



SUMMARY REPORT FROM CART

May 2013

BACKGROUND

Community Action to Reduce Traffic was launched on October 7, 2011 when then Vice Mayor Jim Fraser and Councilmember Jeff Slavitz convened a meeting with Belvedere and school representatives to investigate and tackle the seemingly intractable problem of traffic congestion on Tiburon Boulevard. A committee was formed, calling itself CART. The participants in this process have changed a bit over the ensuing one and one-half years, but always included elected representatives from the Town and City, the Reed Union School District and St. Hilary School, the Reed School PTA, Safe Routes to School, and both Town and City managers and police chiefs. Councilmember Frank Doyle replaced Councilmember Slavitz when he left the Town Council in December of 2012. Belvedere was represented by current Mayor Sandy Donnell and former Mayor Jerry Butler, the latter being subsequently replaced by Councilmember Bob McCaskill. The group has generally met every other Friday, with hiatuses over the holidays. A roster of all who participated at one point or another is attached as Exhibit A. Marin Transit Senior Planner Robert Betts was also a regular attendee and very helpful resource to the group.

AREAS OF EXPLORATION

CART's objective was to explore and consider every approach to reduce traffic on Tiburon Boulevard. To do this, the committee set out to understand the nature of the traffic problem. This included a thorough review of school-related traffic issues for both the Reed Union School District and St. Hilary School. The group gathered information on school populations, current modes of getting to and from school (numbers on buses, one-child cars, on foot or bike, carpool, etc.), "bell" times, and current programs to get kids out of cars and to ease the flow of drop-off traffic and so forth.

Bus ridership was evaluated, including barriers to their increased use such as cost, convenience and perceived safety issues for young riders. The group met extensively with Robert Betts of Marin Transit and other outside resource professionals to review opportunities for public and school bus service that might serve to ease Boulevard traffic. Reed School District and St Hilary parents were surveyed about their school-related transportation modes, preferences and concerns, as well as cost sensitivity for school bus use. A significant amount of time was spent determining the content of the survey, its preparation and execution.

Another information gathering effort was aimed at understanding Tiburon Boulevard traffic patterns including when and how peak problems seem to occur, the impact of crossing guards

(individual child crossings versus “platooning”) and Caltrans signal management. Two area-specific traffic studies were conducted by a traffic engineering firm to gather primary data.

Both physical changes (such as signal timing) and behavioral changes (creating incentives or disincentives to achieve desired behaviors like kids walking to school) were explored. What follows is a partial list of approaches studied during the eighteen meetings that preceded the Community Traffic Forum in September of 2012:

- Altering school bell times
- Altering school child drop-off practices and policies
- Additional school buses
- Carpools (school pools)
- Bus cost and how parents pay for school bus passes
- Bank partnerships to help parents stagger payments for bus passes
- Public subsidies for school buses (tax measure)
- Bike trains and programs to encourage bike ridership
- Crossing guard practices and policies
- Informational campaigns to increase awareness of biking or walking to school or work
- Signal timing (length of green time)
- Signal synchronization
- Under and overpasses for Tiburon Boulevard
- Length of left turn lanes
- Roundabouts
- Better coordination with public transit
- Before or after school programs to stagger drop-off and pick-up times
- Blackie’s Pasture or other locations as park and ride lots
- School incentives for kids who walk or bike
- Altering construction start times
- Increasing ferry service and ridership
- Trams, shuttles and alternative modes of transit on Tiburon Boulevard or bike path

PUBLIC PROCESS

Once the group had conducted its initial explorations and information gathering, it set about planning a Community Traffic Forum to share those results and get feedback and ideas from the public. A significant amount of planning went into the meeting, including the preparation of a power point presentation (Exhibit B) on basic information. The Forum, held on September 20, 2012

at Reed School, was widely advertised in the local paper, on the Blackie's Pasture board and through both Town and City newsletters. Approximately 35 members of the public attended, approximately 16 of whom offered opinions or asked questions. All the many suggestions made by participants were explored by the committee.

CONCLUSIONS

Following the public hearing and the investigation that led up to it, the group strived to distill what ideas and actions might be both useful and feasible for traffic reduction. Its broadest conclusion was a new understanding of the difficulty of addressing this problem. The Boulevard simply lacks adequate capacity for the traffic that the Peninsula's business, work, school and recreational life create. The group found no "silver bullet" to make the problem disappear. Some potentially beneficial, large physical changes to the Boulevard were explored, such as an underpass between Avenida Miraflores (by Del Mar School) and McKegey Green or a roundabout at Trestle Glen, but the steep cost and engineering challenges of such concepts, coupled with the need for Caltrans approval, resulted in them being tabled for now. Any future consideration of these types of measures will require careful analysis of what traffic relief might be gained versus their substantial cost.

Despite no overarching solution to traffic congestion emerging from this process, CART nevertheless concluded that there are many smaller changes which together can work to improve circumstances. These include:

1. Traffic Signal Synchronization: Caltrans already has the signals timed for maximum green time on the Tiburon Boulevard, but the signals are not synchronized. While the distance between signals will serve to reduce the impact of this change, it should offer some benefit. Consequently, this process was commenced with the Town and City commissioning the specific traffic counts Caltrans requires; Caltrans reports the synchronization should be completed in July of 2013.
2. Additional School Bus: During the course of the CART process and in part prompted by it, the Reed Union School District added another school bus, which it now believes fulfills current demand.
3. Bike Train: Plans are underway to create a "bike train" starting at Blackie's Pasture or The Boardwalk parking lot to encourage kids to ride their bicycles to school. The bike train would have adults, both paid leaders and volunteers, ride with kids from the collection points to the schools. An outreach and education component on the program and the benefits of bike ridership would accompany the program to increase participation.
4. Tiburon Boulevard Shuttle: CART is very encouraged that Marin Transit is replacing Route 19, which runs down the Peninsula, with smaller shuttle buses with shorter, 30-minute headways (the time between buses). This new service, Route 219, will operate seven days a week and connect Strawberry Village to Downtown Tiburon. Also proposed is a weekday "ferry feeder" component, Route 219f, that will operate into the hills and connect to three

AM and PM Blue and Gold ferry commute boats. Supplemental bus service for Redwood High School-bound students would continue and now operate as Route 119. All new services will include real-time bus arrival information to be obtained through PCs, smartphones, or at select stops. Fares are \$2.00 for adults, \$1.00 for seniors/youth/disabled. Changes are anticipated for early August, before students return to school.

5. Continued Diligence: Efforts to encourage and incentivize everyone on the Peninsula, regardless of destination or purpose, to minimize car trips, especially during peak traffic congestion times, must be continued or traffic problems will only grow worse over time.
6. Periodic Review: The CART group believes it would be wise for the Town, City and schools to convene every three to five years to review existing measures for traffic reduction to consider their effectiveness and to explore new ideas.

The Town of Tiburon and the City of Belvedere wish to thank the participants in the CART process. They dedicated many, many hours of time in meetings and conducting research to explore this vexing problem and its possible remedies. Everyone listed on Exhibit A deserves great credit for their hard work and is hereby sincerely thanked. An extra special note of thanks is due to Wendi Kallins of Safe Routes to School for her significant contribution to this process.

Submitted by:

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