

# Agenda Report

**TO:** CITY COUNCIL

**DATE:** February 26, 2007

**FROM:** CITY MANAGER

**SUBJECT: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE TRAFFIC  
REDUCTION STRATEGIES STUDY**

## RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council direct staff to implement the following traffic reduction strategies:

1. Establish a target occupancy rate for on-street parking meters and request staff and the parking meter commissions to develop a program for adjusting meter rates to achieve the target occupancy rate.
2. Investigate the conversion of an existing Residential Preferential Parking District to a Residential Parking Benefit District.
3. Confer with the parking meter commissions and prepare a budget proposal for the Fiscal Year 2008 Operating Budget that would:
  - a. use a portion of parking meter revenues for transportation demand management programs within those districts,
  - b. use a portion of parking meter revenues to purchase Universal Transit Passes for employees within those districts,
  - c. use a portion of parking meter revenues to support the establishment of Car Sharing programs within those districts.
4. Request staff to study the feasibility of amending the Zoning Code and Central District Specific Plan removing minimum parking requirements for all new development in the Central District.
5. Request staff to study the feasibility of amending the Zoning Code and Central District Specific Plan to require the unbundling of parking costs for the second parking space per unit for all new residential structures over ten dwelling units in the Central District and in the Transit Oriented Development Zones.
6. Require proof of compliance with the State of California's Parking Cash-Out Law prior to issuing occupancy permits for new commercial development.
7. Recommend a proposal to implement Parking Cash-Out for City employees in the FY 2008 Operating Budget.
8. Support the efforts of Metro and the Arroyo-Verdugo Cities to establish a Bus Rapid Transit Route linking the Metro Orange and Gold Lines.

9. Establish a priority for use of funds collected through the Traffic Reduction and Transportation Improvement Fee for the projects needed to implement a Primary ARTS Transit Network.
10. Request staff and the Transportation Advisory Commission study the feasibility of implementing a Congestion Pricing mechanism within the Central District Area, including outreach to the business community, and return to the City Council with recommendations in 8 months.

### **TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY COMMISSION**

The Transportation Advisory Commission (TAC) reviewed the Traffic Reduction Strategies Study at their regular meeting on December 1, 2006. TAC also held a Special Meeting on January 16, 2007 to discuss each traffic reduction strategy with the consultant and staff.

At the February 8 meeting TAC approved the following four motions regarding the proposed traffic reduction strategies:

1. TAC recommended the following amendments to the staff recommendations for implementing the traffic reduction strategies
  - a) Change staff recommendation # 2 to "Convert an existing Residential Preferential Parking District to a Residential Parking Benefit District and ensure that any funds generated from the meters are spent on improvements recommended by the residents in the parking district.";
  - b) Change staff recommendation # 4 to, "Amend the Zoning Code and Central District Specific Plan removing minimum parking requirements for all new development in the Central District.";
  - c) Change staff recommendation # 5 to, "Amend the Zoning Code and Central District Specific Plan to require the unbundling of parking costs for all parking spaces for all new residential structures over ten dwelling units and all new commercial developments in the Central District and in the Transit Oriented Development Zones.";
2. TAC recommended that the City Council request staff to study the feasibility of lowering the existing Parking Maximum Cap in the Central District and Transit Oriented Development Zones below the existing 75% rate. TAC also requested that the study also analyze the feasibility of implementing a reduced parking rate in all of the Specific Plan areas throughout the City.
3. TAC recommended that the City Council direct staff to coordinate a workshop with the TAC, Parking Commissions, Environmental Commission and any other additional Commissions identified by the City Council. The purpose of the workshop would be for TAC to present the finding of the Traffic Reduction Strategies Study and to discuss the roles of the various Commissions in implementing the strategies recommended by the City Council.

4. TAC recommended that the City Council adopt the staff recommendations for the traffic reduction strategies as well as the two additional TAC recommendations to establish a lower Maximum Parking Cap and to hold a joint meeting with other Commissions to review and discuss the proposed strategies.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

The Traffic Reduction Strategies Study examines the feasibility of reducing traffic without negatively impacting the City's economy, restricting mobility or Pasadena's cultural attractions and quality of life. The study identifies a set of strategies when taken together have the potential to reduce the number of vehicle trips taken during the evening peak travel period by 25 percent. The Study also presents a second set of strategies that have the ability to reduce traffic by 10 percent. The report identifies these strategies and provides an analysis of the effectiveness and the impact on the City's economy. The report also provides case studies of cities that have implemented the strategies proposed to reduce congestion.

While increasing traffic appears to many to be the inevitable outcome of growth and economic development, this study comes to a different conclusion. Rather, it determines that the implementation of strategic policies can have the desired effect of reducing traffic. The analysis recognizes that many of the strategies are problematic and if the public is not brought into the process will be difficult to accomplish. The study also identifies the likelihood that the improved traffic flow on Pasadena roads accomplished through implementing these strategies could induce and attract additional "pass through" trips. Pasadena will need to partner with neighboring cities, regional transit operators and other agencies to adopt regional and state policies in order to successfully reduce traffic congestion.

### **BACKGROUND**

As part of the adoption of the Fiscal Year 2006 Operating Budget the City Council proposed a study to identify strategies that could reduce evening peak hour traffic congestion by 10 percent and 25 percent increments. The City retained the services of the consulting firm of Nelson/Nygaard Associates to prepare a study that would identify strategies to reduce traffic congestion in Pasadena. Working with City staff Nelson/Nygaard has prepared the attached Traffic Reduction Strategies Study (Attachment A).

The Report has identified 12 traffic reduction strategies. For reference, these strategies are presented in a series of individual strategy sheets which provide a brief summary of evidence on the effectiveness of the strategy, examples of communities that have implemented it, and a discussion of potential side effects.

TAC concurred with the staff recommendations except for recommendations # 2, # 4 and # 5. For recommendation # 2 TAC wanted to ensure that with the conversion of a Preferential Parking District to a Residential Parking Benefit District that any funds generated from the meters are spent on improvements recommended by the residents in the parking district. Staff concurs with the TAC recommendation.

For recommendations # 4 and # 5 TAC wanted to see immediate implementation of the strategies and recommended that the City Council forego the preparation of studies. Given the complexities of implementing these strategies and the need to involve other Commissions, staff believes it is necessary to analyze the proposed changes before amending the zoning and parking codes.

There are several significant factors that play a part in traffic generation; these include growth, land use, regional traffic and parking. These factors and their role in traffic generation are discussed in detail in the report and briefly below.

#### Growth

Growth continues to be a concern of Pasadena residents. The study indicates that to reach a goal of reducing traffic by 25 percent, strategies would need to be applied in a way that not only results in all new development taking place without any increase in traffic, but also in reducing traffic to and from existing development by 25 percent. In other words, to reduce existing traffic on Pasadena streets by 25 percent, drive alone rates would need to fall by more than 25 percent, unless Pasadena has no increase in residents, no increase in jobs and no increase in pass-through traffic.

#### Land Use

The shape of a city plays a critical role in how much and how often people travel by car. When neighborhoods are compact and many of a person's daily needs can be found within a few minutes walk, vehicles trips per household decline rapidly. Pasadena's General Plan already emphasizes the importance of transit oriented development, the creation of mixed-use neighborhoods and pedestrian friendly places, and establishes clearly where and in what form such development should take place. Additionally, Pasadena's General Plan contemplates the building of relatively little additional housing and employment compared to the amount that already exists. Therefore, to reach a goal of major traffic reduction, the study indicates that Pasadena's attention must focus on reducing trips from existing homes and workplaces.

#### Regional Traffic

With over 146,000 residents and Pasadena's significant role as a regional center of employment, culture and nationally known attractions, Pasadena plays an important role in the region. However in a region as large and as multi-cultured as Los Angeles, people's daily trips frequently begin in one city and end in another, resulting in the need for Pasadena to partner with other cities and agencies because development activity and traffic does not respect city boundaries.

If all Pasadena residents and all Pasadena workers' stopped driving entirely, Pasadena city streets would not be free of cars. The existing pass-through traffic (with neither origin nor destination in Pasadena), amounting to about one third of all vehicle trips, would continue to pass through. Moreover, since the removal of all local trips would reduce delays for pass-through traffic, cutting through Pasadena on local streets would become more attractive, and it is likely that more pass-through traffic would be generated.

Neighboring cities, regional agencies as well as state and federal agencies all affect transportation in Pasadena, and to reduce traffic, Pasadena will need to actively partner with all of them.

### Parking

The report indicates that Parking Policy is one of the few tools that lies squarely in the hands of the City of Pasadena. It is argued that parking policies may be the most important lever within the City's grasp for affecting the quantity of traffic on city streets. Several cities with the strongest records of reducing vehicle trips and traffic congestion have eliminated minimum parking requirements, and now have maximum parking requirements. The City has already implemented this for the Transit Oriented Development Zones.

### **Implementing the Traffic Reduction Strategies**

Staff reviewed the twelve recommended strategies identified in the Nelson/Nygaard report. Below is a discussion of each of those strategies and staff's recommendation for effectively implementing the strategies.

#### **1. Charge the right price for curb parking.**

To reduce the traffic caused by people circulating to find available curb parking, it is important to price curb parking to the extent that there is available space. Where metered curb parking complements off-street parking, it is important to also analyze the cost of this parking to encourage long-term parking in these facilities. Determining the "right price" will require staff to work closely with individual parking districts. Staff is recommending that the City Council establish a target occupancy rate for on-street parking meters to be between 60 percent and 85 percent and authorize staff to work with the parking meter commissions to expeditiously change meter prices to achieve those occupancy rates.

#### **2. Return the meter revenue to the neighborhoods that generate it.**

Residential Parking Benefit Districts are beneficial wherever there is a potential for spillover parking from nearby commercial areas or land-uses that generate significant demand for on-street parking such as Gold Line Stations, retail districts and colleges. Staff is recommending that the City Council direct staff

to investigate the conversion of an existing Residential Preferential Parking District to a Residential Parking Benefit District.

**3. Invest a portion of parking revenues in transportation demand management programs.**

In commercial parking districts, implementation of more Transportation Demand Management (TDM) measures will provide an additional incentive for employees to use alternative modes of transportation. Staff will work with the parking commissions to utilize a portion of parking revenues for TDM strategies such as transit, carpools, vanpools, bicycle, and pedestrian programs in each parking district. Staff is recommending that existing parking meter districts invest a portion of parking revenues in transportation demand management programs within those districts.

**4. Provide Universal Transit Passes.**

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) has been developing a county-wide Universal Fare System program referred to as the Transit Access Pass (TAP) program. TAP will allow a rider to board any bus and have the fare for the specific transit agency deducted from the pass allowing seamless transfers among all transit modes and operators. Upon the completion of the work by Metro to develop and implement the program with the Municipal Bus Operators, staff will implement this program on the ARTS buses. Staff is recommending using a portion of parking revenues from the parking meter districts to purchase Universal Transit Passes for employees within those districts. This would support strategy number three discussed previously.

**5. Require the unbundling of parking costs.**

Parking costs are frequently subsumed into the sale or rental price of housing and commercial space in California. To reduce traffic, the full cost of parking should be "unbundled" from the cost of multifamily housing units (both rental and for sale). Staff is recommending that the City Council request a study on the feasibility of amending the Zoning Ordinance and Central District Specific Plan requiring the unbundling of parking costs for the second parking space per unit in all new residential structures over ten dwelling units in the Central District and Transit Oriented District Zones.

**6. Require Parking Cash-Out**

Under existing California law each employer of 50 or more located in a "non-attainment area" (such as the South Coast Air Basin) who provides a direct monthly parking subsidy to employees shall offer a parking cash-out program. The California Air Resources Board is the agency responsible for administering the State Parking Cash-Out law. Under a parking cash-out program an employer offers to provide a cash allowance to an employee equivalent to the cost of providing a monthly leased parking space. The employee can choose

to take the parking space or forego the provided parking and take the monthly lease cost. Except for the cost of administering the program, Parking Cash-Out does not have any additional costs to the employer over what they currently spend on leasing parking. Staff is recommending that proof of compliance with the State of California's Parking Cash-Out Law be required prior to issuing occupancy permits for new commercial development.

As an employer, the City has not participated in the State Cash-Out program given the City owns many of the parking lots used by City employees or has entered into long term parking leases for parking spaces. In those locations where the City leases office space, the parking costs are "built in" to the lease rates. Staff is recommending that a proposal to implement Parking Cash-Out for City employees be included in FY2008 Operating Budget.

#### **7. Strengthen transportation demand management requirements.**

The 2004 Mobility Element highlighted the need to implement programs designed to manage demand on the existing transportation system. One of the Department of Transportation's goals was the review of the City's Trip Reduction Ordinance (TRO) to examine alternative program elements that would strengthen the program and provide for improved compliance. The Transportation Advisory Commission (TAC) also had a review of the TRO as part of their Fiscal Year 2006 Annual Work Plan. Department of Transportation staff and a TAC working group have met to review the TRO and the sections of the Municipal Code that regulate transportation management and trip reduction and develop program changes. TAC and the Planning Commission have approved the program changes recommended by staff, and have recommended program changes for City Council consideration.

Car Sharing provides individuals with access to a fleet of shared vehicles, allowing them to avoid owning a car, or a second or third car. Staff is recommending using a portion of revenues from the parking meter districts to support the establishment of Car Sharing programs within those districts.

#### **8. Improve transit.**

The recently approved Traffic Reduction and Transportation Improvement Fee will fund the implementation of transit service improvements for the City's ARTS service over the next 15 years. Transit service enhancements included in the transportation fee include increased service levels and the necessary buses to operate the service. Regional transit service improvements are also being planned that will link the Gold Line to the Red Line and Orange Line station in North Hollywood. Staff is recommending that the City Council support the efforts of Metro and the Arroyo-Verdugo Cities to establish a Bus Rapid Transit Route linking the Metro Orange and Gold Lines and that the City Council establish a priority for use of funds collected through the Traffic

Reduction and Transportation Improvement Fee for the projects needed to implement a Primary ARTS Transit Network.

**9. Improve bicycle and pedestrian facilities and programs.**

Staff will continue to implement the Bicycle Master Plan and the Pedestrian Plan through projects funded annually through the Capital Improvement Program Budget. The City's Bicycle Master Plan has been expanded with 50 miles of additional bike lanes; design of the bike transit facility is underway and the city was approved to receive funds for the North Marengo Avenue Bicycle Boulevard project.

**10. Remove minimum parking requirements for off-street parking.**

Pasadena's minimum parking requirements were adopted to "alleviate or prevent traffic congestion and shortages of curbside parking spaces." While minimum parking requirements have succeeded in preventing shortages of curbside parking as well as preventing spillover parking into adjacent neighborhoods minimum parking requirements have played a powerful role in increasing the number of vehicle trips on Pasadena streets. The study suggests that to successfully remove minimum parking requirements curb parking in the surrounding area must be metered and priced to maintain an acceptable vacancy rate and the funds from the meters must be returned to the area where it is generated.

Staff is recommending that the City Council request the Planning and Development staff to study the feasibility of amending the Zoning Ordinance and Central District Specific Plan removing minimum parking requirements for new development in the Central District. Because the Central District is considered a Transit Oriented Development Zone, it already has a parking maximum.

**11 Set maximum parking requirements.**

Staff will continue to implement the maximum parking requirements (parking caps) for developments with Transit Oriented Development (TOD) zones. Established through the 2004 Update to the Land Use Element, parking for all new development within a quarter mile of the City's six Gold Line Stations is capped at 75 percent of what is required by code.

**12. Establish congestion pricing.**

Establishing congestion pricing is the most powerful single technique for ensuring traffic reduction. For pass-through trips on Pasadena streets, it is almost certainly the only truly effective remedy. The study suggests that a toll ring around Pasadena's Central District Area would likely be the most successful strategy to reduce traffic significantly within the city. However for



congestion pricing to be levied in Pasadena, State legislation would be required to authorize the formation of a public agency to levy the charge. Staff is recommending that the City Council request Transportation staff and the Transportation Advisory Commission to study the feasibility and impacts of implementing a Congestion Pricing Zone or other congestion pricing options within the Central District Area.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

As the City Council considers implementing each of the traffic reduction strategies the fiscal impact associated with the strategies will be presented as part of the requested City Council action. The recommendations requesting staff to prepare studies on the implementation of the various strategies will significantly impact staff resources in the Department of Transportation. If Council authorizes staff to move forward on the strategies, staff will come back within the next 30 to 45 days to request approximately \$150,000 for the consulting services from Parking Funds and Transportation Funds that will be required to prepare studies on meter rate pricing and congestion pricing strategies.

Respectfully submitted:



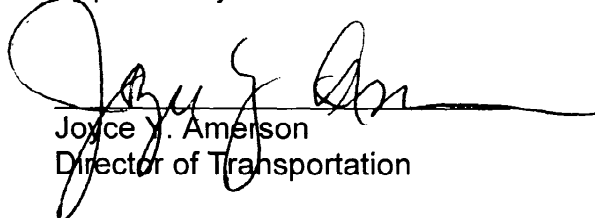
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