Atascadero City Council
Staff Report – Public Works Department

Angled Parking on El Camino Real

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Council:

1. Direct Staff to install angled parking on El Camino Real between Morro Road and Traffic Way at the completion of Streetscape 3; and,
2. Provide Staff with any direction on modification of the extent of proposed improvements.

DISCUSSION:

Background: Cities throughout California are trying to revitalize their downtown core areas, and make them more “pedestrian friendly.” The City’s recent Streetscape Projects are a testimony to Atascadero’s commitment to this type of community investment. Parking is a key component to economic vitality, as people want to shop and dine in areas with convenient parking. Angled parking has long been a tool in the “redevelopment toolbox” for maximizing on-street parking, and calming traffic in business districts. One local City, Pismo Beach, took this to the extreme and located angled parking in the middle of a downtown street.

Parking in the Downtown core of Atascadero has been the subject of debate and environmental analysis since the initial stages of the Colony Square Development, and as recently as the proposed theater and commercial project on the Hoff Property. The Atascadero Redevelopment Agency and City Council have consistently recognized the importance of, and need for, adequate parking to support City events and business economic vitality in the downtown core.

Now that the Galaxy Theatres project is open and interest in the downtown core has increased, the City wishes to stay out in front of the parking supply and demand. The
City zoning regulations allow downtown businesses to develop without providing onsite parking. To ensure that businesses have adequate customer parking, it is important for the City to continually look for opportunities to provide convenient parking that will provide for this demand.

As a logical first step, the City staff has been seeking ways to maximize the number of parking spaces on City property or within the City right-of-way prior to acquiring property within the downtown area. The first phase of these proposed parking improvements are located along El Camino Real and around the Main Street Office on Atascadero Mall.

Analysis: The engineering analysis is similar to the one performed during the design of the Streetscape projects for the southbound lane drop from San Jacinto to Traffic Way. The lane drop from San Jacinto Avenue to Traffic Way was supported by a lane drop analysis by Whitlock and Weinberger Transportation Engineers, which indicated that the lane drop would not cause a reduction in the level of service or other traffic problems. Staff performed a similar lane drop analysis in the parking study area (Traffic Way to Morro Road) to ensure traffic conditions would not worsen or fail based on current and estimated future traffic volumes.

The current El Camino Real right-of-way is typically 100-feet wide. Downtown parking along El Camino Real is currently configured for parallel parking, Class 2 and 3 bike lanes, medians/center turn lane, and four driving lanes. Attached are drawings which show maximum potential diagonal parking, new bike lanes, and automobile traffic lane configurations.

The City’s General Plan requires that a level of service “C” or better be maintained on City streets. Therefore any reduction in the number of traffic lanes must be evaluated so that modifications do not restrict traffic unnecessarily or create undue delays. Staff used the recent traffic studies (Walmart, Colony Square, and Hoff) along with our own traffic counts to assess current and future traffic conditions.

Bicycle traffic on El Camino Real is low, and peak hour bike counts are in the range of five to ten bicycles per hour. To promote bicycle usage and the “Complete Streets” concept, recent Streetscape projects have added striping and signage to more clearly designate bike lanes both north and southbound through the Downtown. There are no existing accident histories related to conflicts between bicyclists in bike, or traffic lanes, and parallel parking movements currently on El Camino Real, or on other streets in the Downtown with angled parking (Entrada Avenue and East Mall Avenue). This is likely due to the light bicycle traffic, relatively flat grade of streets and slower bicycle speeds typical in this area. The anticipated reduced automobile speeds on El Camino Real, and overall traffic calming effect of the angled parking will afford the bicyclist to traverse through the angled parking area as safely as on other streets in the Downtown.

The recent traffic counts show that the current traffic on El Camino Real is approximately 11,650 vehicles per day (both directions), with a peak hour traffic count of 934 vehicles per hour (both directions.) This results in a current Level of Service (LOS) “A” during the weekend, A.M., and P.M. peak hour demand periods for the two
northbound and two southbound lanes. The total capacity of all directions is currently 3,320 cars per hour.

With the proposed reduction from two lanes in each direction to one, the capacity is essentially cut in half. Therefore, the total capacity of all directions would be 1,660 cars per hour. The current LOS would drop to a level "B" in the weekend and P.M. peak hour and remain “A” in the A.M. peak hour. Staff does not anticipate that turning movements or intersection cues would be impacted by the proposed reconfiguration.

As future traffic increases, delays and congestion will increase. Staff estimates that there is capacity for an additional 391 weekday peak hour trips before the traffic Level of Service reaches LOS “D” in the P.M. peak hour. It is anticipated that this will be approximately 20 years into the future. This estimate includes pedestrian and school traffic. A LOS “B” will not be exceeded in the A.M. peak hour.

A LOS “D” will be reached earlier during the mid-weekend peak hour. Staff estimates that the LOS “D” will be reached in five years. This estimate is based on all downtown projects being completed and built-out (Hoff Property, Rite Aid, Colony Square – all “Baseline Projects” in Walmart EIR) and the Walmart project opening. The mid-weekend delay would only occur during one 60 minute period. Staff believes that this would be an acceptable traffic condition during the mid-weekend peak hour, since all other peak hours would remain well above LOS C-D.

Overall, a LOS “D” during peak hours (A.M. and P.M.) mid-week will be reached in approximately 20 years. At that time, traffic capacity improvements would be required to improve traffic flow. This may result in removal of all or some of the angled parking and adding back one or both north and southbound lanes.

**Parking Configuration:**

The following table describes the existing and proposed number of diagonal spaces:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Map</th>
<th>Existing Parallel Spaces</th>
<th>Proposed Diagonal Spaces</th>
<th>Gain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highway 41 to East Mall</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>+40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Mall to Entrada</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>+7</td>
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Staff is not proposing any additional diagonal parking in front of Sunken Gardens or the Carlton Hotel at this time. There is insufficient width to safely accommodate bike and traffic lanes and diagonal parking along Sunken Gardens and the Hotel. Public Works will continue to evaluate potential diagonal parking as other properties develop and future striping plans are submitted as part of the development review process.

**Back-In Parking Configuration**

There has been some interest expressed in “back-in” angled parking. This configuration is similar to that proposed, only it requires drivers to pull past a space and then back...
into the space. The advantages of this configuration are that when drivers pull away from the space they can more easily view oncoming traffic including bicyclists, and loading into a truck is more convenient. However backing into the space is more difficult, and longer rear overhangs on most vehicles conflict with current curb heights and sign placements, which would likely lead to increased damage and claims. Staff does not support back-in spaces on El Camino Real, and would suggest a pilot project on a smaller less traveled street before implementing on El Camino Real.

Conclusion: Staff has verified that El Camino Real is wide enough to accommodate diagonal parking. Staff recommends that the Council approve the angled parking as proposed and authorize the Public Works Director to install the improvements at the completion of Streetscape 3.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Restriping on-street parking is the City’s most cost effective method of creating additional parking as it does not require the purchase and development of off-street property. The construction cost for restriping El Camino Real will range from $30,000 to $40,000. This cost includes plans, grinding existing striping, traffic control and new striping. This cost also includes minimal slurry sealing of El Camino Real to hide the grind marks and protect the ground asphalt.

<table>
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<th>EXPENDITURES</th>
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<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
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<td>Inspection / Testing / Project Management</td>
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<td>Contingency 20%</td>
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<td>Total Estimated Expenditure:</td>
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<table>
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<th>REVENUES</th>
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<td>Streetscape III Remaining Budgeted Funds</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Revenues:</td>
<td>$48,700</td>
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ALTERNATIVES:

Council may:

1. Direct staff to modify or expand currently proposed angled parking.
2. Not modify existing parallel parking configuration in the downtown.
3. Direct staff to further evaluate “back-in” angled parking.
4. Direct staff to not modify existing parking and use existing available funds to pursue off-street parking alternatives.
ATTACHMENT:

A. Angled Parking Conceptual Layouts (4 sheets)