbound residential streets around 83rd Street to Rayford, Stanmoor, Park Hill, Hastings. They'll funnel onto westbound Manchester so they can get onto Pershing. There are no good transportation alternatives serving this area that will get people out of their cars, so they'll just find alternate routes the best they can. I think very few people will opt to ride a bicycle on Culver between Jefferson and the Marina Freeway. You can call it 'traffic calming,' all you want, but I'm not sure it'll do anything to calm the tempers of the people driving the cars. They'll just enter residential neighborhoods in a cranky mood.

And BTW, as long as the City is restriping Pershing, how about changing the center median of northbound Pershing just south of Sunridge into a left-turn pocket? As it is right now, that location has a center median marked with solid double-yellow lane stripes for northbound traffic. To make a left turn legally from northbound Pershing onto westbound Sunridge, cars would have to stop in the sole northbound lane of Pershing, which invites a serious rear-end collision because traffic often goes 10 mph over the 35 mph speed limit. The only reason you don't get lots of rear-end collisions at that location is that most drivers are smart enough to ignore the solid double-yellow lines and use the median area as a left turn pocket, even if it puts them in violation of the law. It's absurd that people have to choose between violating the law or protecting their safety.

- 10) I know several South Bay commuters who already are starting to cut up Westchester Parkway and Manchester from Pershing so they can get to Lincoln Blvd as an alternate route. They are also cutting through east Playa so they can use the traffic light at 83rd that turns left onto Lincoln Blvd north in the mornings. In the afternoon/evening, Lincoln southbound is a mess from Playa Vista up through Westchester. Lincoln has become as congested as its Playa Del Rey neighbors.
- 11) This is a bigger problem than 'calming' traffic in lower Playa. We need to remember that Playa Vista/Silicon Beach is now a huge work destination for many Santa Monica-to-South Bay residents. Our streets will be slower, for sure, but not necessarily calmer.
- 12) ...it's done now (the "re-organizing" of the stretch west of LAX) – so we get one lane each direction (north-south) – on the west side, angled parking spaces...(think about that)...no u-turn pockets that I could see and how would that be possible...?
...soo...when people leave these angled parking spaces, they MUST reverse out into on-coming traffic on the only remaining lane – where we know people really like to speed...wow...way to go...hope I'm wrong but this looks like a set-up for disaster...
There is a short stretch on the south-bound side just north of Imperial, where there are two lanes, plus one turning lane...
Knowing how chaotic it could be before, (on certain days) with two lanes each direction and somewhat safer parking, (you might be able to simply drive out) what will happen now...
- 13) There is no way this will send more people down the 105 and 405 as those freeways don't move now. It now takes a long time to get off the hill and this will make it worse. I would love to be wrong, but don't think that is in the cards.
- 14) Santa Monica has been doing traffic calming for years. It slows the traffic and makes everyone's commute longer. Nothing else is gained.