



OFFICE OF COUNCIL PRESIDENT TODD GLORIA COUNCIL DISTRICT THREE

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: May 30, 2013
TO: Mayor Bob Filner
FROM: Council President Todd Gloria 
SUBJECT: Thresholds for Impacts of the Temporary Balboa Park Traffic Management Plan

As it relates to the temporary Balboa Park Traffic Management Plan, I have proposed that thresholds be established to determine whether impacts from the changes, including the intermittent closure of the Cabrillo Bridge and changes to Balboa Park's internal traffic and parking systems, exceed acceptable levels. The purpose of this memo is to establish proposed areas that should be measured and tracked to quantify the impacts. These include external stress points during bridge closure; internal stress points during bridge closure; and internal stress points with the bridge open. Additionally impacts to the attendance at Balboa Park's cultural institutions must be measured.

External Stress Points During Bridge Closure:

The Plaza de Panama EIR, certified in July of 2012, included an analysis of several alternatives which included closure of the Cabrillo Bridge. The traffic analysis concluded that bridge closure resulted in significant traffic impacts in the neighborhoods surrounding Balboa Park, including Downtown, Bankers Hill, North Park, and along Park Boulevard on the east side. Given that the temporary traffic management plan includes bridge closure that could result in severely congested road segments and failed intersections, the following testing is recommended to establish performance metrics prior to and during closure at standard and peak hours of activity;

- Traffic counts along road segments using "road tubes"
 - 6th Avenue between Laurel Street and Robinson Avenue, North
 - Robinson Avenue between 6th Avenue and the 163 Freeway, East
 - Robinson Avenue between 163 Freeway and Park Boulevard, East

- 'A' Street between 6th Avenue and Park Boulevard, East
- Park Boulevard between Russ Boulevard and Presidents Way, North & South
- Park Boulevard between Robinson and Morley Field Drive, South
- Vehicle queuing/congestion measurements at intersections by visual monitors
 - 6th Avenue and Laurel Street; Laurel St. East-bound and 6th Avenue Southbound
 - 6th Avenue and Robinson Avenue; Robinson Ave. North-bound and South-bound
 - A Street and Park Boulevard; A Street East-bound
 - Park Boulevard and Presidents Way; Park Blvd. North-bound and South-bound
 - Park Boulevard and Zoo Place; Park Blvd. North-bound and Zoo Pl. West-bound
 - Park Boulevard and Robinson Avenue; Robinson Ave. West-bound

Acceptable impacts will have been exceeded if any of these road segments become severely congested or if any of these intersections fail as a result of changes in traffic flow related to the temporary Balboa Park Traffic Management Plan.

Internal Traffic Stress Points During Bridge Closure:

The Plaza de Panama EIR included an analysis of several alternatives that considered the closure of the Cabrillo Bridge and eliminating traffic through the Plaza de Panama, similar to the proposed weekend configuration of the temporary Traffic Management Plan. The traffic analysis of these alternatives concluded that there would be significant impacts to vehicular circulation within Balboa Park.

As the potential for resulting impacts to internal traffic circulation and Park egress, combined with limited access, could further impair the visitor experience and Park functionality, the following testing is recommended to establish performance metrics prior to and during closure at "standard" and "peak" hours of activity;

- Traffic counts along road segments using "road tubes"
 - Presidents Way between Park Boulevard and Pan American Road, West and East
 - Pan American Road between Presidents Way and the Spreckels Organ Pavilion, North

- Vehicle queuing/congestion measurements at intersections by visual monitors
 - Presidents Way and Park Boulevard, Presidents Way East-bound
 - Presidents Way and Pan American Road, Presidents Way West-bound and Pan American Road South Bound
 - Pan American Road at Spreckels Organ Pavilion (pedestrian crossing)
 - Esplanade, North and South
 - Plaza de Panama, South-end at El Cid turnaround

Acceptable impacts will have been exceeded if any of these road segments become severely congested or if any of these intersections fail as a result of changes in traffic flow related to the temporary Balboa Park Traffic Management Plan.

Internal Traffic Stress Points with Bridge Open:

The Plaza de Panama EIR included analysis of several alternatives that included traffic through the Plaza de Panama, similar to the proposed temporary Traffic Management Plan. The traffic analysis of these alternatives concluded that there would be significant unmitigable impacts to vehicular circulation within Balboa Park. Given the potential for resulting impacts to internal traffic circulation, Park access, and, hence, the visitor experience, the following testing is recommended to establish performance metrics prior to and during closure at “standard” and “peak” hours of activity;

- Traffic counts along road segments using “road tubes”
 - West El Prado, East
 - Plaza de Panama, South
 - Esplanade, North
 - Presidents Way between Federal Lot and Pan American Road, West and East
- Vehicle queuing/congestion measurements at intersections by visual monitors
 - West El Prado and Plaza de Panama; West El Prado East-bound and Plaza de Panama West-bound (pedestrian crossing)
 - Plaza de Panama and Esplanade: Esplanade North-bound
 - Pan American Road at Spreckels Organ Pavilion (pedestrian crossing)
 - Pan American Road and Presidents Way, Pan American Road South Bound and Presidents Way West-bound

Acceptable impacts will have been exceeded if any of these road segments become severely congested or if any of these intersections fail as a result of changes in traffic flow related to the temporary Balboa Park Traffic Management Plan.

Impacts on Balboa Park Cultural Institutions:

The park's museums and cultural institutions are the City's partner in creating a vibrant cultural experience in San Diego. The health of the institutions is dependent on many factors, including revenue from admissions. In order to determine whether the closure of the Cabrillo Bridge stops people from coming to the park or diminishes the Balboa Park guest experience, the following admissions counts will need to be measured:

- Same day of the week admissions (ie: third Saturday)
- Overall admissions
- No-shows and cancelations at special events, or timed and ticketed shows.

Any measurable decrease in revenues from admissions will negatively impact the cultural institutions in the park. A 5% decrease in such revenues over a season due to increased difficulty some guests may have accessing the park due to changes in parking or the valet service will exceed acceptable impacts.

Any other measurable degradation of the Balboa Park guest experience, such as difficulty of senior citizens accessing cultural institutions, or surveys indicating reluctance to return to the park because of access difficulties, or extensive queuing on roads in or around the park, including State Route 163, should also be considered.

I hope you will agree with me that these metrics should be used to determine whether acceptable impacts to the overall park-user experience or to the surrounding neighborhoods have been exceeded.

cc: Allen Jones, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor
Stacey LoMedico, Park and Recreation Department Director