



First in the Valley

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January 11, 2008

Via U.S Mail & Facsimile
(818) 756-8204

Mr. Ken Firoozmand
Department of Transportation
West Valley District
19040 Vanowen Street
Reseda, CA 91335

Re: Valley Circle & Highlander Road

Dear Mr. Firoozmand:

At the regularly scheduled monthly meeting of the West Hills Neighborhood Council held on November 7, 2007, you and two other representatives of the City of Los Angeles Department of Transportation conducted a briefing on actions taken with regard to the new traffic signal placed at Valley Circle Boulevard at Bell Canyon Road and stop signage on Valley Circle Boulevard at Highlander Road. Following the briefing, it was agreed that pursuant to earlier discussions among representatives of the West Hills Neighborhood Council, Department of Transportation and Councilman Dennis P. Zine and staff that the Department of Transportation would conduct a review within 90 days and thereafter communicate its finding to Councilman Dennis Zine and West Hills Neighborhood Council in a joint briefing.

In furtherance of the proposed 90-day review and briefing, it was agreed that the West Hills Neighborhood Council would provide to you questions from the community with regard to the traffic control matter and you in turn would provide responses. Both questions and responses will be placed on the West Hills Neighborhood Council's website for general community viewing.

I wish to thank you for earlier providing to us documentation regarding studies and drawings relating to your initial determination of appropriate traffic control actions to be taken on Valley Circle Boulevard at the intersections of Bell Canyon Road and Highlander Road. That information was in part placed on West Hills Neighborhood Council's website.

Following the November 7, 2007 West Hills Neighborhood Council's meeting, the co-chairs of the council's Streets and Transportation Committee collected questions to be submitted to your department for appropriate response. The following is a list of those questions received:



1. Why are there no crosswalks on Valley Circle at Highlander Road?
2. If Highlander and Valley Circle "qualified" for a 4 way stop 25 years ago, how do they not "qualify" now when the traffic is much heavier?
3. The request for a traffic signal at Highlander predated the request "2 years ago" from the Bell Canyon resident - why was it not given priority?
4. Since Platt and Highlander qualified for a light many years ago, why hasn't Valley Circle and Highlander ever qualified even when it was requested several years ago?
5. Who made the request for the light at Bell Canyon and Valley Circle and why is the process a secret? Why did one request weigh more heavily than all the input from the people living on or near Highlander?
6. Why is the LADOT so secretive and closed, about traffic control devices before installment why don't they give notice and solicit input from affected residents?
7. Why were the traffic lights at Bell Canyon and at Ingomar both installed now instead of at some earlier time?
8. Please explain why a smart light at Highlander and Platt, which is 0.1 mile from Vanowen, is legal and yet a smart light at Highlander and Valley Circle between Bell Canyon, also 0.1 mile, is illegal? Both Platt and Valley Circle have comparable traffic.
9. Why does Dorie at Valley Circle still have a stop sign?
10. What qualifies Dorie at Valley Circle for a stop sign that Highlander does not meet?
11. Why do the slope and angles of Highlander and Valley Circle not change the normal Signal Requirements for a typical flat, unobstructed view 4-way stop?
12. Why is a test done with a stationary bright orange cone and then expected to be the equivalent of a dark color car moving at high speed?
13. With the taking out of the stop signs at Highlander and Valley Circle and then, putting them back in, the traffic control, tree cutting, plastic turn lane poles, painting of the street markings, bush trimming, etc, much of it last minute and probably on overtime, how much did all that cost?

14. Given that the "mid block crosswalk traffic signal" across Valley Circle in front of the baseball fields between Hartland street and Highlander Road has not yet been designed or approved, how long will it be before that project is implemented?

15. Since the "mid block crosswalk traffic signal" across from the West Hills baseball field will only be implemented at a future time, and since the 4-way stop signs and the crosswalks at Valley Circle and Highlander have already been removed, pedestrians currently must run across 4 lanes of speeding traffic to reach the baseball and soccer fields. As this poses a serious and immediate danger to both pedestrians and motorists, why will the stop signs and crosswalks at Valley Circle and Highlander not be restored right now, at least until the mid block crosswalk is put in place?

16. According to the LADOT report, a traffic count at Valley Circle and Highlander conducted on 4/13/2007 found a "combined minor street volume" of 105 between 5 and 6 pm. This necessarily implies that the "highest approach minor street traffic" vehicle volume was at least 53 (pedestrian traffic across Valley Circle at this hour on a workday is near negligible). This volume of traffic easily meets "Condition B" on the "Traffic Signal Warrant" form, which requires only 42 vehicles per hour for the "highest approach minor street traffic". Given that the other element of Condition B (vehicle volume on "both approaches major street") is met by a very wide margin, this leads to the conclusion that "Condition B" for the installation of a traffic signal is met, and the intersection at Valley Circle and Highlander qualifies for a stoplight according to LADOT regulations. Since the conditions are met, and the residents strongly urge placing a stop light at the intersection, how soon will one be installed?

17. The study of vehicle volume at the intersection of Valley Circle and Dorie Drive conducted on 6/13/2007 includes data collected over a single hour (5-6 pm). Since the LADOT "Traffic Signal Warrant" form itself requires data on "Eight-Hour Vehicular Volume," this is clearly insufficient. Does LADOT intend to make changes at the intersection based on such incomplete data, and if so, why?

18. The LADOT report, dated July 19, 2007, was provided to the West Hills Neighborhood Council and residents only in December 2007. This was more than four months after the report was written, and nearly a month after traffic changes at Valley Circle and Highlander had been implemented. Why the delay?

19. A statement has been made by LADOT, related to the removal of the stop sign at Highlander & Valley Circle, indicating one reason for their removal was "Drivers would not be expecting a Stop Sign so close to a Signal and that would be confusing and could cause rear end accidents". However, there are several intersections within the Valley where installation of Stop Signs are in close

proximity of Signals. One example is the intersection of Erwin/Topanga (Signal), then westerly 1 very short block the intersection Erwin/Glade (Stop Sign), and continuing westerly another very short block the intersection of Erwin/Randi (Signal). Precedence has been set for over 30 years at these intersections. So, why are the residences of Highlander and Valley Circle being denied the same right?

20. Given that residents have already expressed strong reservations about the signal plan, shouldn't they be given a chance to review the reports and comments on it before changes are made?

21. Can you give us a list of times and dates that LADOT conducted their Traffic Count / Study of the Valley Circle and Highlander intersection during this 90 day monitor period between November 2007 and February 2008?

We shall look forward to your responses promised to the community's questions set forth above. Should you have any questions, regarding the responses called for, please do not hesitate to call or write me at your earliest convenience. I can be reached during the daytime at my office at (818) 716-1444. In that the 90-day time review period is quickly approaching I would appreciate having your responses at the earliest opportunity so that there may be ample time to publish them on the website before your follow up briefing with Councilman Zine and representatives of the West Hills Neighborhood Council.

Very truly yours,

Stephen A. Lenske, Co-Chair
West Hills Neighborhood Council

SAL: mlr
cc: Councilman Dennis P. Zine
cc: Mr. Jose Martinez
3CD Deputy Field Representative