

City of Lafayette Staff Report

For: Lafayette City Council
Lafayette School District Governing Board

By: Carol Federighi, Councilmember and MORTRAC Chairperson
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Date Written: May 4, 2004

Meeting Date: May 10, 2004

Subject: Discussion regarding circulation issues within the Moraga Road corridor and the findings of MORTRAC

Introduction

The purpose of this agenda item is twofold. The first is to introduce the School Board to the work and findings of the Moraga Road Transportation Advisory Committee (MORTRAC), a City committee established to address circulation issues within the Moraga Road corridor. The second is to initiate a discussion between the School Board and City Council regarding the effects of Lafayette School and Stanley Middle School on circulation in the area and potential solutions towards mitigating these effects.

This staff report provides a brief background of the MORTRAC process, including the identification of the key circulation problems and the development of feasible solutions to these problems. The report then focuses on the role of the schools in mitigating problems and suggesting next steps. An attachment to this staff report provides additional background information as well.

Background

The City Council approved the Moraga Road planning process in 2000. The purpose of the process was to study and make recommendations regarding circulation and related quality of life issues within the Moraga Road corridor. The intent of the process was to address community concerns about the level of vehicular traffic and its impact on the quality of life, especially pedestrian and bicycle safety, neighborhood character and traffic congestion. The Council appointed MORTRAC, a committee made up of volunteer representatives of the Council, Planning Commission, Circulation Commission, small and large businesses, school interests, senior interests and at-large citizens, to undertake this effort. The current members are:

- Carol Federighi, Chairperson: City Council
- Michael Anderson: Planning Commission
- Lynn Hiden: Circulation Commission
- Ellen Poling: Circulation Commission (alternate)
- Steve Cortese: Large business owner
- Richard Poy: Small business owner

- Avon Wilson: Senior interests
- Tess Schoenbart: School interests
- Carol Singer: Citizen-at-large
- Michael Olson: Citizen-at-large
- Brad Kisner: Citizen-at-large
- Mike Majchrzak: Moraga Town Council

Since its inception, MORTRAC has accomplished the following:

- ♦ Held 26 public Committee meetings
- ♦ Reviewed every study and analysis about traffic in and around Moraga Road prepared in the last 15 years
- ♦ Held three public workshops
- ♦ Sent out comment cards to every property owner, business and organization within 500 feet of the Moraga Road corridor soliciting input about circulation issues
- ♦ Completed a survey of Lafayette School parents regarding traffic issues
- ♦ Completed the Problem Statement identifying the major issues impacting circulation
- ♦ Considered 29 programs and improvements to mitigate or lessen the problems
- ♦ Recommended a list of solutions to the City Council which was accepted in October 2003
- ♦ Recommended an implementation plan to the Council which was accepted in February 2004

The Problems

After much research, many meetings, two public workshops, outreach to area residents and businesses, and the school survey, MORTRAC identified the two major problems with circulation in and around Moraga Road: congestion and safety. These problems were further defined by specific issues:

- Congestion
 - Heavy traffic congestion in the mornings and afternoons make it difficult to turn off of and/or onto Moraga Road, particularly left turns across traffic. Traffic congestion and long backups also are the result of people making left turns off of Moraga Road.
 - Local schools contribute a significant amount to traffic congestion.
 - Growth in Moraga has made traffic conditions worse, and new growth will continue to increase congestion.
- Safety
 - There is significant speeding and a lack of enforcement of speed limits resulting in accidents and unsafe turning movements off of and/or onto Moraga Road from side streets and private driveways.
 - Moraga Road is unsafe because of a lack of pedestrian and bicycle facilities, particularly for children, and because of road conditions, such as poor lighting, limited visibility, rough surfaces and poor drainage.

The Solutions

Once the problems were identified and the City Council agreed with the findings, MORTRAC brainstormed solutions. Some of these solutions were considered in the past, some were new. The Committee took a comprehensive approach to ensure that everything was discussed before developing a list of credible and feasible recommendations on how to address the problems in some measure. The list of 29 ideas (see the attachment) was reduced to seven recommendations that could be implemented in the near future.

- Request the Lafayette School District to consider program(s) to modify locations, habits, and patterns of school drop-off/pick-up activities for both Stanley and Lafayette School.
- Facilitate and increase enforcement of speed laws.
- Construct pedestrian paths along both sides of Moraga Road.
- Improve bicycle and pedestrian safety on First Street.
- Negotiate with the Moraga to use the Palos Colorados traffic signal to meter traffic on Moraga Road.
- Implement intersection improvements at Moraga Road / Brook-School Streets.
- Implement an on-going vegetation management program to improve walkway clearance and sight distances at side streets, driveways, sidewalks and around curves on Moraga Road.

The City Council approved the recommendations in October 2003, and asked MORTRAC to develop an implementation program.

Implementation

In February 2004, the Council approved the following action steps developed by MORTRAC to implement the recommendations:

Actions requiring collaboration with outside agencies, such as the Lafayette School District. These required that the City Council make the initial contact with these bodies to explain the MORTRAC process and recommendations and establish the groundwork for future work:

- Contact the Lafayette School District to request a joint meeting to explore if and how MORTRAC's ideas can be implemented. Recognizing that certain projects will take time and on-going collaboration, MORTRAC recommended that the initial joint meetings also be used to establish subcommittees that could work together to follow up each project to its conclusion.
- Contact the Lamorinda School Bus Board is to request a discussion regarding the feasibility of school bus service along Moraga Road.
- Contact the Town of Moraga to request a discussion at the next Tri-City meeting to explore options for the future Palos Colorados traffic signal to mutually benefit of all of Lamorinda.

Actions to be integrated into City programs and services (such as traffic enforcement and vegetation maintenance). These actions will be referred to the appropriate City department heads for incorporation into proposed workplans and budgets, which will be presented for Council's consideration at the 2004/2005 budget workshop in June. If approved and funded, these actions will be implemented beginning with the new fiscal year.

A capital improvement project to implement enhancements specified in the recommendations, such as the pedestrian paths along Moraga Road. MORTRAC has reviewed and accepted a set of concept project plans and estimates prepared by staff (see attachment). The Committee will host a joint meeting with the Circulation Commission (with the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee), and representatives from the Lafayette School District, principals, and PTAs to present the project scope for public review and comments. Concurrently, MORTRAC has recommended that staff proceed to secure Measure C fund allocation for the project, and to program the project into the 2005 Capital

Improvement Program, which is scheduled for adoption by the Council at the budget workshop. At this time, staff estimates there is sufficient Measure C allocation to Lafayette to fully fund the project.

Schools

Throughout the process used by MORTRAC, congestion caused by the schools and safety issues for children going and coming from schools were a prevalent theme. Because it was so prevalent, MORTRAC worked with Tom Del Beccaro, a Lafayette School parent and former member of MORTRAC, to survey parents (see attachment). The information from the survey was used in part in developing its recommendation to consider program(s) to modify locations, habits, and patterns of school drop-off/pick-up activities for both Stanley and Lafayette School, MORTRAC looked at a number of ideas that could result in reducing some of the congestion and safety issues. It is these ideas that MORTRAC wants to see further explored by the School District and the City:

- Deploy a facilitator to keep traffic moving through the drop-off and pick-up area and minimize blockages of the driveway openings at Moraga Road
- Eliminate double-parking in the drop-off and pick-up area
- Restore signage to prohibit left turns from the Lafayette School driveway onto Moraga Road
- Create new and/or satellite drop-off and pick-up locations, such as adjacent to the Stanley School sports field off St. Mary's Road or at the new Library
- Create and encourage parents to use appropriate locations for short-term parking
- Implement a "walking school bus" with designated stops along routes used by parents going to and from the schools
- Stagger school bell times and/or school buses
- Educate parents and students about best traffic practices – the DOs and the DON'Ts
- Provide incentives for children to ride bikes or walk to and from school, and provide disincentives for parents driving children to and from school as part of an independent transportation demand management program
- Develop a civics curriculum with ties to Moraga Road traffic issues
- Investigate the operation of a school bus line on Moraga Road

MORTRAC recommended that the next step should be the establishment of a sub-committee with School District and City representatives to see if any of these ideas are feasible or if there are other measures that would be effective.

Recommendation

1) Establish a sub-committee with School District and City representatives to discuss ideas for mitigating congestion and safety issues around Lafayette School and Stanley Middle School. 2) Bring back a status report to the Board and Council in October.

Attachments

- City Council Staff Report, dated October 14, 2003
- School Commute Study / Lafayette School, March 2002