

October 27, 2021

RE: Discontinuation of the Slow Streets Program

Members of the Transportation Commission

A Staff Report of a previous survey explained that voluntary surveys such as was done for that particular case are not significant since they reflect the opinions of only those who participate and not necessarily those of the general community. Even so, they continue to try to convince the public that we should be making decisions based on such surveys. And while such surveys might prove interesting, they certainly should not be relied upon when making significant decisions.

In the past, when Staff needed to discount the results of a survey that didn't support their position they would also point out that the unfavorable responses tended to come from members of groups belonging to such irrelevant categories as the participants' race, ethnicity, neighborhood, economic status and various other factors not particularly relevant to making a decision based on their survey results.

What should we make of the following observation? The Staff report related to the renaming of Jackson Park included the statement: "It is important to note that this survey included a demographics question, and the large majority of respondents were **older, white residents.**" The implication apparently was that the votes cast by these *old white people* shouldn't be taken too seriously. Might this admonishment be viewed as an expression of racist or, perhaps, agist beliefs being put forward by City Staff? Probably not. Even so, this does serve as an example of selectively discounting survey participation by selected groups if it serves the Staff's purpose.

These criticisms definitely apply to the Slow Streets survey. The pro-continuation votes tended to come from people who lived on the currently designated Slow Streets. Clearly, this didn't represent the majority of people living in Alameda. They also included irrelevant participant categories such as race, age, and economic status. This was probably done so they could, if necessary, discount a large negative vote should it come from a particular group, say, mostly older white residents.

When it comes time to make a decision whether to continue or discontinue the Slow Streets program we can completely ignore the results of the survey given their complete lack of usefulness as regards decision making. Let's just keep in mind that most of the pro votes were from people who live on a currently designated slow street. They like the relative solitude produced by the program. The rest of us in Alameda actually are inconvenienced by the program and don't derive any particular benefit.

While program may or may not have served a useful purpose early in the Pandemic, it certainly does not do so now that people are pretty much free to go wherever they choose. And if they are outside, and especially if they're fully vaccinated, they don't even have to wear a mask, in most situations. And note the vast majority of Alamedans over age eleven are in this category already. Soon it will also include children five years and up.

I understand that many, though certainly not all, of the residents enjoy living on semi-private streets. The rest of us do not appreciate the inconvenience put upon us by virtue of the Slow Streets program and, most importantly, **the program serves no useful purpose vis-à-vis the current status of the Pandemic.**

For all of these reasons, I urge the behind-the-scenes-powers-that-be to terminate the Slow Streets program as soon as logistically practical and stress that, in my opinion, they certainly should not strive to have it continued for another year. (Do we recall how rapidly the signage was changed at Jackson Park?)

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