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July 16, 2013

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VENTURA COUNTY  
GRAND JURY

Honorable Brian J. Back, Presiding Judge  
Ventura County Superior Court  
800 South Victoria Avenue  
Ventura, CA 93009

**Subject: Grand Jury Report – Victoria Avenue corridor through the City of Ventura**

Dear Judge Back:

The following is the City of San Buenaventura's response to the Ventura County Grand Jury's report entitled "Victoria Avenue Through the City of Ventura." A copy of the Grand Jury Report is attached for your reference (Attachment 1).

**Facts**

The City agrees with the following "facts" presented in the report: FA-01 and FA-02.

The City disagrees with the following facts presented in the Grand Jury report:

**FA-03.** The City Traffic count data collected by the City indicates that there has actually been a decrease in traffic volumes along the Victoria Avenue corridor. See Attachment 2. Caltrans published data shows a reduction of highway traffic between 2008 and 2011 (*2011 Traffic Volumes on the State Highway System*, Caltrans).

**FA-04.** "Very Heavy" in reference to traffic flow is a subjective description and not a quantitative factual statement. Victoria Avenue is classified as a principal arterial roadway and, as an eight lane facility, is designed to carry higher traffic volumes. The City Council has adopted a peak hour level of service threshold of "D" for intersections in the City. The level of service at all of the intersections along the Victoria Avenue Corridor are better than this threshold standard (2009 VCTC Congestion Management Program).

- FA-05.** There is no supporting evidence in the report, nor has the City received complaints from the public to substantiate the statement that “there is confusion among drivers along the corridor...”
- FA-06.** There is no supporting factual evidence in the report to substantiate untrained “observation” that traffic on streets paralleling Victoria Avenue is speeding. Victoria Avenue does not have a parallel, non-arterial, street network that is a viable option for most drivers of the corridor, nor has the City received any complaints from those adjacent neighborhoods about the proliferation of speeding traffic on streets parallel to Victoria Avenue.
- FA-07.** “Heavy” in reference to traffic flow is a subjective description and not a quantitative factual statement. Kimball Road and Johnson Drive are classified as principal arterial roadways and are designed to carry higher traffic volumes. The City Council has adopted a peak hour level of service threshold of “D” for intersections in the City. The level of service for all of the intersections along the two corridors are better than this threshold standard (2009 VCTC Congestion Management Program).
- FA-08.** “Very Heavy” in reference to traffic flow is a subjective description and not a quantitative factual statement. Wells Road south of State Highway 126 within the City is classified as a principal arterial roadway and, as a six lane facility, is designed to carry higher traffic volumes. The City Council has adopted a peak hour level of service threshold of “D” for intersections in the City. The level of service for all of the intersections along the Wells Road Corridor within the City are better than this threshold standard (2009 VCTC Congestion Management Program).
- FA-09.** The reference document is not related to the “issues” raised in the preceding statements regarding traffic speed, traffic volumes, and traffic flow. The reference document is a policy related to yellow and all-red traffic signal change intervals.
- FA-10.** There is no supporting evidence in the report, nor has the City received complaints from the public to substantiate the statement that there are “...confusing left turn arrows...” at any of the traffic signals along the Victoria Avenue corridor.
- FA-11** There is no supporting evidence in the report, nor has the City received complaints from the public to substantiate the statement that “drivers have complained that quick breaking may result in a rear-end collision...”.
- FA-12.** The report is correct that other jurisdictions have increased their traffic signal yellow clearance interval times. However, City staff review of the Grand Jury reference documents and discussions with staff at one of those agencies indicate that they were done only to come into compliance with State law and traffic engineering professional recommended practices. The City of Ventura’s

traffic signal yellow clearance interval times are already in compliance with State law and traffic engineering professional recommended practices.

## **Findings**

The City has the following responses to the Grand Jury findings:

- FI-1.** Disagree: Speed limits are set according to State law and cannot arbitrarily be set at “a constant speed” along Victoria Avenue. The nature and character of Victoria Avenue changes along the corridor. As required, each of these differing character segments must be considered separately for the purpose of setting speed limits. See additional detail in attachments 4 and 5,
- FI-2.** Agreed: There is a need to provide for a westbound Highway 126 to southbound US 101 connection.
- FI-3.** Disagree: This finding is based on unsubstantiated opinions and not factual evidence.
- FI-4.** Agreed: Red light camera tickets are legal.

## **Recommendations**

**R-01:** Speed limits in the City are set according to the California Vehicle Code (CVC) and California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CMUTCD) as follows:

- CVC Section 627
- CVC Section 22358
- CVC Section 22358.5
- CVC Section 40802 & 40803
- MUTCD Section 2B.13

Setting speed limits arbitrarily so that they are “constant” and “unchanging” along the entire corridor is not in conformance with State law. See Attachments 4 and 5 for details.

Traffic signal synchronization is a traffic engineering term used for isolated corridors and not complicated a grid system of roadways such as are in the City of Ventura. All traffic signals in the City are timed using a system called traffic signal coordination. Coordination timing is set to minimize traffic delays across an entire traffic roadway network rather than managing corridors separately. Traffic signal coordination timing in the City is currently managed through a traffic signal system that controls all 136 traffic signals. The coordination timing is set so as to not be in violation of CVC Section 22401. The City has on its work plan for the 2013-2014 work plan a project to

re-evaluate the traffic signal coordination timing along several primary arterial corridors in the City, including Victoria Avenue. Setting Victoria Avenue as a primary synchronized arterial will have negative impacts to public travel along Telegraph Road, Telephone Road and other local roadways. For this reason, the City sets its traffic signal timing as a coordinated system rather than an isolated corridor.

**R-02:** Initiation of the westbound State Route 126 to southbound US 101 direct freeway connection has been initiated. The City has worked with the Ventura County Transportation Commission (VCTC) to identify the project. The project is listed in the VCTC's adopted highway improvement priority list. A copy of the Ventura County Transportation Commission response is attached for your reference (Attachment 7).

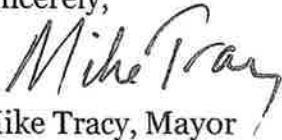
City staff is working with Caltrans, VCTC, the County of Ventura, and the City of Oxnard to seek alternative routing of the westbound State Route 126 to southbound US 101 by use of State Highway 118 and State Highway 232 instead of Victoria Avenue rather than building a costly direct highway to highway connection structure.

**R-03:** Yellow light timing intervals for all traffic signals in the City are set according to the attached City operating policy. The policy is established in conformance with the California Vehicle Code and the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (See Attachments 5 and 6). The method of traffic signal timing used by the City is in conformance with all State laws, standard practice and how they are set by other agencies in the region. To set traffic signal timing independently of these methods would violate driver expectations, engineering standard practices, and lead to an increase in collisions.

**R-04:** Comment noted.

Thank you for your attention to the above response. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

  
Mike Tracy, Mayor

Attachments

Cc: Jay Whitney, Foreperson, Ventura County Grand Jury