

**2004-2005  
FRESNO COUNTY GRAND JURY**



**INTERIM REPORT  
#2**

## CITY COMMITTEE

### INTRODUCTION

The City Committee reviewed the traffic flow/congestion within the city of Fresno. Motorists experience repeated delays in traffic flow and congestion throughout the city. Traveling on east-west or north-south streets, one experiences traffic signals that fail to be synchronized resulting in inefficient, wasteful and frustrating driving conditions that need fixing. This stood out as the most urgent issue needing our attention. The committee interviewed city officials, city department heads and obtained information from the media to obtain its findings and make recommendations.

The City Committee further investigated these possible areas of fact finding:

- No Neighborhood Left Behind.
- Calwa/Malaga Water District.
- City Beautification Issues
- Review Little Hoover Commission Report on the City of Fresno.
- Traffic Flow, Congestion and Air Quality on City Streets
- After School programs offered by the City in conjunction with FUSD.
- Fresno County workforce

After conferring with other committees, a decision was made to combine the efforts of the County, City and Education Committees in a joint report to address a most pressing issue of double digit unemployment in Fresno County with the Workforce Report. The City Committee proceeded with its investigation culminating in these reports:

- Traffic Flow/Congestion
- Fresno County Workforce

## **TRAFFIC FLOW/CONGESTION INTRODUCTION**

Fresno is rapidly becoming a large urban city experiencing increasing traffic flow and congestion problems. The 2004/2005 Fresno County Grand Jury (FCGJ) interviewed experts in the field of traffic control and governmental leaders about these problems and possible solutions. The FCGJ strongly believes that it is time our city leaders address this problem before it becomes unmanageable.

## **TRAFFIC FLOW/CONGESTION FINDINGS**

1. There is considerable traffic congestion on the streets of Fresno near freeway intersections and during rush hours.
2. Traffic signals on most high traffic city streets are not synchronized for efficient flow of traffic.
3. Traffic flow problems are the most serious in areas of the city where there are no effective expressways or freeway systems designed to move heavy traffic.
4. Fresno is currently installing a centrally controlled, synchronized traffic system along major arteries.
5. The synchronized traffic system is being installed in six phases. The first three phases are funded.
6. The synchronized traffic system is being installed on streets with significant traffic flow.
7. Fresno has over four hundred traffic signals within the city and maintains another 200 in other Fresno County cities.
8. Only forty of the over four hundred city traffic signals are connected to the Traffic Operation Center (TOC):
  - not all traffic signals will be connected to the TOC
  - the TOC is currently not fully operational

9. The majority of the signaled intersections in Fresno have programming capability:
  - sixty-five percent of signals are activated and capable of detecting traffic at the intersection
  - approximately twenty percent of signals are technologically advanced and programmable and are designed to be coordinated with other intersections
  - fifteen percent are incapable of being programmed (fixed time/electromechanical)
  - the cost to upgrade the specific functions of signals is \$250,000 per signal
10. The City Traffic Engineering Section will respond to citizen suggestions on improving traffic flow at “problem” intersections.
11. The City Traffic Operations Center is currently composed of a manager and two 0.80 full-time equivalent staff.
12. The City Traffic Engineering Section has one quarter-time position that works on timing of signals.
13. The City Traffic Engineering Section spends two-thirds or more of its time responding to new development projects as opposed to traffic infrastructure projects:
  - developers may request traffic signals to enhance traffic flow into their businesses and developments
  - developers are required to pay for new signals they request be installed
  - a new signal that does not meet the requirements of the Traffic Engineering Section must be approved by the City Council
14. Traffic signals in Fresno are currently under two different divisions. The Traffic Engineering Section implements the planning, placement and timing of signals. The Street Maintenance Division installs and maintains signals.
15. The City of Fresno is conducting a search to employ a licensed Traffic Engineer to manage the TOC.

## TRAFFIC FLOW/CONGESTION CONCLUSIONS

1. Fresno has a traffic congestion problem on highly traveled city streets. Congestion will increase as the city grows.
2. The City Traffic Engineering Section does not have an adequate staff to proactively improve traffic flow.
3. The resolution of traffic problems is being addressed only with traffic signal upgrading. Alternate solutions are not being aggressively studied.
4. The concerns dealing with traffic flow and congestion are fragmented and lack commitment by the City.
5. There are no incremental progress/completion dates to implement the full use of the TOC.
6. Congestion on city streets creates problems including pollution, increased fuel costs, time management and road rage.

## TRAFFIC FLOW/RECOMMENDATIONS

### **The 2004/2005 Fresno County Grand Jury recommends that the City Traffic Engineering Section:**

1. Hire additional personnel to accomplish its responsibilities.
2. Require developers to mitigate traffic problems caused by their development projects.
3. Address current and future traffic flow and congestion problems on streets not included in the current synchronized traffic system program.
4. Install and upgrade technically advanced signals capable of being coordinated with those at other intersections.
5. Devise and implement a definitive plan for the completion of the TOC.
6. Request funding be provided by the Fresno City Council for the remaining phases of the synchronized traffic control system.