Agenda Report

September 20, 2010

TO: CITY COUNCIL

FROM: DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

SUBJECT: **CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP ON STREET CLASSIFICATION**

RECOMMENDATION:

This report is for information only.

BACKGROUND:

With the exception of the hillside areas on its eastern and western flanks, the street system in Pasadena is a small block grid network that has been largely in place since the 1920's. Because the city's grid network developed early and was expanded through accretion as individual tracts developed, there are inconsistencies, in some cases substantial, between the existing street system and the arterial-collector-local functional classifications as they have been applied to Pasadena. In many cases arterial streets, minor and principal, are indistinguishable from local streets in design.

The 1994 General Plan Mobility Element sought to address some of the classification/function inconsistencies by introducing two new types of streets – multi-modal (mobility) corridors and de-emphasized streets. These designations carried through into the 2004 Mobility Element and are in place today guiding city policy for what types of actions are permissible on these streets. The de-emphasized streets begin to introduce the concept of matching the function of the street to its context and in all cases focused on minimizing traffic on streets that while classified as arterials were essentially neighborhood streets. The multi-modal corridors formed a loose grid network of thoroughfares.

Many of Pasadena's traffic calming policies use the functional classification of a street as one of the criteria for deciding whether a particular device is appropriate. Similarly the acceptable methods for enforcing speed limits are influenced by the functional classification of the street. As more traffic calming devices have been deployed in Pasadena, the inconsistencies between the form and designated function of many streets have become more evident. An example of this is that the functional classification criteria have impeded the installation of speed humps on several streets that would otherwise be eligible for the devices under city policy.

In light of the recently mandated Complete Streets policy at the state level, Pasadena is putting more emphasis on understanding the design responses necessary to achieve such a policy. As the emphasis shifts from a curb-to-curb focus to one of a building-to-building (or complete right of way) focus, the variable character (context) of the land use and urban form adjacent to the roadway becomes more important, particularly as one attempts to balance the competing space demands for multiple modes of travel within a constrained space.

The classification system under consideration for Pasadena has three components:

- Context – the character of each street in terms of urban form and land use mix, particularly in ways that relate to the sidewalk.
- Function – the multi-modal and primary trip-type function of each street.
- Overlays – unique factors that merit special consideration that affect design of a street, but do not define the predominate nature of the street.

The 2004 General Plan calls out one of the seven guiding principles of the City as the ability to move about without the use of a car. Incorporating bicycles and pedestrians into the street design process is one way of achieving this objective. Also, the passage of AB 1358 in 2008, which mandates that as of January 1, 2011, cities in California must "modify the circulation element [of the General Plan] to plan for a balanced, multimodal transportation network that meets the needs of all users of streets, roads, and highways, defined to include motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, children, persons with disabilities, seniors, movers of commercial goods, and users of public transportation, in a manner that is suitable to the rural, suburban, or urban context of the general plan." Also, it is important to recognize that a portion of every trip is by foot.

In California, the cities of Sacramento, San Diego, Santa Monica and San Francisco have adopted context and function based street classification policies. The San Francisco Better Streets Plan includes comprehensive street design guidelines allowing San Francisco to "*make their streets more useable and attractive and universally accessible to all.*" Nationally, Charlotte, NC, New York and Minneapolis have all adopted context and function based street design guidelines. The Institute of Transportation Engineers just published a Recommended Practice for Designing Walkable Urban Thoroughfares that is based on these principles.

Public Outreach

The proposed street classification changes were presented to the Transportation Advisory Commission and the General Plan Update Advisory Committee earlier this year. Because the role of street classifications in the planning and street design process is not that widely understood in terms of its ramifications for urban areas like Pasadena staff elected to hold a series of focus groups with residents and business owners to seek input on the street classification efforts.

Focus groups are a technique used to communicate complex ideas to small groups of people in a highly interactive setting and to obtain from the participants an in-depth discussion of what they may have understood, what was unclear, and what their perceptions of the value of systems are. Each City Council District was asked to provide a list of individuals. The Pasadena Chamber of Commerce was asked to provide a list of interested persons as well.

In July two residential and one business community focus groups were held with approximately 40 participants. The Department of Transportation will use the focus group input in two ways. One is to help us communicate more effectively about the street classification process during the General Plan update. The other is to refine the technical aspects of the system proposed by our consultants.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

This workshop supports the General Plan guiding principle, "Pasadena will be a city where people can circulate without a car." New street classifications will assist the Department of Transportation in implementing the four major objectives of the Mobility Element:

- Promote a livable community
- Encourage non-auto travel
- Protect neighborhoods by discouraging traffic from intruding into neighborhoods
- Manage multimodal corridors to promote and improve citywide transportation services.

Respectfully submitted,

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