

FREEPORT BOULEVARD/21ST STREET CONVERSION PROJECT PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE

**Thursday, April 6, 2006, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
C.K. McClatchy High School (Cafeteria)
Meeting Summary**

On Thursday, April 6, 2006, the City of Sacramento, Department of Transportation held a Public Open House for the Freeport Boulevard/21st Street Two-Way Conversion Project at C.K. McClatchy High School (Cafeteria, 3066 Freeport Boulevard). The open house provided an opportunity for community members to learn more about the conversion and the changes it will bring to the community.

Reporters from Channel 13 News and Sacramento Bee covered the event while approximately 45 community members attended the open house. There was a great diversity of attendees, including Councilmembers Robert Fong and Lauren Hammond, representatives from neighborhood groups and area businesses and residents. Project team members present included representatives from the following:

- City of Sacramento Department of Transportation
- Wood Rodgers, Consulting Engineer
- The Hoyt Company, Community Outreach

Workshop Outreach

Prior to the open house, the project team made extensive efforts to contact and invite community members and stakeholders to the public open house. Efforts included mailing nearly 2,000 invitations to neighbors and key stakeholders; making more than 80 reminder phone calls; sending more than 130 e-mail reminders; hand delivering invitations to key gathering places such as the offices of Councilmembers Fong and Hammond, Sierra Curtis Neighborhood Association, Neighbors For Livable Streets, Land Park Community Association, Taylor's Market, Freeport Cleaners, Coin-op Laundry, Freeport Bakery, Blockbuster (Freeport Boulevard and Sutterville Road), Curtis Park Market, Gunther's, Crepeville (2nd Avenue and 24th Street), Quick Stop Service Market (Curtis Park), Public Library, and Swanberg's Clothing and placing two sandwich board signs outside of the high school. News articles also appeared in the March and April 2006 issues of the Viewpoint.

Meeting Format

The program included opening remarks from Councilmembers Robert Fong and Lauren Hammond, a brief presentation on the project background and changes that will result within this corridor and an open question and answer session. The presentation was flanked by open house sessions that provided the community the opportunity to view project displays and speak one-on-one with project team staff.

The following comments and questions were provided during the question and answer session:

Traffic

- Currently, the traffic on Freeport Boulevard is stacked up when the railroad-crossing arm is down and this is in a single-lane situation. With a two-way roadway, how much more impacted will the stacking be?
- Regarding stacking, a lot of it has to do with the fact that there is limited access for residents and we all have to use the same streets to get anywhere. But once the streets are converted, and we are able to turn left, that may reduce stacking.
- What happens when people want to go to Taylor's Market and a queue forms on 4th Avenue because they all want to go to the market? They will stop traffic because they want to turn left. That will cause stacking, even on tracks. Have you considered restricting turns completely in that area or perhaps at specific times? We were told that this will be dealt with in the design phase since it was not dealt with in the Environmental Impact Report.
- Regarding access on Freeport Boulevard, traffic currently backs up from the 2nd Avenue light with two lanes going one-way. Stacking will get worse with the two-way conversion.
- Explain how the traffic works at the intersection of Freeport Boulevard and 21st Street and how turns will work if you are driving northbound and trying to get to Freeport Boulevard, explain how the turns will work.
- Going southbound, is it possible to have two turn lanes onto Broadway? Otherwise, traffic would back up even more. All traffic from 19th Street goes from two lanes into one, so if there were two lanes turning onto Broadway, it would help disperse the traffic.
- I am concerned about traffic flow in and out of Curtis Park since residents only have a couple of ways to turn left out of the neighborhood. There will be too much traffic at the intersections where we can turn left. What is the objective of the median barriers? Do you not want people to turn left out of Curtis park and go south?
- Will there be a left hand turn lane on Freeport Boulevard?
- Have you done an analysis of how traffic speeds will impact these roads?
- Land Park Drive and Riverside Boulevard has speeders and they are one way in each direction, so this conversion plan does not necessarily mean it will slow traffic.
- Explain how traffic with the Curtis Park Village was considered in the planning and evaluation of this conversion.

Railroad Crossing

- Regarding the intersection at Taylor's Market, the railroad-crossing arms come down too soon and stay down too long when a Regional Transit light rail train passes through, can the timing of this be reduced? This will create a problem. Will the traffic signal still allow people to make a left turn if northbound on Freeport Boulevard? Is it possible to turn left with railroad signals down?
- Land Park Community Association, Sierra Curtis Neighborhood Association, everyone has raised the light rail arm issue and its timing. Regional Transit said they would fix it, but we do not know where they are with it. We want an answer.
- Can that railroad-crossing gate be moved? Union Pacific never moved the gate when they moved the tracks. Can you confirm if this gate can be moved?

- If you do not move the railroad-crossing arm to allow for people to take Freeport Boulevard when a train is going through, neighborhoods will have to deal with train rage and we want to stop or prevent this.
- When the railroad-crossing arm goes down people will not be able to detour 21st Street and take Freeport Boulevard. Try to accommodate a left turn from Freeport Boulevard just before the railroad crossing.

Islands and Barriers

- What is the nature of the size of the island and its extension at Portola Way, 4th Avenue and Marshall Way?
- Regarding the triangle island at Portola Way, Marshall Way and 4th Avenue, that is a blind turn and pedestrians are at risk. The triangle island is a good thing.
- On 21st Street, are the medians just striping or do they have form? How tall and wide will they be?
- I am concerned about traffic flow in and out of Curtis Park since residents only have a couple of ways to turn left out of the neighborhood. There will be too much traffic at the intersections where we can turn left. What is the objective of the median barriers? Do you not want people to turn left out of Curtis Park and go south?
- Is that a barrier at Markham Way and 21st street? Markham Way is narrow at that intersection. If you put a barrier in, you will have to restrict parking on Markham Way leading to 21st Street. How would this work? Cars could block this area and no one would be able to turn.
- The barriers on Markham Way and 3rd Avenue will not work because the streets do not have room. You would have to take residential parking away in order to put in barriers.
- Those barriers will not stop anyone, people will find a way if they really want to turn, even if it is illegal.

Monitoring

- Is it true that the project will be monitored and any concerns that come up will be addressed? I am concerned about the median barriers on 21st Street that are to prevent cut-through traffic and left turns.
- During the one-year monitoring program, if there is a problem that comes up do you have to do a special Environmental Impact Report for the modification or are you allowed to just take care of that modification?
- During your monitoring program, I do not know how you will be able to monitor the traffic if there cannot be any traffic since you will be restricting left turns in and out of Curtis Park. You will not be able to see if barriers are even necessary.

General

- I am a bicyclist. Bike lanes continue to disappear and that is not safe because cars need to know where a bicyclist is and with a clear marked area, it is safer. Bike lanes need to be consistent and not disappear and re-appear. We need a protected area.
- Explain why the bike lane starts north of Markham Way, rather than 4th Avenue?
- Explain why the Freeport Boulevard side of the conversion stops at Broadway and not at W Street since 21st Street will be converted to W Street?
- What is the potential to extend the conversion of 19th Street to W Street?
- Why can 2 traffic lanes not end at Vallejo Way? Could you transition the lanes farther south?

- Where the two lanes merge between 3rd and 4th Avenue, this was never discussed in the original plans. Ideally, the inside lane needs to allow for a left turn onto Freeport Boulevard or go straight, but not the merge between 4th and 3rd Avenue.
- The two-way conversion will slow the traffic on Freeport Boulevard, but 21st Street is wide, which tells me that speeding may be a problem. How will people cross 21st Street? Have you considered putting in crosswalks for pedestrians with protected areas midway as you see in some places in Midtown?
- We need a landscaped median on 21st Street (north of 4th Avenue to Broadway). There appears to be enough roadway. This would, offer protection to pedestrians and reduce cut-through traffic.
- Tell us the budget and put an addendum to bid package, as it was done with the Broadway project. We need to find a way to be creative to allow for landscaped medians.
- Would this median be permanent? If so, would we be stuck with it?
- I am concerned about the High Occupancy Vehicle Lanes Caltrans is proposing. How does that project relate to this project and visa versa?
- Caltrans needs to consider this Two-Way Conversion Project as they move forward with their HOV plans, please take this back to Caltrans.
- Thanks for the hard work on this project. It will make a big improvement to our lives.

The following written verbatim comments and questions were submitted via comment cards at the Public Open House:

Comment #1:

I applaud the intent of this conversion. I am concerned about the possible repercussion of traffic attempting to avoid the “slow down” of Freeport moving to Land Park Drive. Land Park is already used as a parallel “freeway” for cars avoiding I-5 traffic during the rush hour.

Comment #2:

Is this the final answer to the Freeport Boulevard/21st Street/railroad tracks intersection?

Comment #3:

The extended island at Portola, 4th Avenue and Marshall does not make sense—it would be better to shorten it to allow Portola traffic to go directly to 21st Street.

Comment #4:

Re: Proposed “pork chop” streets (feeding onto 21st)

A city representative should find out which houses located within 1/2 block of 21st/feeder Street intersection must use street parking. The “pork chop” streets will necessarily limit resident parking, as the streets are too narrow. The no-parking zones would have to be implemented in order for the “pork chop” to be feasible.

Comment #5:

I am very much opposed—why do this before Curtis Park Village is approved?

Comment #6:

Two things

1. All the meetings before never had the merge going north after the railroad tracks. Now they (you) say we will look at it after it's done. You didn't listen to us before (now surprise with merge after railroad tracks). Once it's done you won't change it.
2. No pork chops – no room – no one has looked at the street. Your solution to no parking, which an effect onto residents. Streets are too narrow.
3. Must have left turn from Freeport onto Freeport heading North when train/light rail blocks streets. Apply now, can get adjustment for set back distance on arm to track.

Comment #7:

Pork Chops at Castro/Markham/3rd Avenue

1. Prevents left turns out of C.P. to go south on 21st
2. Prevents left turn onto those streets (from south on 21st, including people who live on those streets!)
3. Forces all traffic onto 2nd Avenue to 24th Street or 4th Street/Marshall.

Please do not put “pork chops” monitor the traffic to determine if they are needed.
*Equity in traffic distribution – especially considering the future C.P. Village traffic.

Comment #8:

How about putting a pre-signal immediately North of 4th Avenue (on Freeport). This would avoid stacking in front of Taylor's (going North and South on Freeport) and protect pedestrians crossing at the island.

Comment #9:

Even with two-way streets – traffic will still be fast – i.e. land Park Drive and Riverside. The project should include speed tables at all crosswalks to slow traffic and provide protection for walkers.

Comment #10:

In the new triangle in front of Taylors, please plant with blooming flowers. Maybe change from season to season. Maybe neighbors can adopt as a gardening project. The important thing is to have blooming color! Thanks

Comment #11:

Local art (sculpture) should be placed on island near Taylor's. Crossing Broadway is a serious danger for pedestrians and a serious effort should be made to make this safer. I would like to be able to walk to Safeway with a degree of safety!

Comment #12:

1. Very important to maintain/preserve ability to exit South Curtis Park and Portola and Marshall up to 21st Street. Why is the island extended to make this even more difficult? This needs to be fully investigated due to proposed CPV project.
2. Islands at 3rd Avenue, Markham and Castro mean that Curtis Park has circulation benefit and 24th Street and 2nd Avenue will be even more impacted.

Comment #13:

No Pork chop room on Markham and 3rd and Castro. Plan to merge lanes into one lane on 21st Street after 4th Avenue, not on original plan(s). Must have left turn lane onto Freeport from Freeport (north) at Taylor's Market.

Comment #14:

Add medians – landscaped! Larkin north to prevent traffic going into residential streets.

Allow traffic north at 4th Avenue – Make island smaller block right turn (northbound) from 21st Street.

Comment #15:

The “pork chop” on 3rd, etc. may be a problem since the streets are so narrow. I’m on the “traffic calming” group for 4th, 3rd, Marshall, etc. and when we considered most of the calming devices the only ones that seemed to work on the majority of the streets were speed bumps, because you had to “eliminate parking” to give enough space for any dividers, circles, or pork chops. The streets are too narrow.

Comment #16:

I have been to a few of these open houses for community projects and my main comment is that you must have a representative from RT present at these meetings. So many questions are raised about RT and they are never answered at these meetings. If we are going to talk about improving the City, we need RT to ALWAYS be there to answer our questions.

Comment #17:

Please consider ways to protect pedestrians crossing Freeport in front of Taylor's/Dry Cleaners. We are concerned that the curve just north of Taylor's creates a blind spot that will expose people and cars (crossing Freeport into Taylor's) to danger.

The following addresses key questions and comments raised during the question and answer session:

Provide traffic analysis and stacking impacts.

The City has this information available in the Final Environmental Impact Report. To review a copy of the document, please contact Dave Edrosolan, City of Sacramento Department of Transportation, at 916-808-5974.

What is the nature of the size of the island and its extension at Portola Way, 4th Avenue and Marshall Way?

The existing island will be extended about 20 feet to the east. This is intended to further discourage the illegal left turn movement from Portola Way to 4th Avenue.

The railroad crossing arms come down too soon and stay down too long when a Regional Transit (RT) light rail train passes through, can the timing of this be reduced?

The Public Utilities Commission (PUC) dictates the time the crossing arms are down. While some crossings have shorter "down" times, the PUC felt the 21st Street/4th Avenue crossing required additional down time.

Among the reasons given to RT by the PUC was the greater width of this crossing compared to a typical crossing, as well as the high level of foot traffic from McClatchy High School and California Middle School.

The PUC has not been inclined to reduce the crossing times. RT and the City of Sacramento attempted to get a variance from the PUC to ring the bells only as the arms go down (similar to what currently happens in Midtown). Due to liability reasons, the PUC denied the request.

The neighbors' concerns are very important to RT. RT is constantly in contact with the PUC for some relief on these types of issues.

Can the railroad crossing gate be moved (since it never moved when the tracks moved) to allow northbound traffic to take Freeport Boulevard if the gate is down?

Due to the street and railroad alignment, it is not possible to relocate the gate to safely allow this movement. The skew of the tracks with the intersection make it impossible to move the gate far enough north to provide for this left turn movement.

There is not adequate roadway width to move or modify this gate or provide a dedicated left turn for northbound traffic on Freeport Boulevard to allow this movement while maintaining safety standards, which is consistent with the PUC's requirements.

What is the potential for additional conversion on 19th Street to W Street?

The current design/project limit is consistent with the EIR that was approved by the City Council. Extending the conversion to W Street was considered during project planning, but not implemented due to the number of lanes and traffic volumes.

The Caltrans HOV (High Occupancy Vehicle) proposal is of concern and how it impacts this project or how this project impacts the Caltrans project, as well as the Curtis Park Village project, how do they relate?

Prior to the proposed Caltrans HOV and Curtis Park Village projects, the City Council approved the Freeport Boulevard/21st Street Two-Way Conversion project in 2004. Thus, all unapproved projects are required to assume 21st Street and Freeport Boulevard as two-way operations, including the Caltrans HOV and Curtis Park Village projects.

In order to include the restricted turn barriers on 21st Street, residential parking would need to be eliminated near the barriers because the streets are too narrow.

The restricted turn barrier design on 21st Street is consistent with the EIR that was approved by the City Council. In order to include the restricted turn barriers, which the City is required to do in accordance with the approved EIR, no parking signs and curbs painted red may be a part of the design along Castro Way, Markham Way, and 3rd Avenue for approximately 50 feet to 100 feet from the restricted turn barriers.

Why not eliminate a lane sooner on northbound 21st Street near the railroad crossing?

Traffic analysis indicated that the Freeport Boulevard/21st Street intersection would operate more efficiently with two northbound travel lanes. As such, 21st Street will have two lanes approaching the railroad crossing. PUC regulations do not allow lane drop tapers to occur across tracks, therefore, we cannot begin the lane drop taper until after the crossing. The taper length is consistent with City Standards for the current vehicular speeds. Upon project completion, City staff will reevaluate the traffic speeds to determine if the taper length can be reduced.

To help with protection for pedestrians and reduce cut-through traffic, there should be a landscaped median on 21st Street.

The City's requirement for landscaped medians is a minimum of 11 feet. The width of 21st Street is at its widest point 52 feet. Traffic lanes are at a minimum 11 feet in width, an additional 6 feet is needed for the bike lane and 7 and one-half feet is needed for on-street parking. This leaves 3 feet for a landscaped median, which is insufficient for planting.

Additionally, a permanent landscaped median would impede driveway access for residents living along 21st Street.

Note: As part of the approved project, the City will monitor the project for one year. In the event that there is an issue with the design, the City may make appropriate changes.