



P.O. Box 16391, San Diego CA 92176

July 13, 2015

Honorable Kevin Faulconer
Mayor, City of San Diego
City Administration Building, 202 C Street, 11th Floor
San Diego, CA 92101

RE: Request Removal of Reintroduced Left Turns at 47th Street & Monroe Avenue

Dear Mayor Faulconer:

On the morning of July 6th, the residents of Talmadge became aware that City staff had decided to reintroduce left turns for 47th Street motorists at the intersection of 47th Street & Monroe Avenue. At its July 8th meeting, the Kensington Talmadge Planning Group voted unanimously to recommend the following to the City of San Diego:

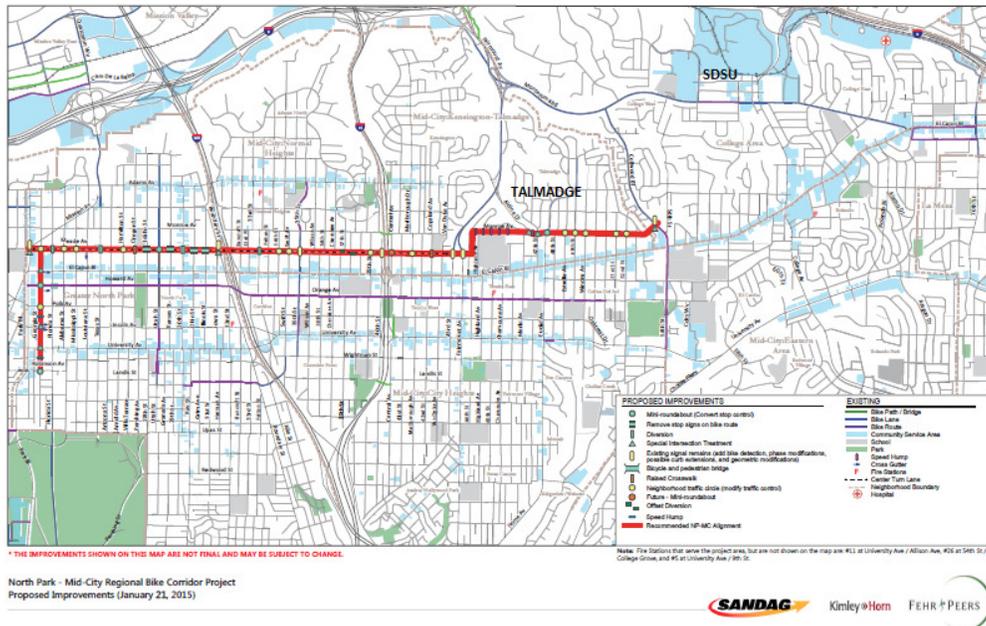
- 1) Ensure that this action by the City does not interfere with the design work being done by SANDAG for the regional North Park/Mid-City bicycle route, which has the active cooperation of the planning group, local MAD, and nearby residents;
- 2) Request an explanation why this change to SANDAG's design was made without input;
- 3) Request removal of the reintroduced left turns, and a return to the previous signage.

MONROE AVENUE FROM ALDINE MERGE TO EUCLID AVENUE



Our reasons are the following:

BICYCLE ROUTE: Of all of the major east-west bicycle routes proposed by SANDAG, the northern North Park/Mid-City Bicycle Route is the only one which connects the major destination points of SDSU and Balboa Park. The loss of the Talmadge section of the route would sever this regional link. The loss of the segment at 47th & Monroe would sever the link within Talmadge.



BICYCLIST ACCESS & SAFETY: Under current conditions from a bicycling standpoint, the Talmadge neighborhood is land-locked. The proposed SANDAG bicycle route is the only means for residents of Talmadge to safely exit the community via bicycle. Monroe Avenue, as it merges into Aldine Drive, is the only westward route. There is no alternative - none. This proposed route offers us our only viable connection to the recently constructed Copley-Price YMCA and the neighborhood serving commercial districts of Kensington and Normal Heights. El Cajon Boulevard would require riders, including parents with children, to ride within the flow of traffic of that major arterial and former highway.

As built, this road bed is filled with many problems. Bolder, more determined bicyclists do use this stretch of Monroe and Aldine and have been injured there. Local, less experienced riders know better than to attempt its use.

SIDEWALKS AS A BICYCLE ROUTE: The sidewalk on the south side of the street is not wide enough to accommodate both bicyclists and pedestrians. When both are present, bicyclists will veer off the sidewalk, into the roadbed, into the face of oncoming traffic and then return to the sidewalk. The north side sidewalk is worse as it includes a section of Huffman style sidewalk and would require bicyclists to cross at the Monroe/Aldine merge in the face of the full force of Aldine traffic, near where motorists negotiate both a very sharp curve and an unexpected rise and dip in the road.

OTHER IMPROVEMENTS: To make this route work, SANDAG has proposed installing improvements at the Euclid & Monroe intersection that also function as needed pedestrian enhancements. This heavily used residential intersection, with ADTs of 3,000 from the north, 5,000 from the east, and 10,000 mostly cut-through ADTs from the south, combining into 18,000 ADTs to the west, imposes extraordinarily wide crossings for pedestrians (see first photo, right side) and encourages drivers to quickly increase their speeds through the intersection for the benefit of other motorists queuing all around them. Without the 47th and Monroe section, the bicycle route is severed; the justification for the route's extension through Talmadge is removed, and with it the neighborhood loses these upgrades. Neither the City nor the MAD has the funds to install these long hoped for improvements any time soon.

JUSTIFICATION FOR "NO LEFT TURN" FOR REASONS OTHER THAN THE BICYCLE ROUTE: Even if there were no bicycle route planned, left turns would not be appropriate at this location during much of the day. The time restrictions put in place with the recent signage change certainly recognize the problems which occur during peak usage, so I will not elaborate on those. However, these time restrictions fail to recognize the physical limitations of the road which exist 24/7. These are created by the curvature to the east and west and the dip followed by a rise to the west, all of which obscure oncoming traffic. Additionally, there is impact to the line of sight by even a few cars queuing eastbound at the Euclid/Monroe intersection. One car strategically placed on Monroe to the east of the 47th Street intersection will blind motorists on 47th Street to west bound traffic. However, given that at certain times of day this westbound traffic is sporadic, it gives drivers on 47th Street the false confidence that they can make a left turn even when they can't see the oncoming traffic. This blockage of sight lines to the east can occur on weekdays or weekends, nights or days, or during high or low traffic volumes.

LACK OF NOTIFICATION OF CHANGE: We also would appreciate some explanation for why the community planning group was not notified of this change. It is well known within Traffic Engineering that this is a problematic stretch of road which not only has consumed many staff resources, but much time and resources within SANDAG as they have attempted to design a bicycle route which successfully navigates the shoals of this road bed. The planning group as well, has devoted much time and energy to these issues for the past 5+ years.

As part of the planning group's re-evaluation of this stretch of road after the removal of the briefly installed Aldine Drive Stop Signs which generated thousands of emails, horn honking, and nearly a few physical altercations between drivers, the planning group supported speed bumps on Aldine and Monroe followed by installation of the No Left Turns at 47th & Monroe. This reduced the problems with accidents caused by speeding, and near misses caused by drivers attempting unsafe turns. And other than the scofflaws who violated the 47th Street turn restriction, this adjustment had proven to be effective. That is why undoing a tenuous solution which took years to craft has disconcerted the planning group so deeply.

Recent changes to Council Policy 600-24 which added all topic areas within the General Plan, including Transportation to the advisory purview of the CPGs, is a testament to the City of San Diego's belief in the Community Planning Group system and the local knowledge they bring to City decisions. Failure to notify the planning group deprived the City of our local knowledge.

Perhaps this omission was caused because the signage change request did not include “Aldine Drive” in its description, but whatever the reason, when dealing with a road which has the conditions of Aldine Drive as it transitions into Monroe Avenue, the community should be informed. This quote from Traffic Engineer Gary Pence when he attended the Planning Group’s meeting of March 2011, illustrates staff’s awareness of the conditions on Aldine Drive:

“Mr. Pence explained that Aldine Drive currently carries 18,000 daily trips, which is far above what it was designed to carry. *In fact, it would be difficult to find a road in San Diego that is more overloaded compared to its design specification.*” - KTPG Minutes, March 9, 2011.

With all of the above issues in mind, the KTPG respectfully requests removal of the time restricted No Left Turns and a return to No Left Turns allowed. We believe this staff-directed change was caused by a misunderstanding of the conditions on the ground. If the City intends to participate in SANDAG’s North Park/Mid-City bike routes, this recent alteration can exist for only a short time, while leaving the new signs in place can only send a message to SANDAG that the City is not invested in the work SANDAG is doing. SANDAG staff are faced with challenges enough elsewhere, we should not create challenges for them here where overall community support is strong. The KTPG does not believe this is the City’s intent, and hopes the City will give its full support to SANDAG’s plan and remove any roadblocks to its implementation. Let’s make this segment the earliest part of SANDAG’s *Early Action Plan*.

Sincerely,



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cc: Marti Emerald, Council Member 9th District
Felipe Monroig, Deputy Chief of Staff, Community Engagement
Linda Marabian, Deputy Director of Transportation and Storm Water
Gary Pence, Senior Traffic Engineer
Daniel Veeh, Associate Planner, SANDAG
Jonathon Herrera, Mayoral Community Representative
Ralph Dimarucut, Senior Council Representative, District 9