

Approved Minutes
Transportation Commission Meeting
Wednesday, July 28, 2021

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Location: Due to Governor Executive Order N-08-21, Transportation Commissioners can attend the meeting via teleconference. The City allowed public participation via Zoom.

Legistar Link:

<https://alameda.legistar.com/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=811335&GUID=54809A56-6AF9-435D-811A-81073DAB8EB1&Options=info|&Search=>

1. Roll Call

Present: Chair Soules, Vice Chair Nachtigall and Commissioners Rentschler, Hans, Kohlstrand and Weitze.

Absent: Commissioner Yuen.

2. Agenda Changes

Chair Soules requested to move item 6E to after item 6A to accommodate the consultant's time. No one objected.

3. Staff Communications are as shown in the web link here:

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5037416&GUID=9CD69079-4C3B-4F7D-833A-9428E0160AD5&FullText=1>.

4. Announcements / Public Comments

Commissioner Rentschler discussed a deal that Congress was working on that had many benefits for the Bay Area.

Commissioner Weitze praised Alameda Municipal Power (AMP) for the system they had set up to reimburse businesses for setting up Electrical Vehicle (EV) charging stations.

5. Consent Calendar

5A. Approve Meeting Minutes of the Special Joint Meeting of the Planning Board and Transportation Commission - May 10, 2021 (Action Item)

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5037417&GUID=C108F591-B9D7-4FAF-9DF2-2CC39C5426ED&FullText=1>.

Commissioner Weitze moved to approve as is and Vice-Chair Nachtigall seconded. A vote was taken by a raise of hands and the motion passed 5-0 with Commissioner Hans abstained since he had been absent.

5B. Approve Meeting Minutes – May 26, 2021 (Action Item)

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5037418&GUID=E1EF96FE-5C3C-4C78-BEF2-DA7C32B4F47D&FullText=1>.

Commissioner Kohlstrand moved to approve the minutes as is and Vice-Chair Nachtigall seconded. A vote was taken by a raise of hands and the motion passed 6-0.

6. Regular Agenda Items

6A. Elect Chair and Vice-Chair of the Transportation Commission (Action Item)

The staff report can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5037419&GUID=EFD295E3-0188-4D90-820E-A52EB8BC601D&Options=&Search=>

Public Comments for #6A

There were no public speakers.

Chair Samantha Soules opened the floor for nominations.

Vice-Chair Nachtigall nominated Chair Soules as Chair for the next term and Commissioner Weitze seconded the motion. A vote was taken by a raise of hands and the nomination passed 6-0.

Chair Soules thanked everyone for their confidence in her leadership.

Chair Soules nominated Commissioner Yuen for Vice-Chair, she had discussed this with her before the meeting and could confirm her interest in the role. Commissioner Rentschler seconded the motion. A vote was taken by a raise of hands and the nomination passed 6-0.

6E. Discuss Citywide Roundabout Analysis Results (Discussion Item)

Gail Payne, Senior Transportation Coordinator, introduced this item and gave a presentation. She also introduced Mike Alston, a consultant with Kittelson & Associates, Inc. The staff report and attachments can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5037423&GUID=1BE1750D-6EA2-4133-A912-638485701722&FullText=1>.

Commissioner Clarifying Questions for #6E

Chair Soules asked about the Social Vulnerability Index and its update status.

Staff Member Payne shared that the update is being covered as part of the Hazard Mitigation Plan update effort.

Public Comments for #6E

Jim Strehlow was pleased that there was not enough space for roundabouts everywhere. He discussed what his concerns were and called out Pearl Street by Tilden Way as an example of what might get overlooked. He also pointed out that at Otis Drive and Grand Street it was difficult for Fire Engine 1 to make a turn.

Staff Member Payne addressed his concerns about roundabouts and this was an initial scan to see what was possible. For the intersection discussed (Tilden/Blanding/Fernside) they would of course take Pearl Street under consideration. Then for Otis and Grand, they did consider that issue, the consultants did make sure it could fit.

Mr. Alston discussed all the elements they look at when they evaluated an intersection. He explained what they had studied and looked at for the intersection analysis.

Commissioner Comments and Discussions for #6E

Commissioner Kohlstrand wanted to know if smaller traffic circles could work in locations that had been deemed too unsuitable for roundabouts. Instead of focusing on those intersections, she wanted to focus on intersections that could still use a traffic circle.

Staff Member Payne answered that this study had been focused on the modern roundabout, our fatal and severe injury collisions, and where those took place. They happened on the busier and wider streets. She explained more about why they had focused on the modern roundabouts.

Mr. Alston discussed the difference between modern roundabouts and traffic circles. He went into the details and the geometric space needed for each to work. He said the main difference with traffic circles is that they are more appropriate for low volume, local streets.

Commissioner Kohlstrand discussed her experiences with traffic circles. She felt that they would not have that kind of space in Alameda but that should not keep them from improving safety. She asked if a smaller version could work in those higher volume intersections that have 25 mph speed limits.

Mr. Alston discussed the emerging trend of using mini-roundabouts. He explained how they address the space constraint issue, the center aisle is completely traversable and can work in spaces with low-speed limits. He did add that they are usually used in places that have an established history of roundabouts, so people know how they work.

Staff Member Payne clarified that the 85 percentile speed was more like 32-35 mph, which was much higher than the actual speed limit.

Commissioner Weitze wanted to know what was the typical minimum/maximum for a traffic circle or a mini-roundabout.

Mr. Alston explained the physical attributes that mark the difference between traffic circles and roundabouts.

Chair Soules said she appreciated the criteria to apply some sort of guidance for future funding. She encouraged the staff to focus on education and outreach to help people understand.

Staff Payne confirmed that the commission wanted them to continue this research and work on the remaining arterials and collectors in town.

Chair Nachtigall very much wanted them to continue this work. She agreed with Commissioner Kohlstrand about being able to implement them in other ways. She had an appetite for exploring intersections where any sort of circular intersection could work.

Rochelle Wheeler, Senior Transportation Coordinator, discussed the work she had been doing with the Slow Streets Program and how temporary traffic circles had been discussed. The idea was to test out some of these on the streets of Alameda.

6B. Recommendations for Commercial Streets (Action Item)

Staff Member Wheeler introduced this item and gave a presentation. The staff report and attachments can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5037420&GUID=2B5A74EA-642E-4F2F-994C-30CE45C3454E&FullText=1>.

Public Comments for #6B

Cyndy Johnsen, an Alameda resident, gave her support for the continuation and improvement of the Commercial Street Program. She also encouraged that protected bike lanes be incorporated into the program. She discussed her own experiences as a cyclist.

Kathy Weber, Executive Director to the Downtown Area Business Association (DABA), discussed the many benefits of the Commercial Street Program, that City Staff had worked so hard on for the businesses during this difficult time. She thought that continuing the program was vital to businesses as they continued to navigate through the pandemic. She was in full support of staff's recommendations.

Jim Strehlow thought the parklet structures blocked some businesses' storefronts. He also did not think dining near busy streets was enjoyable. He discussed his other concerns such as backed-up traffic and wanted someone to measure how many people no longer come to Alameda because of the closed streets. He knew many people who no longer visited Alameda.

John Frangoulis, owner of Park Street Tavern and member of DABA, thanked the city for all the support they had given restaurants and bars. He supported the continued use of the program and believed that if they made this permanent then more bike lanes would come which would allow people to feel safer. He hoped they would approve all the proposed projects.

Curtis Azevedo, an Alameda resident, thought the parklets were a spark of joy during a dark time. He thought instead of dedicated bike lanes they should consider more slow streets and traffic circles. He discussed how much he had enjoyed the slow streets as a cyclist.

Ron Mooney, the owner of Daisy's, fully supported the Commercial Street concept and process. He wanted to see more encouragement in changing the mindset of what streets were for, he believed they should first be for pedestrians than cars. He also wanted to see the two-lane change on Park St become permanent and to see the speed limit dropped to 20 mph. He discussed all the positive changes the parklets had done. He wanted to see a permanent parklet feature in Alameda.

Joan Stebbins, the owner of Honey Salon and DABA member, discussed how much businesses still needed the Commercial Streets Program to stay in place. She implored the commission to keep it. She also discussed all the benefits of the program she enjoyed. She agreed that with more time they could make it look more cohesive. She was in full support of staff's recommendations.

Sabrina Cazarez, the owner of Twirl, said she was in full support of the parklets. The parklets allowed businesses to survive as well as created a sense of community and helped with safety concerns.

Denyse Trepanier, Board President for Bike Walk Alameda, discussed the importance of being able to reimagine and redesign our public spaces. She added that with all the changes that had happened and the changes that were in the works it would be too disruptive to go back to the way things were. She thanked the staff for their thoughtfulness and hoped they were given the chance to continue this work.

Linda Asbury, Executive Director of the West End Business Association (WABA), said the board of directors and members of WABA were in favor of extending the program to December 2022. She discussed the benefits for the many businesses on the West End and thanked the staff for all their hard work.

Commissioner Comments and Discussions for #6B

Commissioner Weitze wanted to know how many short-term parking spots would be lost on Webster St. He cautioned that those spots would be treated as permanent spots and he thought the short-term spots were nice to have.

Staff Member Wheeler did not have an exact number but after talking with businesses they were interested in keeping 4-5 spots along Webster. The staff would still want to consider loading zones and green zones.

Chair Soules asked for clarification on the program timeframe of the recommendation.

Staff Member Wheeler clarified that the recommendation was for two years from this October, which would then be until October 2023.

Commissioner Kohlstrand thanked the staff for all their hard work on this program and for getting it going so quickly. She supported the staff's recommendations. She echoed the concerns about

eliminating many of the 15 minute parking zones, she wanted staff to think hard about percentages of short-term vs long-term parking. She also voiced her concerns for buses that travel along Park St and wants to have a conversation with AC Transit about their concerns. She did not want to hamper bus travel times. She supported having permanent design standards for parklets and encouraged working on safer more aesthetic guidelines.

Commissioner Rentschler discussed the importance of having a safe way to let buses navigate these areas with pedestrians. He appreciated the recommendations for Alameda Avenue and discussed the parking opportunities on the parallel streets of Park Street and Oak Street. He then discussed the opportunities that Alameda Avenue presented. He thought it could be a place for bike parking.

Vice Chair Nachtigall thanked the staff for their work and appreciated the thought of improving not removing. She was in support of staff's recommendations. In regards to Park and Webster, she thought it was positive that people were avoiding driving on those streets. That is better for buses, pedestrians and cyclists. She agreed that keeping these in place would benefit everyone as a shared resource since everyone could use the streets more effectively. She was in favor of improving bike lanes along these corridors as long as it didn't negatively affect bus travel time or pedestrian safety. For the parklets, she enjoyed them but wanted the safety buffers around them to be improved.

Commissioner Weitze discussed the safety of having bikes move toward Park St but not necessarily on it. He was sympathetic to Bike Walk Alameda's desire to have bike lanes but he was not sure how it would work with parklets and motor vehicles. For Alameda Ave, he wanted to know if any additional work had been done to address the after-hours noise. Then for the survey results, he was impressed that it seemed overall that people liked the parklets.

Staff Member Wheeler explained the work that DABA had done to control late-night activities on Alameda Avenue.

Chair Soules said the two-year timeframe concerned her. She said she would be more supportive of one year versus two years. She discussed the survey results and that parking enforcement should be monitored more as well as safety and design guidelines. She discussed the importance of really looking at who was being inconvenienced by these changes and not discount how they had traditionally done things.

Commissioner Kohlstrand said if they wanted to put something permanent in place then they would need to monitor the temporary situation for another year. The second-year could be a more public process of moving into a more permanent process. She also had concerns about trying to put a bike lane on Park Street.

Chair Soules asked for clarification on what would happen over the proposed two years.

Staff Member Wheeler explained that over the next year the staff would monitor and make tweaks on parking and work on design guidelines for the parklets. Then over the next year, they would finish out the Active Transportation Plan, Vision Zero Plan, and their planning.

Andrew Thomas, Director of Planning Building and Transportation, added that the two years would allow the staff and the community to better understand the final design that Park and Webster St should be. He discussed the items that had come up during this meeting only that needed to be addressed sooner rather than later.

Chair Soules appreciated his comments but her concerns were based on the people who wanted the four lanes back. She wanted to acknowledge and recognize the voices who did not like the changes. The planning process that is traditionally used would allow more public outreach. She did not want to just serve half of the community. She also wanted to know the demographics of the survey results to make sure a group of people was not being left out, and thought that would be fairer.

Director Thomas agreed.

Chair Soules made a motion to accept and approve all staff's recommendations for the Commercial Streets Program and Commissioner Weitze seconded the motion. A vote was taken by a raise of hands and the motion passed 6-0.

6C. Recommend Approval of Draft Amendments to Alameda Municipal Code Section 30-7 Off-Street Parking and Loading Space Regulations to improve environmental quality in Alameda and implement the City of Alameda Climate Action and Resiliency Plan and Transportation Choices Plan (Action Item).

Brian McGuire, Planner with Planning Building and Transportation, introduced the item and gave the presentation. The staff report and attachments can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5037421&GUID=AC653E42-7C7E-4DFD-A744-96A04E1573D6&FullText=1>.

Commissioner Clarifying Questions for #6C

No commissioners had questions at this time.

Public Comments for #6C

Bill Chapin, an Alameda resident, gave his support of these amendments. He also discussed his background with a Master's Degree in Urban Planning and that his master's project was on minimum parking requirements.

Jim Strehlow discussed his concerns with the electric vehicle charging program with the state having brownout warnings. He did not understand the move to more electrical and wanted to know how the bureau of electricity was going to generate more electricity.

Commissioner Comments and Discussions for #6C

Commissioner Weitze asked about User Permits and how would those interact with the required disabled access parking spaces. So if a place wanted to turn their parking lot into outdoor sitting. How would that work?

Staff Member McGuire explained how the code was written and that in the Use Permit review is when they could make requirements for accessible parking. Each situation would be different.

Director Thomas explained more about what a Use Permit allowed and what impacts the staff would consider. The staff has to make findings and they have the authority to make conditions of approval.

Staff Member McGuire added that they have a pending Use Permit right now that brought up this issue. The conditions are where they could add that accessible parking was required or a rideshare drop-off space.

Director Thomas discussed how informative and helpful the meeting with the Commission of Disabled People had been.

Chair Soules was happy to see the electrification element and agreed that it was important that they find a way to keep up with the need for more electricity.

Commissioner Kohlstrand made a motion to approve the Draft Recommendation to the City Council and Commissioner Weitze seconded the motion. A vote was taken by a show of hands and the motion passed 5-0, Commissioner Rentschler had to leave the meeting before the vote.

6D. Discuss the Alameda General Plan Update, including the Mobility Element and Transportation Element Appendix (Discussion Item)

Director Thomas introduced this item. The staff report and attachments can be found at <https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=5037422&GUID=7BF1A807-4CFB-4402-94F3-DE5D4BAA1B1A&FullText=1>.

Commissioner Clarifying Questions and Discussions and Comments for #6D

Chair Soules discussed what she would want to see at a subcommittee meeting and she wanted to see the timeline for the street categorization.

Director Thomas explained more about the appendix maps they had sent AC Transit. He also discussed the public comments they had received as well as comments from other boards and commissions. He then explained the next steps.

Commissioner Kohlstrand discussed a few wording changes she wanted to see. She wanted to have another subcommittee meeting on the Mobility Element appendix. She was not comfortable incorporating these maps, she had many concerns about Clement Avenue.

Chair Soules and Commissioner Weitze concurred about having another subcommittee meeting.

Director Thomas discussed what would be helpful.

Public Comments for item #6D

Jim Strehlow took issue with the language around converting gas to electricity for new construction as well as existing buildings.

Director Thomas said they were still taking public comments on these policies. He pointed out the next public hearing for the Planning Board would be September 14. He explained more about the Electrification Ordinance and how Climate Change was impacting everything including our use of natural gas.

7. Announcements / Public Comments

Jim Strehlow discussed how confusing bike only and bus only lanes were on Webster Street at Willie Stargell Avenue. He wanted to allow bicycles in the bus lane and wanted a discussion

with AC Transit on this issue. He also wanted the city to create educational materials on how pedestrians should dress when walking around at night.

Chair Soules reminded everyone that school started on August 6 and that meant many people figuring out new morning commutes. She encouraged everyone to reach out to bring awareness in the community to help everyone stay safe. She then thanked Vice Chair Nachtigall for her hard work as Vice Chair.

Vice Chair Nachtigall thanked everyone and said it had been an honor. She concurred with everyone being aware of children going to and from school and parents figuring out school pick up and drop offs.

8. Adjournment

Chair Soules adjourned the meeting at 9:38 p.m.