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Subject: Analysis regarding posted speeds

Dear Transportation Commissioners and Council Members,

I am unable to attend the CTC meeting on Wednesday, Sept 14 since I will be at the Walk/Bike Conference in Ventura. Please enter these remarks into the record for that meeting.

Mission: Pedestrian did not oppose the temporary increase of the posted speed on Morrissey and Bay Streets to see if radar enforcement would bring the speeds down enough to allow radar enforcement at 25 mph. This experiment failed.

Our letter to you in 2003 said, "We strongly believe that if the test is not successful in reducing the 85th percentile as planned, then the posted speed must be maintained at 25 mph and other methods of speed reduction tried."

Do not increase the posted speed limits.

Increasing the posted speed limit may allow radar enforcement, but there is no evidence presented in the staff report that the previous enforcement produced the lower speeds observed on some streets in 2005. The 2005 speed survey measures 73 Santa Cruz streets. Of these streets 47 (64%) show a decrease in the 85th percentile speed, 8 show the same 85th percentile, and 18 (25%) show an increase in the 85th percentile.

Is this overall improvement the result of more enforcement? Given the City's financial resources, it would be useful to clarify whether enforcement in 2005 was greater than in 2000.

What was the pattern of enforcement in 2005? Where did it take place? How many times were there enforcement operations and on what streets?

How did 2005 speeding enforcement differ from enforcement in 2000?

What evidence does the city have that radar enforcement caused the reduction in the 85th percentile on the 64% of streets where a reduction occurred?

Did the 85th percentile decrease on any streets where there was no radar enforcement?

Did the 85th percentile increase on any streets where there was radar enforcement?

The recent speed reduction demonstrations on Morrissey and Bay failed to reduce the 85th percentile low enough to permit radar enforcement at 25 mph.

Given these observations there seems to be no logical basis for staff's recommendation to increase posted speed limits. They have shown that radar enforcement is either ineffective or even unnecessary. If enforcement was not the major factor in the speed reductions on 64% of the surveyed streets, then what are the factors that produced this result? Instead of spending resources on ineffective or unnecessary enforcement, the City should try to learn what non-enforcement factors led to lower speeds on 64% of the surveyed streets. Armed with that knowledge and the latest research on street designs that passively encourage speeders to slow down, the City should apply non-enforcement techniques to reduce speeds on the streets with the worst or most dangerous speeding.

Questions for staff and Council

The City's traditional posting of 25 mph on all City streets is not based on a desire for enforcement, but rather on a desire for safety and quality of life.

What is our vision for Santa Cruz neighborhoods?

Do we want a community that emphasizes quality of life and safety, or do we want to accommodate drivers who speed through our neighborhoods? Should we work to preserve the use of radar or should we work to slow down speeders who endanger our children and pets, who generate excess noise, and decrease our quality of life? **The staff report acknowledges that radar enforcement doesn't work. Shouldn't we now devote our energies to reducing speeding by other means?**

There are many other tactics to try including inexpensive measures.

The staff report includes a quote from the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices that says, ". . . studies have shown that establishing a speed limit at less than the 85th percentile generally results in an increase in accident rates,"

Questions about this quote:

What studies? Did the studies deal with expressways? residential streets? arterials? Were the studies appropriately designed and conducted by credentialed researchers? Do these studies deal with severity of collisions as well as numbers of collisions? Were the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists taken into consideration in these studies?

Is the conclusion, that the number of crashes increases, a misinterpretation of the data? Such a mistake has been made previously with the erroneous assumption that crosswalks give pedestrians a false sense of security. (That erroneous conclusion, based on the so-called "San Diego study" has since been discredited and superceded by more current research.)

Our questions about this conclusion are based on the following data:

- a) Braking distance is markedly increased as speed increases.
- b) Pedestrian mortality is exponentially increased as speed of the vehicle increases.
- c) The driver's view of the roadway is narrowed as vehicle speed increases.

All of the above factors might increase the chance of a collision and a) and b) increase the severity of injury should a collision occur.

Debbie Bulger for Mission: Pedestrian