



Information Item

Date: June 8, 2010

To: Mayor and City Council

From: Barbara Stinchfield, Director of Community and Cultural Services
Elaine Polachek, Deputy City Manager

Subject: Staff's Evaluation of Proposed Half-Marathon

Introduction

At the [July 28, 2009](#), City Council meeting, race promoter Laurence Cohen, with TLC MediaWorks, presented a proposal to conduct a half-marathon race entirely within the borders of Santa Monica, using a section of Pacific Coast Highway (PCH). Due to public safety concerns about the use of PCH as well as the burden a half-marathon would place on City resources, Council rejected the proposed route. Council directed staff to work with the race promoter to try to find an appropriate half-marathon route. This report describes staff's efforts to identify a viable half-marathon route in the City.

Background

Community Events staff was first approached by Laurence Cohen, with TLC MediaWorks, in March 2009 about the possibility of running a full marathon race (26.2 miles) entirely within the City borders. Staff, as they do with all such inquiries, advised him that the City has two official 5/10K race routes and that, given the traffic circulation patterns in the City and the impacts to residents and businesses, those were the only race routes available. The routes are defined in SMMC 4.68.160. The code is written to allow races in the least disruptive manner. Other than the recently-approved 3.1 mile segment for the 2010 LA Marathon, a limited number of races are permitted on the two routes, during restricted hours and days of the week, and with the condition that there be a minimum of eight weeks between races.

Subsequently the race promoter submitted an Event Permit application to conduct a full-marathon within the City for 24,000 people using one of the approved 10K routes and extending it to include a section of PCH. Fire and Police staff, in consultation with the City Manager's Office, determined that the race route, as proposed, would be an extreme challenge for City staff to manage, exceeded the capacities for the start/end venues, and would overwhelm City resources. As a result, the application was rejected.

In response, the race promoter scaled back the race to a half-marathon still utilizing a portion of PCH, reduced the number of participants, explored partnering with a 5K race, that was already working through the events process, to expand their race to a half marathon, and selected the Santa Monica-Malibu Education foundation (SMMEF) as a beneficiary.

Staff from Fire and Police carefully assessed the impacts of the proposed half-marathon route, met with the race promoter, and consulted with public safety personnel in other municipalities that host similar races. Staff was primarily concerned about public safety, the challenges of staffing such a large event, and the effects on residents and businesses. SMPD and SMFD determined they could not support approval of the route and communicated their concerns to the race promoter. The promoter expressed confidence that the challenges could be mitigated. In May and June of 2009, the promoter met with Council members, representatives from the Pier Restoration Corporation, Bayside District Corporation, and the Convention and Visitors Bureau to solicit support.

On July 28, 2009, during the City Council meeting when the route for the Santa Monica segment of the Los Angeles Marathon was approved, the race promoter presented his proposal to conduct a half-marathon using a section of PCH. Both the Police and Fire Chiefs again expressed serious concerns about the use of PCH and the demands that it would place on their operations. As a result, Council rejected the proposal and directed staff to work with the race promoter to try to find a viable half-marathon route.

Discussion

The promoter has been receptive to staff feedback and has proposed several alternative routes for consideration during the last year. Staff from Big Blue Bus, Community and Cultural Services, Finance (Parking Operations), Fire, Police (Traffic Services), Transportation Management, and the City Manager's Office have dedicated numerous hours and worked diligently to research and evaluate each route proposed by the race promoter.

Following is a timeline outlining the various route proposals:

- *March 2009* – Promoter applied for an Event Permit to run a full-marathon. Application did not meet established criteria and was rejected.
- *April 2009* – Promoter proposed two options for a half-marathon route.
- *October 2009* – Promoter proposed a half-marathon route for a race in November 2010 that included running on 3rd Street Promenade, Ocean Front Walk (OFW), beach bike path, and in the Annenberg Beach House parking lot.
- *December 2009* – Promoter proposed a revised half-marathon route with two options for a race in January 2011. Both options included running on OFW.
- *January 2010* - Promoter proposed a revised half-marathon route for a race in January 2011.
- *February 2010* – Staff requested that the promoter wait until after the Los Angeles Marathon so that all parties involved would have a better understanding of impacts, costs, etc. The promoter was also informed that staff is not supportive of a half-marathon in January due to its proximity to the March Los Angeles Marathon and the annual Christmas Run.
- *April 2010* – Promoter proposed a revised half-marathon route with three options for a race in September 2011.

While staff recognizes that there may be some benefits to hosting a half-marathon in the City (e.g., support for SMMEF, local participation in Students Run L.A., increased parking revenue, and possible TOT revenue), staff is convinced that the negative consequences outlined in Attachment 1 outweigh the benefits.

Unlike the L.A. Marathon, the half-marathon's 13.1 miles would be run *entirely* within the City of Santa Monica, placing the responsibility of staffing the route *entirely* on Santa

Monica Police and Fire. The required staff time and necessary resources would be significant. The primary concerns related to conducting a half-marathon entirely within the City borders are: impacts to Fire and Police operations and the ability to provide emergency services to race participants as well as the greater Santa Monica community; the event's unreasonable burden on City resources; traffic impacts, detours, and congestion resulting in disruption and inconvenience to residents, businesses, Big Blue Bus/MTA commuters, hotels and valet services along Ocean Avenue, and Farmer's Market vendors and customers; the fact that a number of events, races and parades already impact residents and business along portions of the proposed routes; and that more and more residents are speaking out about the impacts of races and questioning the value of races to the City. Additional concerns are outlined in Attachment 1. It should be noted that the first two concerns identified in Attachment 1 conflict with the required Event Permit criteria established in SMMC 4.68.060.

On May 19, staff met with race staff and the SMMEF director to inform them that, after much thoughtful consideration and for the reasons described in this report, staff has determined that the proposed half-marathon would be extremely disruptive to the City and could not be adequately mitigated to the community's satisfaction, and, as such, not feasible in the City without significant negative consequences to City resources and the community's quality of life.

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Attachment 1: Concerns Related To Proposed Half-Marathon

CONCERNS RELATED TO PROPOSED HALF-MARATHON

Staff from Big Blue Bus, CCS, Finance/Parking Operations, Fire, Police/Traffic Services, Transportation Management and the City Manager's Office has evaluated the proposed half-marathon route.

Based on the following concerns and impacts, staff recommends that a half-marathon route not be approved.

- Public safety staff's concerns related to the race's impacts on their operation and ability to provide emergency vehicles to race participants as well as the greater Santa Monica community.
- The event's unreasonable burden on City resources necessary to preserve the public's use of the area contiguous to the route.
- Traffic impacts, detours, and congestion resulting in disruption and inconvenience to:
 - ▶ Residents - difficulty parking near and traveling to and from their homes
 - ▶ Businesses – customers having difficulty accessing businesses and employees having difficulty accessing place of employment
 - ▶ BBB & MTA commuters
 - ▶ Hotels and valet services along Ocean Avenue
 - ▶ Farmer's Market vendors and customers
- A number of events and races already impact residents and business along some or most of the proposed route including:
 - ▶ The annual Christmas Run already uses Barnard Way in the south beach area.
 - ▶ There are already two 5/10K races each year, an annual 4th of July parade and an annual Festival of Chariots procession that use Main Street.

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- ▶ Residents along the San Vicente section of the route are already impacted by two 5/10K races each year and the L.A. Marathon.
- ▶ Merchants and residents along Ocean Avenue are already impacted by two 5/10K races each year, the L.A. Marathon and GLOW.
- More and more residents are speaking out about the impacts of races and questioning the value of races to the City.
- The route bifurcates the Transit Mall, resulting in the need to modify or cancel a substantial number of Big Blue Bus and Metro transit routes, and cuts off access to residents, workers, commuters and business owners.
- The route affects access to public parking structures that support downtown businesses. Depending on route option, parking structures on 2nd Street would be isolated, causing limited or no access to 2,100 parking spaces.
- Based on the experience of planning for the Santa Monica segment of the L.A. Marathon, an inordinate amount of staff time and resources required for planning the half-marathon, including participation from staff in over 30 City divisions.
- Unlike the L.A. Marathon, the half-marathon's 13.1 miles would be run *entirely* within the City of Santa Monica, placing the responsibility of staffing *entirely* on SM Police and Fire. The impact on staff time and resources to staff the event would be significant.
- Street Maintenance staff and resources required to inspect and repair the entire 13.1 mile route.
- Disruption of trash collection schedules.
- Uncertainty regarding promoter's ability to provide for the safe and efficient movement of event participants, workers, spectators, and non-event traffic, by providing and implementing a comprehensive traffic control plan. Such a plan would require substantial resources devoted to renting, deploying, and removing necessary traffic control devices. The event will likely require more than five times the level of traffic control devices deployed for the L.A. Marathon, at a significantly greater cost.
- Uncertainty regarding promoter's ability to reimburse the City for costs incurred.