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Dear Neighbors –

I apologize for any duplicate posting on this e-mail.

On behalf of the City Council, I wanted to sincerely thank you for the effort and time you've taken to share your thoughts regarding changes to **Bayside Drive** between Marine/Jamboree and West Coast Highway. Your concerns about congestion, the pace of traffic and the potential confusion of a roundabout are certainly well articulated. A great number of folks seem to “get” the problem – that Bayside Drive's traffic can move at speeds that can be unsafe.

I also get that not everyone likes the various solutions proposed, and offer my thanks for all of you who thoughtfully suggested alternative solutions.

I wanted to take a moment to give you some background on this issue. And at the end of my email (because it's getting too long), our staff has worked on a Q&A to address some of the alternative ideas for keeping traffic moving calmly along Bayside Drive.

First, please know that the residents along Bayside, while not unanimous in preferring the roundabout, are as eloquent and concerned as you are about **speeds and safety along Bayside**. This is their home street. You folks get to see this, too, as you drive the road - and hopefully you're doing what you can to help keep speeds down.

I wanted to dive deeper in to that point – **California has a law against speed traps**. The law says that cities **must** set road speeds based on how fast 85% of the drivers are going. Basically, you do this by surveying speeds. Generally, you throw out the speeds driven by the fastest 15% of drivers, and you stop there and set the limit. That means we can't pick a lower number even if a lower number is safer. As speeds creep up, we have to survey it regularly and re-set the limit again. I know, I don't like this law either. Therefore, we can't lower speed limits, and nor can we enforce (ticket) drivers on a road that does not have a current speed survey with appropriately-set speed limits.

Second important point: traffic engineers will tell you that **a road's feel** – the lanes and lane width, whether there are medians, canopy trees, etc – **tends to govern how fast folks go**. Sometimes more so than speed limits. Thus the conversation about **physical changes** to the road that might cause people to slow down on their own. Stop signs, medians, signals, roundabouts, etc.

About those possible solutions, folks have emailed in a variety of options that they think might work, and I again thank you for that. When it comes down to it, the Council and our staff have to rely on State law, our professional traffic engineers, and opinions like yours and the folks on Bayside for the best solutions (we joke that this is a city of 85,000 traffic engineers – I am guilty of being an “engineer because I drive”, too).

If I had a moment (hopefully you do), I would delve a little deeper here, such as:

- **What other alternatives are under consideration?** There is always the “keep it as is” option, with a repaving or re-slurry of the street. This doesn't calm the traffic down, though, and has no improved safety benefit for pedestrians, cyclists, or area residents. There also is “Alternative One” that adds a raised median (a median is the middle of the road) but that keeps the same number of travel lanes (two) in each direction. The latter is a traffic calming method

(landscaping and trees tends to make people go more slowly) that might work a small bit, but we think it may have less success than the roundabout option (“Alternative Two”) with regards to reducing speeds and improving safety.

- **Is this a done deal? Where is this decision in the process?** Decisions are rarely “done” until the construction starts. So no, this one still has discussion, votes and outreach ahead of it. In November 2016, the Council asked the City staff to take a step forward to do some further design work on the **roundabout option**, which includes bringing the road down to one lane in each direction (with a bike lane and parking) between Harbor Island Drive and Marine/Jamboree. The engineer design plan work has not started yet, nor has a design contract been awarded. There are many more steps to go, and the Council could revisit this discussion with the community, selecting the “just pave it” alternative, the “put in medians, no roundabout” alternative, or something else.
- **What if I wanted to learn more?** I would suggest reading this [staff report](#). If you didn’t want to read it, you could always review the [minutes](#) from the meeting or the [video](#) of the staff’s presentation (Item #29) that was made that same date. You will want to go into the video to about the 1:16 point. If these links are not working on your computer, Google “City of Newport Beach” and find “Agendas” then follow the staff report and video links for the 11/22/2016 meeting.

I’ll close this too-long e-mail by acknowledging that it sounds like a lot of folks were unaware of this discussion. I can certainly see where more outreach would be helpful here, and please allow me to apologize. But again, there is still time ahead of us.

The one thing we can do today to improve the safety of our roadways like Bayside is to drive more slowly (even just a few MPH below the speed limit). It sets an example for others and it could help us someday keep (or bring) speed limits lower per that 85<sup>th</sup> Percentile law. If you do this all around town, you might get a one-fingered wave sometimes, but you are helping our roads stay safe. Wave at me, too – I’m the guy in a blue Ford c-max driving slightly less than the speed limit for this exact purpose (I’m not very popular).

Thank you again for writing in. if you have further ideas or alternatives that we’ve not thought of, please offer them. On behalf of the City Council, I can say to a person that they very much appreciate the time you took to share your concerns.

Sincerely,

Dave Kiff  
City Manager  
City of Newport Beach  
949-644-3001

PS – I send out a 2x a month e-mail to anyone in town interested in City Council issues and agenda items. If you feel like you’re out of the loop on things, please ask me and I’ll put you on that e-mail distribution list.

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#### **Q & A about Bayside Drive and Possible Solutions.**

- **So what about more stop signs?** The traffic engineers will tell you that stop signs are not intended nor designed to be used for speed control. When installed as such, motorists tend to “disrespect” them and often “roll” or “run” through them: (a) not solving the problem; and (b) creating the potential for an incident.
- **What about speed bumps or humps?** Although speed humps can help to reduce speeds on **local** streets in neighborhoods, they become problematic on larger, higher speed roadways like Bayside Drive by restricting the flow of the roadway and increasing potential damage to vehicles hitting such objects. Two other significant problems exist: (1) they can dramatically slow and damage emergency equipment like fire trucks; and (2) no one wants one by

their home – this is understandable. The braking, banging, clanking, and thumping of cars going over them 24/7 can be unbearable to adjacent neighbors.

- **Does Bayside have the engineered capacity to go to one lane in each direction?** Actually, yes. During the development of Alternative Two, our traffic engineering staff reviewed both the roundabout and narrowing of Bayside from two to one lane in each direction. The results concluded that, based on the current traffic volumes, the roadway with one lane in each direction with the roundabout would operate at a “Level of Service A” which is the top level and is considered “free-flowing”. I would also note that this proposed option suggested reducing the roadway down to one lane in each direction for a portion of the roadway - not at the Pavilions shopping center or at the signalized intersections. That said, does this mean it should go to one lane? Not necessarily.
- **What about another crosswalk?** Additional crossing locations were considered, but not proposed. Mid-block crosswalks and crossings can be very difficult for motorists to see, and can result in someone getting seriously hurt. The plan in design does include a new section of sidewalk that allows one to cross at the existing pedestrian signal and continue on to the shopping center along the north side of the street.
- **What about a new signal?** A traffic signal was considered for the Harbor Island Drive intersection, but the intersection characteristics (intersection volumes, pedestrians, more) did not meet the minimum requirements of State law (called “warrants”). Additionally, a new traffic signal is not likely to slow the speeds along Bayside Drive – that’s because it would be resting in the green phase most of the time on Bayside as there is relatively little traffic coming out of Harbor Island.
- **What about lowering the speed limit?** As noted, the speed limits are set through a process that is required by the State of California. Unfortunately, the City cannot deviate from this process and arbitrarily lower the limits.
- **What about more enforcement of the existing speed limit?** This is a good and fair. More stringent enforcement is always helpful, and can work for a short time. But our resources don’t allow us to be everywhere at all times. That’s why we try and help the enforcement side by designing roads so that the roads themselves encourage people to drive more slowly.
- **What is the accident history?** There have been a fair amount of incidents along this section of roadway - the majority are associated with travelling at an unsafe speed. A few of them have been rather severe with vehicles leaving the roadway and crashing into parked cars, landscaping and even homes.