

**MINUTES OF GENERAL PLAN WORKSHOP #16
THE TORRANCE PLANNING COMMISSION**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The Torrance Planning Commission convened in a regular session at 7:05 p.m. on Wednesday, April 23, 2008 in the Council Chambers at Torrance City Hall.

2. SALUTE TO THE FLAG

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Transportation Planning Manager Semaan.

3. ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioners Browning, Gibson, Horwich, Skoll, Uchima and Chairperson Busch.

Absent: Commissioner Weideman (excused).

Also Present: Deputy Community Development Director Cessna, Planning Manager Lodan, Sr. Planning Associate Chun, Planning Associate Richardson, Planning Associate Cutting and Transportation Planning Manager Semaan.

4. INTRODUCTION OF DRAFT ELEMENTS

4A. DRAFT CIRCULATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE ELEMENT

Transportation Planning Manager Semaan reported that the Circulation and Infrastructure Element plans for the efficient movement of people and goods within Torrance and throughout the region and covers all modes of transportation, as well as the infrastructure system for the circulation of energy, water, sewage, storm drainage and communications. He noted that the draft element has been reviewed by the Traffic Commission and the Water Commission, but no changes have been made pending the Planning Commission's review and additional input from the public.

Responding to questions from the Commission, Planning Manager Semaan explained the procedure for estimating pass-through traffic.

Referring to Table CI-4, Near-term and Long-range Roadway Improvements (pages 33-38), Chairperson Busch noted that the list of improvements was extensive and asked about funding for these projects.

Planning Manager Semaan explained that funding for projects has not been allocated beyond the five-year capital improvement budget; that the list was generated by the ongoing Citywide Traffic Study as a means of planning for the future; and that it also provides the supporting documentation necessary to solicit funds at the county, state and federal level when they become available.

Referring to Item 2.2.2, Railroad and Commuter Rail Service (page CI-21), Commissioner Skoll noted that it mentions that Union Pacific is considering abandoning a portion of its rail lines in Torrance and asked about the use of this land.

Planning Manager Semaan stated that he was not aware of any plans, however, there has been discussion of converting some of the rail lines for commuter rail service, but that would be off in the distant future.

In response to Commissioner Skoll's inquiry, Planning Manager Semaan provided clarification regarding Development Impact Fees. He confirmed that staff reviews applications for non-residential developments to ensure compliance with the City's Transportation Demand Management Ordinance, which requires features such as bicycle storage facilities and preferred parking for carpools. He also confirmed that the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Handbook mentioned under Item 14, Neighborhood Traffic Calming, has already been developed and is available to the public.

Commissioner Uchima suggested, with regard to parking, that the City require that customer parking for new retail/commercial projects be conveniently located, i.e. within a certain distance of the project. Noting that idling vehicles waste energy and contribute to pollution, he recommended that an effort be made to better synchronize traffic signals particularly during peak hours on major arterials and in cases like Robinson Helicopter where all employees leave at once creating gridlock on surrounding streets. He also suggested that building pedestrian bridges over major roadways, such as Hawthorne Boulevard near Del Amo Fashion Center, would improve the flow of traffic and make it safer for pedestrians.

Chairperson Busch asked about the implementation of Policy CI.4.8, which calls for the establishment of a system for residents and businesses to receive real-time traffic information (page C1-41).

Planning Manager Semaan reported that the City already has a dedicated radio station that provides local traffic information and the goal is to improve the exchange of information as better technology becomes available and interconnect with regional information.

Referring to Item 4.4.3, Oil and Gas Pipelines (page CI-60), Chairperson Busch questioned whether a significant amount of oil was still being extracted from underneath Torrance, and Deputy Community Development Director Cessna advised that while there are several pipelines, there is very little extraction being done.

In response to Chairperson Busch's inquiry, Planning Manager Semaan confirmed that the City has developed standards for speed humps/bumps as mentioned in Item 14, Neighborhood Traffic Calming, but discourages their use because they can slow emergency vehicles and damage fire department equipment.

Commissioner Horwich noted his opposition to speed bumps due to the damage they can cause to vehicles.

Chairperson Busch invited public comment.

Heather Storm, 24216 Los Codona, suggested having a shuttle service along Hawthorne Boulevard so people could shop at various businesses without having to get in their cars.

Robert Feldman, 4620 Cathann Street, commented on the drastic increase in traffic Torrance has experienced in recent years and questioned whether there was a way to determine if past projections were reasonably accurate. He related his belief that the City needs to come up with accurate projections to ensure that proposed improvements will be adequate. He suggested that the City may have to consider making some major arterials one-way, i.e. Hawthorne southbound only and Crenshaw northbound only, at some point in the future and voiced his opinion that it was important to have long-range contingency plans in place. He urged that the City think “outside the box” to find creative solutions, noting that some freeways in Washington have lanes that reverse direction in order to better deal with peak hour traffic.

Commissioner Browning noted that there are limitations on what the City can do on Hawthorne Boulevard and Pacific Coast Highway because these are State-controlled roadways and the City is currently in the process of trying to acquire them.

Planning Manager Semaan reported that Assemblyman Lieu has introduced legislation that would speed the acquisition process.

Commissioner Gibson asked about Torrance’s daytime versus nighttime population. Planning Manager Semaan related his understanding that the nighttime population is approximately 147,000 people and swells to 350,000-500,000 during the daytime.

4B. DRAFT NOISE ELEMENT

Deputy Community Development Director Cessna explained that the Noise Element addresses sources of noise within the community and establishes policies to prevent any new noise/land-use conflicts and minimize the impact of existing noise sources. She noted that traffic noise is the primary concern in Torrance and that a study of baseline noise sources and levels was included in the report.

For the benefit of the audience, Chairperson Busch noted that the Commission has forwarded an item to the City Council recommending that the City’s hours of construction be made more restrictive due to the impact of construction noise on nearby residents.

Referring to Section 3, Future Noise Conditions (page N-13), Commissioner Browning questioned why the only residential areas expected to experience increased noise levels are two segments of Palos Verdes Boulevard. Deputy Director Cessna stated that she would check with the consultant because it wasn’t clear why these areas were singled out.

Commissioner Browning questioned whether anything could be done about late-night noise from trains. Deputy Director Cessna explained that certain modifications can be made to crossings that would allow trains to cross without the blowing of whistles.

In response to questions from the Commission, Deputy Director Cessna provided clarification regarding the noise abatement program at Torrance Airport.

Commissioner Skoll expressed concerns that the Airport Commission no longer receives monthly reports on noise violations, which he found to be very informative during his time on the commission. Deputy Director Cessna explained that the report was discontinued due to a reduction in staffing.

Commissioner Skoll suggested that it would be helpful to include a definition for the word "threshold" as used in this report.

Commissioner Skoll questioned whether the City has been receiving complaints about construction noise. Deputy Director Cessna reported that most complaints are related to contractors beginning too early or working too late.

Referring to Item 3, Future Noise Conditions (page N-12), Chairperson Busch related his belief that in addition to the roads mentioned, he believed Lomita Boulevard would also be likely to experience an increase in noise due to traffic volume.

Commissioner Horwich expressed concerns about noise from leaf blowers, and Deputy Director Cessna advised that regulating leaf blowers is an issue that has provoked much debate.

Chairperson Busch invited public comment.

Joe Arciuch, 23521 Kathryn Avenue, reported that he lives under the flight path of the airport and is frequently disturbed by aircraft noise. He expressed concerns that noise monitoring equipment has not been operational for the past two years and about the reduction in staffing of the Noise Abatement office and called for strict enforcement of noise restrictions. He suggested that monies from the Airport Fund should be used for this purpose rather than the General Fund.

Commissioner Browning noted that a new noise monitoring system is in the process of being installed, which features advanced technology and requires less staffing.

The Commission briefly recessed from 8:40 p.m. to 9:05 p.m.

Heather Storm, 24216 Los Codona, reported that the removal of shrubs along the perimeter of Walteria Park has greatly increased the noise level for nearby residents, noting that Policy N.3.3 (page N-22) calls for the planting of dense landscaping along roadways and adjacent to other noise sources to act as a buffer. She stated that rather than noise from airplanes, she is plagued by noise from helicopters that frequently hover in this area.

Deputy Director Cessna advised that the new noise monitoring system includes a monitor in the Walteria area to address concerns about noise from helicopters.

5. SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

Planning Manager Lodan thanked the Commission and audience members for their comments. He noted that the next draft elements to be reviewed by the Commission will be the Land Use and Housing Elements but no date has been set at this time.

Commissioner Skoll suggested that staff look into placing notice of the workshops in the *Daily Breeze* under community events.

Commissioners and Chairperson Busch commended staff for doing an excellent job of preparing for the workshops.

6. ADJOURNMENT

At 9:05 p.m., the meeting was adjourned to the Planning Commission meeting of May 7, 2008 at 7:00 p.m.

Approved as Submitted July 9, 2008 s/ Sue Herbers, City Clerk
