BUDGET DOCUMENT # 60

CITY OF SAN JOSE
CAPITAL OF SILICON VALLEY

Memorandum

TO: MAYOR REED

FROM: Councilmember Sam Liccardo

SUBJECT: BUDGET DOCUMENT

DATE: May 21, 2014

Approved Sam Liccardo P.R Date 05/21/14

RECOMMENDATION

That the following recommendation be enacted.

Proposal

Program/Project Title: "Speed Bumps, Sans The Studies" Pilot Project

Amount of City Funding Required: $320,000

Fund Type (i.e. General Fund, C&C funds, etc.): Construction Excise Tax Fund (465) (Reserve = $8,108,454, p. V-781)

San Jose's families suffered over 40 auto-related fatalities last year, a particularly severe year for roadway deaths, particularly for a city that remains among the very safest for walkers in the U.S.. Pedestrians and cyclists comprise the majority of those fatalities. In addition to safety-related impacts, speeding on neighborhood streets has significant quality of life impacts in our neighborhoods, routinely ranking among our residents' top concerns.

Nonetheless, numerous legal and bureaucratic obstacles prevent us from implementing relatively simple traffic calming measures. As was urged in the May 16, 2013 memorandum from Councilmembers Johnny Khamis, Rose Herrera, and myself, the City should have the ability to inexpensively install speed bumps—without extensive and costly studies—where a specific set of readily-observable conditions exist. That memorandum can be found at http://sanjoseca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/17279 .

No policy or ordinance change responsive to that memorandum has yet emerged, but it seems sensible to ensure that we're ready to make use of it when that policy emerges. Fortunately, speed bumps constitute among the very least expensive of traffic-calming devices for residential streets, at roughly $8,000 per bump. An allocation of $320,000 could ensure that every Council district could install four bumps on the highest-priority, least safe residential streets.

Although speed bumps are much less costly than many traffic calming alternatives, like bulb-outs and traffic circles, San Jose has largely excluded speed bumps from its traffic calming "toolkit." Historically, concerns have largely focused on Fire Department officials' objections about impediments to emergency vehicle access. When I discussed this issue a couple of years ago with a transportation engineer in the Dutch city of Utrecht, she appropriately summarized the confounding aversion of American traffic engineers to speed bumps: "fire trucks might come down this residential street once every three years, but every single day,

children are running and cycling around traffic here, and seniors are crossing the street. Who should we build this street for?"

Fortunately, conversations with Fire Department leadership last year suggested a new openness to consider bump designs with appropriate "slots " to allow wide-axle emergency vehicle access. Although Department of Transportation staff has explored "humps" and "lumps" as an alternative means to slow traffic, we've heard mixed reviews about the effectiveness of such measures. Past attempts to install 15-mph signs in school zones do not appear to slow traffic, and revising the traffic calming toolkit has done little where the same bureaucratic and fiscal obstacles persist.

To make our streets safer, we should deploy the one tool--speed bumps--that we know will work, and to make it easier, to install these roadway improvements.

Independent of what we do, an important step lies in streamlining how we do it. Current council policy requires a "traffic engineering analysis" to be performed in each instance, which adds substantially to the cost and delay in implementing traffic calming, and the lengthy "wait list" for studies leaves neighborhoods without a solution for years. Studies cost money, and little funding exists for studies on residential streets. When the studies are conducted, the "85% percentile speed" data rarely comports with the observations of residents with a daily view of the traffic. Worse still, "average" and "85% percentile" speeds don't capture the sporadic speeding that may pose the greatest risks of all. At the end of these studies, we typically have created far more heat than light, and at considerable taxpayer expense. Let's restrict this funding to speed bumps that can be installed without the burdensome bureaucracy.

Funding Source

☐ Construction Excise Tax Fund (465): $320,000 (Reserve = $8,108,454, p. V-781)

Department or Organization: Department of Transportation

Department or Organization Contact (list contact information for the individual that certified cost estimates contained within your recommendation):

Name:

Phone number:

E-mail address:

This change is:

_X___ One-time _____ Ongoing

The City Service Area to which the change best relates:

☐ Community and Economic Development Services
☐ Environmental and Utility Services
☐ Neighborhood Services
☐ Public Safety
☐ Strategic Support
√ Transportation and Aviation Services