

Dec. 7, 2022

Bankers Hill Community Group – Design Review Committee (minutes/notes)
Discussion of Overall mobility in Balboa Park and Reconfiguration of Balboa Dr.

Phil Trom
Christina Chadwick
Claudia Brizuela

Bruce Damman
Jim Frost
And others from BHCG

Resurfacing opportunities for significant changes in the park.
Opportunities for balancing parking needs in the park
Related, bike racks in the park.

Program through streets division “repave and repurpose”.

Reason for more parking:

Phil: Park Blvd. is two lane with limited access for bikes. Reconfiguration is to change that to one lane and one transit + cycle track rethinks that roadway. That Blvd. is losing over 200 spaces. Balancing is intended to recapture and rebalance that loss on Park Blvd.

Swing gates on Balboa Dr. close around 10pm, seen as opportunity to recapture loss of parking on Park Blvd. Accessibility needs as well.

Does the west mesa need more parking? Park changes gives us a new baseline. Right now it does not need more parking. We aren't sure what that looks like on balboa drive. We will be able to assess that once Park is improved.

Jim Frost: seems like the loss on park is trying to be made up for on the west mesa. Who is parking on Park Blvd vs. who parks on the west mesa. Different user groups involved and may not be a legitimate equivalency.

Phil: the two corridors are part of a very large park. We are not sure we knew that park is a major artery, Balboa is supporting role. We don't know how that will happen over time. Park is a significant project with large losses.

JF: you're making a major intervention on Balboa Dr. for a supposed need, for unknown users, and unknown need to accommodate this unquantified question. Can you replace them reasonably, physically, nearly a mile away from where those other spaces exist?

Phil: opportunity to intermingle the roadway needs. Balboa Dr., two lanes southbound only but doesn't have that level of traffic. Puts the ROW in play, what are the low hanging fruits.

Claudia B: when we look at BP we look at it in its entirety. We are looking at all parking in general in parking for Balboa Park, it is still all meant to serve the park.

Bruce: Friends of Balboa Park did a parking and circulation study. Have you contacted them and have they reviewed your proposal?

PHIL: we are working through Balboa Park Committee.

CB: we have been working with Christina (Chadwick) and parks and rec on that, not sure if they are on the BPC.

Bruce: Jack Carpenter, Mike Stepner, have worked on that study and their input would be very helpful.

Bruce: This will create a change in the ambiance by placing diagonal parking and a travel lane in the middle. Balboa Dr. is 25mph street right now. If you drive in the summer and on Sat and Sunday, you see people using it for recreation. They skate, bike and jog all using Balboa Drive for recreational activity. Parking will change the whole use of that street to basically a dangerous space and people might not use it at all.

How do you feel about the experience as a drive now? Putting the diagonal parking makes it more of a parking lot. What do you as traffic designers feel about that?

Claudia B: we looked at speeds and volumes on the road. Angled parking is a traffic calming measure. Reducing it down to around 16', studies show 85th % to show average to go down. Some concerns with angled parking is people not being able to see users, proposing reverse angle parking. Addressing safety concerns.

Bruce: people go both directions. There is also a bicycle plan for Balboa Park Master Plan. Are you aware of that? How do you think that fits in?

CB: I'm only aware of city Bicycle Master Plan not the Balboa Park Master Plan.

Bruce: Part of the trail goes onto balboa drive where it joins 8th ave. People now run along balboa drive and go up 8th ave, the trail called the cherry shan trail, terminates where the most recent Halloween event was. Balboa drive is used as a pedestrian and exercise experience along with parking.

Jim F: the comments Bruce and Claudia point out, Balboa Dr. is not your typical urban street where traffic goes down the middle. This is a very different animal we are dealing with and we need to be careful from a traffic engineering point of view to not get bogged down in the engineering details. It currently serves multiple needs and when we do these wide sweeping densification of vehicles that we don't wipe out these other users from the park space. This is a road in a park and not as a parking lot. This is what balboa drive was used for in the past. South of laurel was parking lot for downtown and north of laurel is a parking lot for construction workers. Let's look at this from a multi-faceted user point of view.

Bruce: the consensus from our last meeting was that it hasn't been proven to us that additional parking is needed for the west mesa. The feeling was, that we don't want additional parking unless it proven that its needed. We like the idea as diagonal parking, but we would like to find out if there are other

potential uses that could be used for Balboa Dr that could be within the 40' ROW. The diagonal parking may be on the west side is an excellent idea, but do we need parking on the east side?

Jim F: losing sight of the global park view is that there is a parking demand in the park. When we eliminate spaces, we get a problem. Adding spaces can be overcome or justified by linking up west mesa and other parts of the park. This is a combined issue we are looking at here. This is 3/4 mile away, how those people are going to walk into the central mesa. If you look at the standard old parking requirements how far are Americans willing to walk? 600ft. Doesn't get you to the laurel street bridge. This is a two-pronged situation you are looking at, moving people around the park and from this parking to where they want to go. The in-park transit vehicle used to go to the west mesa. It can't go there anymore. That must be a strong input on what we are looking at. Users, demand, desires, all kinds of parking on balboa drive but if they can't get where they want to go, so what.

Any plans for expanded tram service to the west mesa?

Phil: we have been exploring ways to provide better trams through Sandag. Like paratransit.

Christina: there have been discussion about how to modernize the roles of the tram throughout the park. We are looking at different ways to do it, and we have been talking about it and making more steps towards grant dollars we would incorporate you into that discussion.

Jim F: one immediate possibility due to its current state is the possibility to use that tram to make a u-turn at laurel and balboa drive. It can turn around there. It can go there legally. It gives it a tram terminus at the west end of laurel street bridge. To correspond to this restriping effort that is imminent. We've got to get to Phil's situation which is restriping which is tomorrow.

Christina C: tram is not street legal.

JF: where does street legally begin and end? You can u turn and not need to be street legal, it can be instantly incorporated.

Christina C: top of mind for our streets division and mobility dept.

Bruce: do you think this is too early and maybe you should wait until you do more studies about the park? Doesn't seem to be a need, hate to see diagonal parking put on the west side and be vacant all the time. If you have a repaving project, then can there be other alternatives for Balboa Dr.

Phil: considering those factors, we will look at Balboa Park Master Plan trail and bike network,. From a holistic standpoint it would have a traffic calming effect, we see this as a system wide improvement as a positive. We see the use as a point well taken. Tram is a great way to activate this area and create a Spine to Prado, dips into this parking lot, is about 2000' each way. Makes the park whole in some ways. To complement something that's happening on the east side, can you do something positive in response? We think this is. Adding active transportation users are also active uses we can make, based on those to we think it's a net positive. Taking the parking on Park, what's the best solution for all users? we think this is the best solution.

Jim F: in the foremost portion of our minds we should be thinking about the park as a park, not as a parking lot. It's not a facility to support public good and not private needs. We are going to lose sight of

our design goals and the long-term perspective of what the park should be and what it can become. We don't know what the long-term impact of these will be without a vision.

Bruce: Balboa Park Master Plan calls for the west mesa to be a pleasure area of the park. By creating more parking in this part of the park, and I think that's very important. Claudia and Phil, did you look at "we wanted to add more parking, so we want to put more parking in to compensate for the loss on park" Did you look at other uses for Balboa Dr such as a cycle track or jogging, or?

Claudia B: we evaluated and took a look at it, once we took a look at the swinging gates we thought it wouldn't be operational 24hrs a day. Fifth Ave and Fourth Ave are bidirectional facilities and cyclists can use those go north and south. Balboa Dr. Gates would be closed and not be available all hours of the day so we ruled it out for bike lanes.

Brer: The assumption that because the gates close at 10pm bicyclists won't use a Balboa Dr. cycle track is just wrong. Every day cyclists move around obstacles, like when cars park in the bike lane, they stop and mount the curb to just go around the obstacle. If a cyclist wants to go ride their bike along Balboa Dr. after the gates close at 10pm they can still do that.

There is another group of cyclists that isn't being considered here. Many people do not ride their bikes on city streets because they are terrified of riding with cars. So they put their bikes in their car and drive them to places with no traffic where they can ride safely, they do that here in Balboa Park. Park their car and ride around inside the park. A Sharrow isn't protecting those users and will end up excluding them.

Jim F: this is a situation where the project is going ahead as designed. We've been talking about balboa park committee engaging with you, and then you engaging with the community. Competing interests, as well as Park Blvd. This is all very helpful feedback. I would like a clear answer, is there any chance of modifying the city's plan before its implementation in June?

Phil: striping plan is not done, we are planning to go back to Balboa Park Committee. January is the cut off. We submit to street department in February. We will take this back to leadership.

Jim F: I want to make sure we aren't getting backed into it.

Phil: we discussed this with transportation, and we landed on the Sharrow for bicycle facilities. We have thought a lot about this.

Bruce: what will be your reaction or communication with Balboa Park Committee regarding west mesa?

Phil: we will go back to leadership and then Balboa Park Committee.

Bruce: what do you plan to say?

(End of meeting discussions and thank you)

(End of notes)