

**TRAFFIC COMMISSION  
MINUTE EXCERPT  
MARCH 4, 2008**

**BELFAST MEDIAN  
REMOVAL**

The staff report was introduced to consider removal of the existing raised median on Belfast Drive from west of Galway Street to east of Donegal Drive.

Carolyn Elliott, 13372 Galway Street, addressed the Commission. Ms. Elliot is in favor of leaving the median in. She is concerned with the safety of the street as there are no sidewalks in the area and the high school children need to walk in the street. The median has reduced the heavy traffic on Galway Street and made it safer, especially the large trucks that cater to the businesses and need to make it to Garden Grove Boulevard. She is now used to the lower volume of traffic and is questioning why the median was installed in the first place if the City was going to tear it out at a later date. And although there is a sign posted "No Trucks Allowed" the trucks continued to use Galway Street until the median was installed.

Mr. Joseph Pak, 11073 Linda Lane, addressed the Commission. He commended staff on the good job they did in addressing the Community and getting people to come out to the meeting. He stated that the Korean Business District generates over 1 million dollars annually in sales tax. He understands the concerns of the residents who live in the area and would like to see a compromise reached between the Korean Business District and the residents. He would like to review alternate ideas for traffic calming. He noted that vehicles occasionally make an illegal left turn facing oncoming traffic when traveling northbound on Galway at Belfast.

Rev. Wilfredo Benitez, 9471 Larson Avenue, addressed the Commission. He supports the median being removed; it has been an incredible inconvenience for his parishioners. He has viewed many vehicles making the illegal left turn into oncoming traffic. The median has cut off the main entrance to his church coming from Galway, he has not seen that a high volume of traffic is an issue and believes that it is not fair to the residents on Gilbert; as the traffic that normally would have used Galway now uses Gilbert as the thruway, creating a large volume of traffic on Gilbert.

Gary Sunda, 13172 Donegal, addressed the Commission. He would like to see the median stay. He appreciates the reduction of traffic on Donegal Avenue, as the pedestrians are safer with less traffic traveling on Donegal. He agrees with removing a portion of the median at

Galway to allow left turn access into the church and the business district. Donegal does not have sidewalks either and again the pedestrians are safer with a 43% reduction in traffic. He doesn't believe that the economic downturn in Garden Square is due to the installation of the Belfast Median.

He doesn't believe Galway, Donegal, or Gilbert should be used as a thoroughfare to access the Garden Square shopping center. He also believes the traffic volumes will increase upon the completion of the Galleria Shopping Center, which is the same distance from the freeway off ramp on Trask Avenue. He is willing to put up with a little inconvenience to have lower traffic volumes.

David Moulard, 13371 Galway Street, addressed the Commission. He believes the study is flawed because of the Galleria and the apartments going in on Garden Grove Boulevard. He commented that two children have been hit by cars as well as vehicles parked in the driveway. He works in El Segundo and they do not cater to small businesses. Residential neighborhoods are not used for thoroughfares in El Segundo.

Raymond Choi addressed the Commission. He is the Chairman of the Korean Festival of Orange County and past president of the Korean Chamber of Commerce. He is in favor of removing the median. He believes the Korean Shopping District has hardship due to the traffic not being able to get through from Galway and Donegal. There are many complaints to the Korean Chamber of Commerce because of the traffic reduction due to the median installation. His photo was introduced into the record.

Andrew Chui, 9944 Garden Grove Boulevard, addressed the Commission. He is in favor of removing the median. He commented that vehicles getting off the 22 freeway at Magnolia Street have no way to get to Garden Grove Boulevard and it hurts the Korean Business District who is the main contributor to the City's revenue with their taxes.

Sung Young Park, 13061 Galway Street, addressed the Commission. He owns a business in Garden Square. He stated the function of the City streets is to allow convenient, safe, and efficient access for cars and pedestrians to get to their destination and that they are constructed in a way to allow for the best and most cost efficient route. The decrease in traffic has caused a hardship to the Korean Business District. He states lack of easy access has caused the customers to look for other stores. Mr. Park cited mathematical information to show the degree to which the new routes caused by the installation of the median are not effective. He is asking the Commission to restore the City streets affected to their fundamental function.

Wendy Yoo, 9636 Garden Grove Boulevard, addressed the Commission. She is in favor of removing the median. For 30 years she has gotten off the Brookhurst off ramp from the 22 freeway and

gone up Donegal Street to get to her business. She is now blocked from taking that route and has to use Brookhurst or Magnolia. She suggested installing sidewalks on the affected streets. She has also viewed children playing on the median.

David Gorba, General Manager of the Alano Club, 13182 Vener Drive, addressed the Commission. His only access is Belfast Street; he cannot be seen from Garden Grove Boulevard. He is in favor of removing the median as it affects his business of catering to recovering alcoholics.

John Starbird, 9691 Russell, addressed the Commission. He is a retired traffic officer and does not agree with the Belfast median. He is in favor of removing the median.

Taek K. Hoang, 9580 Garden Grove Boulevard, addressed the Commission. He is in favor of the median removal. AR Supermarket was one of the biggest Korean markets in the county and in Southern California. Mr. Hoang believes the Korean shoppers have been lost to Irvine and Fullerton due to the more difficult access to the Korean Business District in Garden Grove because of the median installation on Belfast.

Commissioner Alejandro gave some background on the item. He reiterated that Garden Grove is not anti-business. He would like to see a balance between the residents' needs and the needs of the Korean Business District. Building the median did what it was supposed to do and that was to reduce traffic at the request of the residents in the area at the time it was built. As the needs and sentiments of the community change over the years then the City can come up with some compromises.

Commissioner Feather inquired if the businesses were consulted or included in the voting process in 2005 and the cost to build the median.

Mr. Candelaria explained that, as he understood it the residents were not solely the driving force to have the median built. The business owners were concerned that vehicles were using Donegal and traveling northbound straight through onto their property to cut through to Garden Grove Boulevard using the driveway that enters the shopping center from Donegal north of Belfast. The median cost approximately \$90,000.00 to build and will cost approximately \$30,000.00 to remove. Mr. Candelaria noted that the radar trailer has been used in the area already.

Commissioner Lindsay inquired as to what type of traffic control was in the area prior to the median installation.

Mr. Candelaria explained there were several stop signs in the area prior to the median being built.

Commissioner Alejandro inquired about the cost to remove only a portion of the median.

Mr. Candelaria responded that to remove only the segments that restrict movement would lower the cost.

Commissioner Lindsay noted that there were no residents in attendance from Belfast Street and that the residents had mixed opinions while the business community is very allied in the removal of the median. He would also like to see a compromise to help both sides.

Commissioner Cabral inquired if temporary barricades were considered as a possible solution first to see if the problem could be solved before installing a permanent fixture. She also inquired about the two accidents that were brought up in the previous discussion; what streets were they on and did they happen prior to the median being built; also how many accidents before the median was built and how many accidents occurred after the median was built. She doesn't believe the City ever intended residential streets to be major thoroughfares, especially since there is access through Garden Grove Boulevard. She is not in support of removal.

Commissioner Ashland commented that the accidents were before the median was built.

Mr. Candelaria noted that there was some discussion noted in the file, however to his knowledge they were not put in.

Commissioner Ashland is very sympathetic to the residents' plight and realizes the impact of the traffic on the residential streets. He was on the Garden Grove Boulevard Specific Planning Study when the development of Korea Town was first brought forth. At that time, the segment of Garden Grove Boulevard between Magnolia and Brookhurst was almost vacant. He commented that the revenue the merchants bring in is important to the City. He also noted that the tour buses should stay on the arterial streets and not use the residential streets. He is supportive of the recommendation of staff.

Commissioner Lindsay would like to look at alternatives to keep the flow of traffic low on Donegal and Galway if the median is removed completely and would like to remain proactive on this issue to help the residents.

Mr. Candelaria commented that over the years staff has done several preliminary steps to address the traffic issues in this area. Staff has several tools with which to accomplish this; the radar trailer is used, the police department can do selective enforcement, and posted speed limit signs can be used. These have been used in the area; however, to really get traffic volumes to drop something drastic has to take place. Building the median was a drastic action, but it did what it was built to do, reduce traffic volumes. Staff can study it and monitor it; however, these tools have been used already.

Commissioner Alejandro moved to table the item so staff can restudy the issue and find other alternatives to removing the median and receive more public input.

Commissioner Feather inquired if staff believes any further studies would result in new findings.

Staff commented that all the tools have been used to study this issue and has received as much public input as possible and that further study would not likely find anything new.

Commissioner Cabral commented that although Donegal and Galway may have been used as thoroughfare initially when Garden Square was a thriving business community 20 to 30 years ago, did the City project that almost 1900 vehicles would be traveling through this area. The City has seen a significant increase in population possibly due to the businesses located in the area.

Commissioner Cabral seconded Commissioner Alejandro's motion.

THE MOTION IS NOT CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: COMMISSIONERS: CABRAL AND ALEJANDRO  
NOES: COMMISSIONERS: ASHLAND, FEATHER, AND LINDSAY  
ABSTAIN:  
ABSENT:

Commissioner Ashland motioned to accept staff's recommendation, seconded by Commissioner Feather.

THE MOTION CARRIED BY THE FOLLOWING VOTE:

AYES: COMMISSIONERS: ASHLAND, FEATHER, AND LINDSAY  
NOES: COMMISSIONERS: CABRAL AND ALEJANDRO  
ABSTAIN:  
ABSENT: