

Honorable Mayor and Members
of the Torrance City Council
City Hall
Torrance, California

Members of the Council:

SUBJECT: Caltrans' Proposed Traffic Signal Installation at the Intersection of
Western Avenue and 235th Street.

RECOMMENDATION

The Community Development Director recommends that the City Council review the staff report, accept public input and direct staff to:

- Adopt a Resolution stating the City's opposition to the proposed installation of the traffic signal by Caltrans at the intersection of 235th Street and Western Avenue;
- Explore different alternatives such as requesting that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) be drafted or withholding necessary construction permits, in an effort to deter the installation of the traffic signal by Caltrans at 235th Street and Western Avenue;
- Install raised medians to restrict access into and out of 235th, 234th and 236th Streets at Western Avenue, should a traffic signal be installed at this intersection; and
- Direct Staff to continue working with Caltrans and the City of Los Angeles for their concurrence to the installation of the median island on 235th Street west of Western Avenue as described in Alternative 1.

BACKGROUND

In August 2003, Caltrans apprised City of Torrance staff of their intent to install a traffic signal at the intersection of Western Avenue and 235th Street, as a means of addressing traffic safety concerns. Staff communicated to Caltrans that such signal was not desirable to the City, and forwarded a copy of the Southeast Area Traffic Calming informational packet. This packet included information about traffic-related data and residents' comments regarding traffic volume and speeds, and cut-through traffic specifically along 235th Street.

City staff asked Caltrans to coordinate a meeting with the City of Los Angeles to provide the opportunity for the three agencies to cooperatively determine the best means to address the situation.

In August 2003, April 2004, and again in September 2004, City staff met with Caltrans' representatives to discuss the proposed signal. At these meetings, the City's position had been made clear regarding the City's opposition to Caltrans' proposed signal. At our last meeting, Caltrans agreed to host a neighborhood meeting with Torrance residents to hear their comments.

On December 15, 2004, Caltrans hosted a meeting with Torrance residents to review the traffic signal plans for the intersection of Western Avenue and 235th Street. Staff from the City of Torrance Community Development Department and City Manager's Office was also in attendance. Despite the majority of the residents in attendance being opposed to the new signal, Caltrans has continued with their intent to install a new signal.

Since that time, City staff has not only been working with the City Manager's and City Attorney's office to retard the installation of the traffic signal, but staff has developed two roadway modification alternatives designed to minimize the negative impacts on Torrance residents should the new signal be installed. Graphic illustrations of the proposed signal, as well as two vicinity aerial maps, are attached to this report. One, noted as Existing Conditions, shows the relationship between 234th and 236th Streets with 235th Street. The second is a large scale aerial of Western between Sepulveda and 238th Street.

On Wednesday January 19, 2005, City staff held a Neighborhood Meeting with the residents of southeast Torrance to receive feedback regarding the State's continued consideration of the traffic signal. A summary of these findings is described in this report for Your Honorable Body's support of the City's judgment regarding the traffic signal.

ANALYSIS

Throughout our meetings with Caltrans, the City has suggested various design solutions and roadway modifications to address the intersection of 235th and Western. The first suggestion was to extend the median islands on Western through the intersection of 235th Street. This option could potentially eliminate all left-turns into and out of 235th at Western, as well as the through-movement on 235th across Western. This concept would have required the concurrence and permitting of both the City of Los Angeles and Caltrans. This idea was not well-received by either agency. The second suggestion involved two alternatives to minimize the traffic impact by suggesting the implementation of turn restrictions through the use of a raised median and/or a closure of the left turn pocket for northbound Western Avenue. Restricting left turns from northbound Western at 235th would potentially decrease movements through the intersection and decrease volumes on 235th Street.

Alternative 1: (see attachment C) is designed to prohibit the northbound traffic along Western Avenue from making left turns onto 235th Street while the southbound traffic would continue to be allowed to enter 235th Street. Eastbound traffic on 235th Street would only be able to make right turns onto southbound Western Avenue.

Alternative 2: (see attachment D) would have a similar affect as the first option, but would give the eastbound traffic along 235th Street the ability to make both left and right turns onto Western Avenue from 235th Street.

The two alternatives were presented to the residents who attended the January 19th Meeting. A majority of the residents still objected to the installation of the traffic signal, but agreed that Alternative 1 would help minimize any potential negative impacts should the signal be installed.

To prevent potential over-flow of traffic onto adjacent streets, similar restrictions should be considered on 234th and 236th Streets at Western Avenue.

To date, Caltrans is moving forward with their plans to install a traffic signal at the intersection of Western Avenue and 235th Street. They have scheduled to advertise for construction bids in March 2005. Our offices will continue to work with Caltrans and the City of Los Angeles on this matter.

Respectfully submitted,

CONCUR:


Jeffery W. Gibson
Community Development Director

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Community Development Director


By: Ted Semaan, Manager
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CONCUR:


LeRoy J. Jackson
City Manager

Attachments:

- A) Resolution
- B) Aerial Photos
- C) Caltrans' Proposed Signal
- D) Alternative 1
- E) Alternative 2
- F) Correspondence