



# SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT

**TO:** Edward D. Reiskin  
City Administrator

**FROM:** Ryan Russo  
Director, Department of  
Transportation

**SUBJECT:** Improvements to Telegraph Avenue  
from 20<sup>th</sup> Street to 29<sup>th</sup> Street

**DATE:** June 28, 2021

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City Administrator Approval 

Date: Jun 30, 2021

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## **RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution To Modify Telegraph Avenue From 20<sup>th</sup> Street To 29<sup>th</sup> Street With Enhanced Buffered Bike Lanes With Curb Management And Adopt California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Findings.**

## **REASON FOR SUPPLEMENTAL**

Staff was requested to respond to the AC Transit letter to City Council dated June 22, 2021 (**Attachment A**).

### **Transit Operations**

City of Oakland staff—working closely with community leaders from Walk Oakland Bike Oakland, Bike East Bay, the KONO Business Improvement District, and the Northgate Neighborhood Council—developed and refined a 10 criteria framework for evaluating five design scenarios. One of the criteria included how well each design option facilitated transit operations and access.

Staff initially did not draw a distinction between the transit operational benefits of the two buffered bike lane options and the protected bike lane option as each option provides similar transit-specific amenities, including concrete bus boarding islands to eliminate curbside conflicts at bus stops. However, AC Transit in their letter to the city have stated that protected bike lanes are better for transit operations. AC Transit staff also indicated that illegal double-parking in the buffered bike lane could lead to bikes unexpectedly swerving into the travel lane used by buses, which could lead to bus-bike conflicts. On the other hand, with protected bike lanes, vehicles making parallel parking maneuvers also block travel lanes used by buses.

Facilitating transit operations and minimizing potential conflicts between people biking and buses are important considerations. In evaluating all alternatives, City of Oakland staff and key community representatives also consider the impacts to safety of each design scenario.

City Committee  
July 6, 2021

### **Intersection Safety**

Seventy-five percent (15 of 20) of collisions involving people walking and biking on Telegraph Avenue between 20<sup>th</sup> Street and 29<sup>th</sup> Street since 2016 occurred at intersections. Intersections are where people walking and biking have been most at risk. Intersections, especially uncontrolled intersections, present potential conflicts between people walking, biking, and driving. Buses do not turn at uncontrolled intersections along Telegraph Avenue, and while separating bus and bike movements is important along the entire corridor, improving safety at intersections, especially uncontrolled intersections, is a key goal of the permanent project.

### **Mid-Block Travel**

On low-speed corridors buffered bike lanes offer a similar safety risk as protected bike lanes. With lower travel speeds reaction times become more generous allowing both drivers and bicyclists the time they need to navigate the corridor safely.

Overall, the City of Oakland values AC Transit partnership, as demonstrated by the current collaboration with AC Transit in different areas of the City, including Park Boulevard where the City has installed buffered bike lanes along the transit route. We are confident in the training and expertise of AC Transit's professional bus operators and their long track record of operating on Oakland streets with very few bike vs bus collisions, particularly on streets where dedicated bike lanes have been established.

### **Opportunities for Bus Priority and Future Bus Rapid Transit Projects**

OakDOT strongly supports AC Transit's desire to prioritize public transit in the our management of the public right-of-way and stands at the ready to collaborate on project planning and development. We are happy to hear that AC Transit is once again interested in developing transit priority projects like Bus Rapid Transit. OakDOT's Strategic Plan recognizes the importance of affordable, efficient public transit in reaching our goals of Equity and Sustainability. The City of Oakland and OakDOT have been key partners in facilitating the completion of the Tempo/East Bay BRT Project and OakDOT has taken a leadership role in conceiving, funding and delivering transit priority street designs including red bus lanes as part of repaving Broadway in Downtown Oakland.

**ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

Staff Recommends That The City Council Adopt A Resolution To Modify Telegraph Avenue From 20<sup>th</sup> Street To 29<sup>th</sup> Street With Enhanced Buffered Bike Lanes With Curb Management And Adopt California Environmental Quality Act Findings.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Emily Ehlers, Senior Transportation Planner, at 510-238-2259.

Respectfully submitted,



Ryan Russo  
Director, Department of Transportation

Reviewed by:  
Fred Kelley, T.E.  
Assistant Director  
Department of Transportation

Mohamed Alaoui, P.E.  
Great Streets Division Manager  
Department of Transportation

Prepared by:  
Emily Ehlers  
Planning & Project Development Section Lead  
Great Streets Division  
Department of Transportation

Attachment (1):  
Attachment A: AC Transit letter



June 22, 2021

City of Oakland (submitted electronically)  
1 Frank H Ogawa Plaza  
Oakland, CA 94612

**Re: Telegraph Avenue Corridor Comment on Proposed Roadway Modifications**

Oakland City Council Members:

Thank you for providing the public and Telegraph Avenue corridor stakeholders the opportunity to comment on the proposed roadway modifications between 20<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> streets. The Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District's (AC Transit or the District) comments on the City's proposal are in response to the version of the staff report released on June 6, 2021. AC Transit opposes the City of Oakland's Department of Transportation's (OakDOT) recommendation to replace the existing parking-protected bicycle lanes with buffered bicycle lanes and supports converting the existing configuration into permanent parking-protected bicycle lanes.

Background

Telegraph Avenue is a key transit corridor for AC Transit. We currently operate two routes along the corridor – Line 6 at 10-12-minute frequency and Line 800 at 30-60-minute frequency at night. Pre-pandemic, AC Transit carried 5,600 daily riders along the corridor between Downtown Oakland and Downtown Berkeley.

AC Transit's Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Major Investment Study was the District's effort to identify the appropriate corridor alignment for the eventual implementation of its first BRT line. The study concluded that the optimal alignment to benefit the most riders was along: E.14<sup>th</sup> Street between the Bay Fair BART Station and the Oakland border, International Boulevard between the Oakland border and Downtown Oakland, and Telegraph Avenue between Downtown Oakland and Downtown Berkeley. AC Transit analyzed this alignment through the Environmental Review process and brought the project alignment to the cities of Berkeley, Oakland and San Leandro in 2010 for approval. While Oakland supported the project, San Leandro approved a truncated project that terminated at the San Leandro BART Station and Berkeley rejected the project altogether; the Berkeley City Council voted down the project by a one vote margin. As a result, though Telegraph Avenue could accommodate BRT, the final project alignment was from Downtown Oakland to the San Leandro BART Station, which is the BRT route in place today.

With BRT no longer proposed for Telegraph Avenue by a narrow-margin vote, The City of Oakland proposed a road diet along the corridor in 2014 that would remove a vehicle travel lane and install a combination of parking-protected and buffered bicycle lanes along the corridor. This effort would all but preclude any possibility of BRT along the corridor in the future. With concerns over transit performance along a planned slower street, AC Transit proposed that the City's road diet project not preclude future

consideration of BRT and that the interim project must include bus boarding islands to mitigate any delays to transit as a result of increased traffic created by the project. At the time of project approval, the Oakland City Council acknowledged AC Transit's comments. In 2016, the City implemented the road diet project with pressure from AC Transit to include the modular bus boarding islands.

While Telegraph is a slower street as a result of the City's road diet project, AC Transit's buses can safely move along the segment between 20<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> streets because the parking-protected bicycle lanes completely separate cyclists from buses along the entire segment including at the bus stops. To improve speed and reliability, AC Transit is piloting all-door boarding for riders along the corridor, upgrading the Transit Signal Priority (TSP), and optimizing bus stop locations, though all are less effective than dedicated transit lanes and full BRT treatment.

### OakDOT Recommendation

As indicated in the City's June 6, 2021 Agenda Report, City staff is recommending to replace the parking-protected bicycle lanes on Telegraph Avenue with buffered bicycle lanes because it believes buffered lanes are safer for all users of the road, more compatible with special events and require less maintenance. While AC Transit appreciates staff's analysis that led to the recommendation, we have a number of concerns with the City's planning and outreach process, as well as the recommended option:

**1. There has been no consultation or outreach to AC Transit staff or elected officials since 2017.**

Given the impacts of any of the design options to AC Transit's operations, we are concerned that City staff did not include AC Transit in the development of alternatives, the alternatives analysis or the recommendation. The alternatives analysis identifies safety impacts to transit for each option, but the transit analysis is insufficient and does not directly investigate the impact of the various options on transit performance. Had AC Transit been involved in the planning process as a key stakeholder, we would have been able to provide valuable insight on each option's true impact to our service and operations. Our initial knowledge of this project was through the media and our first discussion with staff was on June 14, 2021 after AC Transit reached out to OakDOT to have a meeting on this subject. We understand there are many stakeholders involved in this complex project and AC Transit should have been a key one to include early, especially if the City has a vision for making Telegraph Avenue a true multimodal corridor.

**2. City staff did not consider dedicated transit lanes or BRT as an option in the alternatives analysis.** If the opportunity arises, AC Transit remains committed to a future with BRT on the corridor and these projects that take a lane of traffic for parking and/or cycling infrastructure without space for a transit lane threaten that future. With changes in Berkeley City Council's composition, AC Transit believes there may be more support for BRT today than when the project was shortened in 2010. As previously stated, AC Transit requested to ensure that the possibility for BRT was never precluded when the City first introduced the road diet concept. However, with the development of the recent analysis by the City, any chance for a dedicated transit facility along Telegraph is minimized.

**3. Parking-protected bicycle lanes are safer for transit operations than buffered bicycle lanes.** Parking-protected lanes completely separate bikes and buses throughout entire length of the



corridor from 20<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> streets and not only at bus stops as analyzed by City staff. AC Transit's experience with buffered bike lanes is that they allow for double-parking and other obstacles in the lane that require cyclists to swerve into traffic, and thus the path of the bus. Because of their respective speeds, buses and cyclists could have multiple points of interaction along a corridor creating more points for potential conflicts.

From a transit safety perspective, AC Transit believes protected bike lanes should be scored higher than buffered lanes in the alternatives analysis. Buffered bicycle lanes also create a weave around the transit boarding islands leaving the perception of cyclists traveling toward the vehicle lane after a bus stop; this is compared to the straight path of travel experienced by cyclists in parking-protected lanes. If the solution to maintain parking-protected bicycle lanes is to install more traffic signals or prohibit turning movements at unprotected intersections, AC Transit's preference is the latter since it will not negatively impact transit performance.

With regard to the modular boarding islands included in the current interim project, AC Transit expects the future project to include concrete boarding islands as promised by the City. The modular boarding islands hardly work as an interim condition, are difficult to see, especially at night and don't permit the installation amenities typically found on transit islands such as seating, shelter or wayfinding signage.

AC Transit respectfully requests the City Council approve the option that maintains parking-protected bicycle lanes along Telegraph Avenue, including the installation of permanent concrete bus boarding islands to improve the customer experience for riding transit along the corridor. In addition, we hope to continue to work with OakDOT staff on the vision for Telegraph as a multimodal corridor, including the potential for the implementation of BRT or dedicated transit lanes.

Please contact AC Transit's Director of Service Development and Planning – Robert del Rosario at 510.891.4734 or via email at [rdelrosa@actransit.org](mailto:rdelrosa@actransit.org) for further coordination on this effort.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Michael A. Hursh'.

Michael A. Hursh  
General Manager

