

**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
THE TORRANCE TRAFFIC COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Traffic Commission convened in a regular meeting at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, October 3, 2011 in the West Annex meeting room at Torrance City Hall.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

Commissioner Walter led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Galvin, Green, Sargent, Siani,
Tsao, Walter, and Chairperson Rudolph.

Absent: None.

Also Present: Engineering Manager Semaan.

4. AFFIDAVIT OF POSTING

MOTION: Commissioner Sargent moved to accept and file the report of the City Clerk on the posting of the agenda for this meeting. Commissioner Tsao seconded the motion; a roll call vote reflected unanimous approval.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: SEPTEMBER 6, 2011

MOTION: Commissioner Galvin moved for the approval of the September 6, 2011 Traffic Commission meeting minutes as presented. Commissioner Walter seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

6. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #1

None.

7. ITEMS UNDER CONSIDERATION

Chairperson Rudolph explained the policies and procedures of the Traffic Commission, including the right to appeal decisions to City Council.

**7a. TRAFFIC COMMISSION WORK PLAN – SECOND PRIORITY
Develop a Guideline for Protected Permissive Left-Turn Signals**

Engineering Manager Semaan provided background on the item continued from Commission meetings of September 6 and August 1, 2011. He recommended that the Commission concur with the following list that represents the Traffic Commission's modified and prioritized criteria used on when NOT to consider protected-permissive or flashing yellow arrow left-turn phasing:

1. Non-Torrance Primary Agency Intersection;

2. More than one left-turn lane in one direction;
3. Left-turn movement crosses three or more opposing through lanes;
4. With lead-lag left turn phasing operation;
5. Critical speed limit is over 45 mph;
6. A left-turn accident problem exists;
7. A line of sight issue exists; and
8. High opposing volume of through traffic with lack of adequate gap.

He presented a spreadsheet of 166 signalized intersections populated with criteria identified by the Commission for further consideration of Protected Permissive Left-Turn (PPLT) phasing and/or Flashing Yellow Arrow (FYA) Permissive-Only Left-Turn indication. He explained the color-coding of intersections deemed inappropriate under the Commission's criteria for consideration at this time, noting that dark green highlighting indicates lead-lag left turn phasing operations.

Engineering Manager Semaan introduced Mark Miller, Executive Vice-President of Albert Grove & Associates and City Traffic Engineer, City of Fullerton.

Mr. Miller provided a power point presentation on Protected Permissive Left-Turn (PPLT) traffic signal operations. He showed diagrams of typical protected only signal head locations and typical PPLT signal head locations that are stacked and in a five-section "doghouse" display. He noted that the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD) states that for any movement there needs to be two indications. He explained how PPLT signals work as well as how they help reduce driver frustration, minimize delay, and decrease idling emissions. He described illustrations of phase sequencing at Harbor Boulevard and Lambert Avenue in the City of Fullerton.

He provided information about PPLT Flashing Yellow Arrow (FYA) indication that was determined to be better understood by drivers according to a 1999 study. He stated that in 2003 the City of Fullerton applied for and was approved to implement FYA on a three-year experimental basis. Following extensive public notice, several FYA signals were installed at major traffic generators in Fullerton. He discussed findings that showed good results for driver understanding and safety, noting that drivers intuitively know that yellow means to "proceed with caution."

Mr. Miller stated that the signals in Fullerton have been operational for five years and that FYA is presently included in the 2009 MUTCD Section 4D.20, "Signal Indications for Protected/Permissive Mode Left Turn Movements." He showed the FYA display arrangement and explained that there is no "Left Turn Trap" because the flashing yellow arrow is displayed concurrently with the opposing green ball. He discussed benefits of FYA that includes minimizing driver delay, allowing for better coordination of signals via lead/lag, reducing red light running, and saving fuel costs. He stressed the importance of creating positive offset and stated that the MUTCD does not recommend any signing.

Commissioner Sargent inquired whether the "doghouse" display or FYA indication would be better for Torrance. Mr. Miller responded that, since there are no PPLT signals in the City, it is easy to convert protected only left turns to FYA and noted that it is also less expensive.

Engineering Manager Semaan noted that another benefit of FYA is that the four section head could be changed to a three section head by taking away the flashing yellow during peak hours.

Commissioner Galvin questioned why the Commission was even considering the “doghouse” display and he explained that the education element is an important factor in selecting the FYA option because most drivers are not familiar with the indication.

Commissioner Sargent received clarification from Mr. Miller that FYA indication could be possible at the intersection of Crenshaw Boulevard and 235th Street because the flashing yellow could be turned off certain times a day.

Engineering Manager Semaan showed short U-Tube videos regarding FYA operation, the standard “doghouse,” the Left Turn Trap, and Dallas Phasing.

Mr. Miller discussed benefits of using a queuing detector to serve the majority of drivers and not the minority.

In response to Commissioner Siani’s inquiry, Mr. Miller explained that in a FYA operation, the first yellow signal is protected and the second yellow signal indicates clearance before a red signal. He conceded that this could be confusing to drivers but that the Vehicle Code states that there must be a clearance before red.

Responding to Chairperson Rudolph’s inquiry about PPLT and three lanes of opposing traffic, Mr. Miller stressed the importance of looking at each intersection individually for critical speed, congestion, and line of sight issues. He stated that generally he uses a maximum speed limit of 40 mph on three lane arterials. He offered to review the Commission’s proposed list of criteria and provide feedback.

Engineering Manager Semaan distributed Chapter 201: Sight Distance from the Highway Design Manual and explained why speed and line of sight are independent.

When Commissioner Sargent inquired what steps the Commission should take to move forward, Engineering Manager Semaan suggested first setting parameters for the criteria and then identifying locations that are viable for consideration. He recommended not prioritizing them because available funding would drive implementation.

Chairperson Rudolph voiced support for using the criteria as a guideline but not an absolute and Commissioner Sargent suggested having two categories of criteria—absolute and non-absolute.

Engineering Manager Semaan responded that it was not necessary to list non-absolute criteria as those parameters would have to be considered on a case-by-case basis during actual design. He recommended establishing an absolute list and everything else would still be flexible as well as selecting either FYA or the “doghouse” configuration.

Mr. Miller offered his opinions about including dual left-turns, three lanes of opposing traffic, and maximum critical speed limit in the criteria.

MOTION: Commissioner Sargent moved to direct staff to consider Flashing Yellow Arrow Permissive-Only Left-Turn indication as a baseline and to modify criteria used on when not to consider Protected Permissive Left-Turn phasing as follows: 3: Left-turn movement crosses more than three opposing through lanes; delete 4: With

lead-lag left turn phasing operation; and delete 8: High opposing volume of through traffic with lack of adequate gap. Commissioner Galvin seconded the motion; a voice vote reflected unanimous approval.

Commissioner Walter recognized Mr. Miller for providing a positive influence on his career.

8. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS #2

8a. Engineering Manager Semaan distributed e-mail communication with Yunus Ghausi and Romeo Salvador from Caltrans regarding synchronization of traffic signals along Hawthorne Boulevard, Pacific Coast Highway, and Western Avenue.

Chairperson Rudolph expressed interest in having a representative from Caltrans come to a future Commission meeting.

8b. Engineering Manager Semaan informed Commissioners that bid openings for improvements for the intersection of Hawthorne Boulevard and Skypark Drive are expected the end of October 2011.

8c. Commissioner Walter suggested that staff consider lead-lag operation for north and southbound at Costco and Lowes.

8d. Commissioner Galvin relayed concerns that residents of condominiums are crossing Sepulveda Boulevard when they are restricted to right or left turn movement; Engineering Manager Semaan offered to relay the concern to the Police Department.

8e. Chairperson Rudolph inquired why the City sweeps streets where cars are parked and Engineering Manager Semaan explained that they rely on residents to move their cars and also because of Clean Water Act mandates.

8f. Commissioner Siani discussed a Los Angeles Times article about extending the duration of yellow lights and Engineering Manager Semaan stated that it is not a good idea because it allows more drivers "to gun through" an intersection.

9. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION: At 9:15 p.m., Commissioner Walter moved to adjourn the meeting to November 7, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. in the West Annex meeting room, Torrance City Hall, and, hearing no objection, Chairperson Rudolph so ordered.

Approved as Submitted November 7, 2011 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
