

November 12, 2003

Honorable Chairman and Members of
the Public Works Commission

Regular Meeting of
November 19, 2003

PEDESTRIAN SAFETY CROSSING PACIFIC COAST HIGHWAY AT PIER AVENUE

Recommendation:

It is recommended that the Public Works Commission consider options to improve pedestrian safety crossing Pacific Coast Highway at Pier Avenue.

Summary:

Staff and Caltrans have received numerous complaints concerning the safety of pedestrians crossing Pacific Coast Highway (PCH) at Pier Avenue. Vehicles making a right turn often do not see the pedestrians in the crosswalk who have to jump out of their way. This is a standard condition for all signalized intersections where turning vehicles with a "green-ball" must yield to pedestrians. There are certain factors that may make this location worse than typical. The first is the optional double right turn movement. Eastbound traffic on Pier Avenue has three lanes at the intersection; one left turn only lane, an optional left or right turn lane, and a right turn only lane. Eastbound traffic on Pier Avenue gets the "green-ball" with the simultaneous pedestrian crossing

The City traffic engineer recommended moving the crosswalk to the north side of the intersection with the thought that left turning vehicles would more easily see pedestrians. Caltrans shares our concerns regarding pedestrian safety at this intersection but did not think moving the crosswalk would improve the situation. Of course, the safest situation would be to give the pedestrians a protected phase but Caltrans could not approve an additional 30-second delay of PCH traffic. Caltrans recommends eliminating the existing middle option lane for eastbound traffic on Pier Avenue at PCH and making it an additional left turn only lane. They feel that a single right turn only lane would provide the needed improvement for pedestrian safety. The thought being that the vehicle in the middle lane can be blocked from viewing the pedestrians by a vehicle in the right turn only lane. Staff agrees with this assessment.

The City provided Caltrans with traffic lane counts done during peak hours for this intersection. Their review of these counts and their observations made at this intersection lead them to believe that a single right turn lane will be adequate for the existing traffic volumes. They recommend adding approximately 5 to 7 seconds to the right turn arrow to handle the additional load. We could also consider losing a couple of parking stalls on eastbound Pier to extend the right turn lane. Ray Abassi, the City traffic engineer will discuss the different options with the Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard D. Morgan, P.E.
Director of Public Works/City Engineer

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