



SUPPLEMENTAL REPORT

TO: Edward D. Reiskin
City Administrator

FROM: Darlene Flynn, Director
Dept. of Race & Equity

SUBJECT: Improvements to Telegraph
Avenue from 20th Street to 29th
Street

DATE: June 29, 2021

City Administrator Approval 

Date: Jun 30, 2021

RECOMMENDATION

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

REASON FOR SUPPLEMENTAL

On June 22, 2021, the Public Works Committee considered the Oakland Department of Transportation (OakDOT) recommendation that City Council approve the installation of enhanced buffered bike lanes with curb management for the bicycle improvements along the stretch of Telegraph Avenue between 20th and 29th Streets in the Koreatown Northgate (KONO) District, as documented in the June 6, 2021 agenda report. At that meeting, the Public Works Committee recommended instead that the City select installation of the permanent bike lanes, rather than enhanced buffered bike lanes. As provided in the Oakland Municipal Code (OMC) Section 2.29.170.1, this Supplemental Report examines the equity considerations relevant to this decision.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Disaggregated demographic data sources consistently document Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) residents of Oakland to be detrimentally impacted by racial disparities in most every significant life outcome. The most deeply rooted impacts tend to be related to a lack of access to pathways to economic security for these groups. This condition also drives a continuum of impacts including housing instability, displacement, and homelessness. All these outcomes are driven by historic systemic and structural disadvantages based on race that can and should be addressed through equitable policy.

Considering these conditions as it relates to the KONO District and the proposed bike lane project, this report recommends adoption of the OakDOT recommendation to revise the pilot protected bike lane project in this corridor by replacing it with enhanced buffered bike lanes,

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described as Option 5 in their agenda report dated June 6, 2021. This approach improves pedestrian, senior and cycling safety, compared to the pre-pilot conditions, while being responsive to concerns raised about the pilot design and better supporting the viability of the diverse business district.

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

The City of Oakland OMC 2.29.170.1 established that “the City of Oakland will intentionally integrate, on a Citywide basis, the principle of “fair and just” in all the City does in order to achieve equitable opportunities for all people and communities. Equity practice focuses on developing recommendations that do no additional harm. Beyond that, this approach also takes every opportunity to improve conditions for people not experiencing equitable access to the opportunity to stay rooted in Oakland and to thrive.

The Black luminary Audre Lorde said, “There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives” Applying a racial equity lens to this topic supports equitable decision making by bringing the complexity of conditions impacting those living with racial disparities into consideration. The persistence of racial inequity requires taking stock of potential unintended consequences that could increase the marginalization BIPOC communities and this supplemental report highlights these concerns.

ANALYSIS / EQUITY CONSIDERATIONS

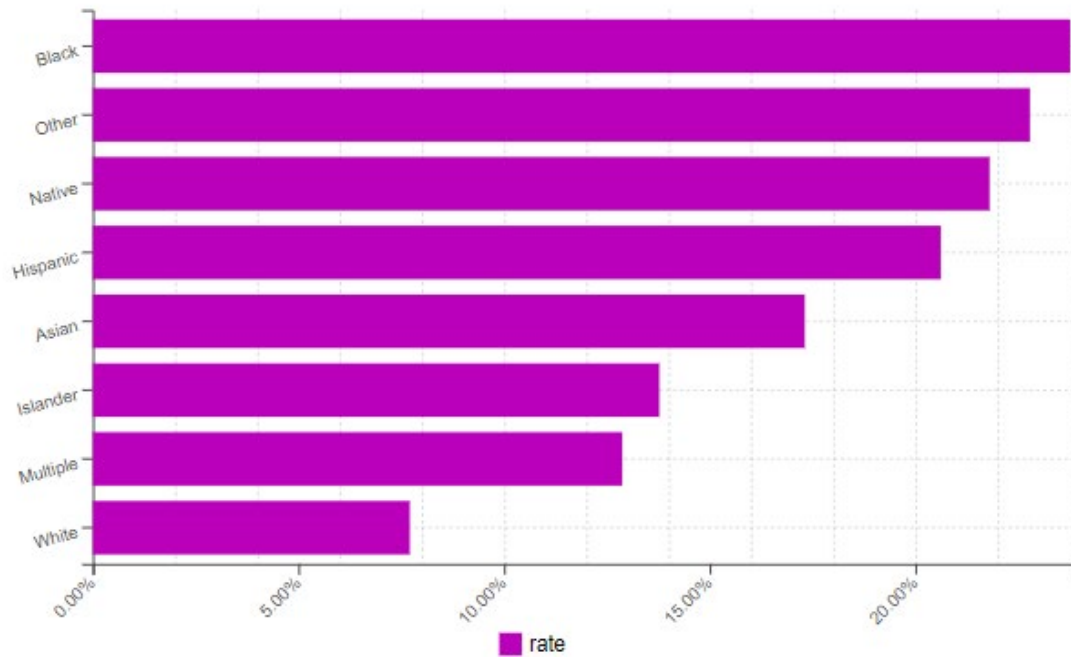
Entrepreneurs start small businesses for many reasons, but it has been observed that immigrants and people of color impacted by employment discrimination, poor educational opportunity and lack of citizenship documentation may be left with few other options for gainful employment. Low wage work that may otherwise be available to them does not provide pay at a level even close to living wages in the Bay area. Preservation and expansion of BIPOC owned businesses is an essential component of furthering economic stability in historically marginalized communities.

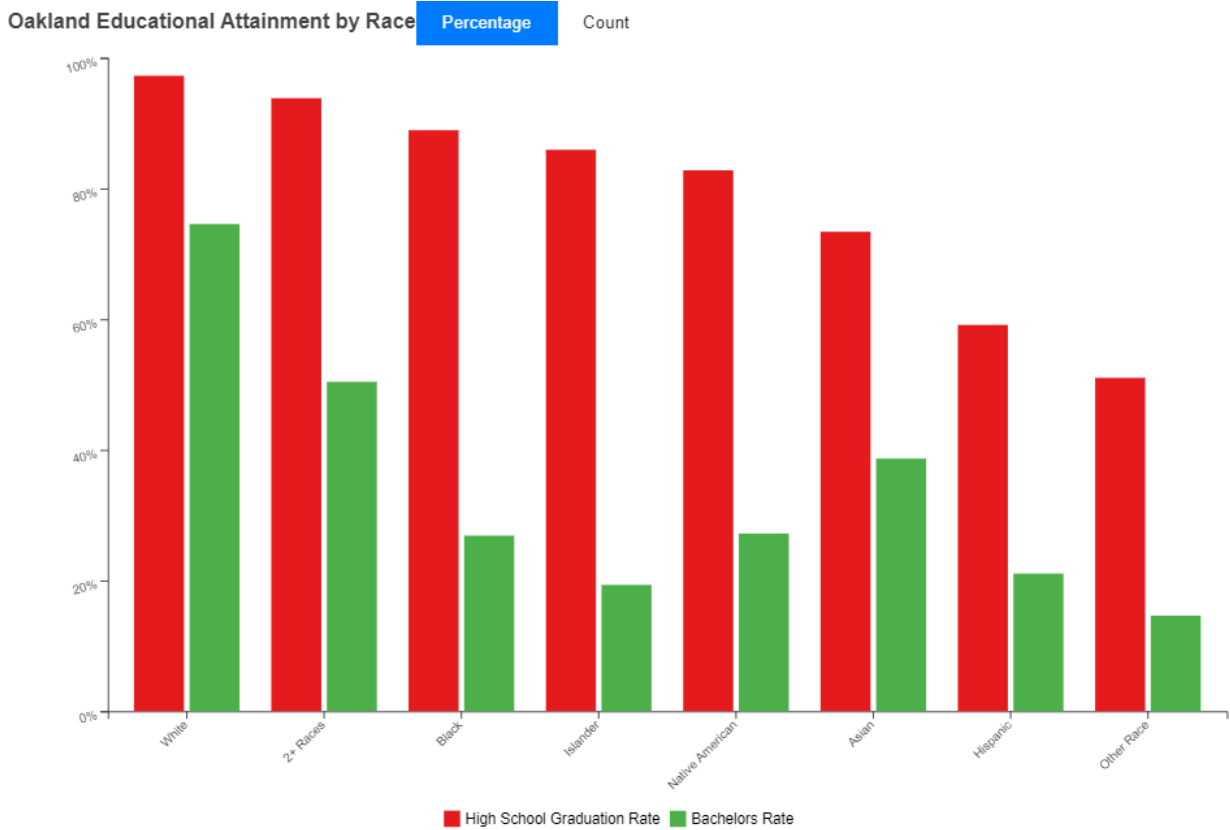
It is critical to recognize that while road diets, bike lanes and other transportation management strategies may have the same physical attributes in all business districts, all business districts are not equally situated to withstand and overcome the challenges to operations that they present. There is a long history of transportation projects exacerbating systemic inequity. However, investments in the public right-of-way that seek to achieve greater community safety and environmental sustainability can also be powerful vehicles for addressing inequity, particularly when they are developed with meaningful participation and co-creation with the communities who have been subject to systemic inequity.

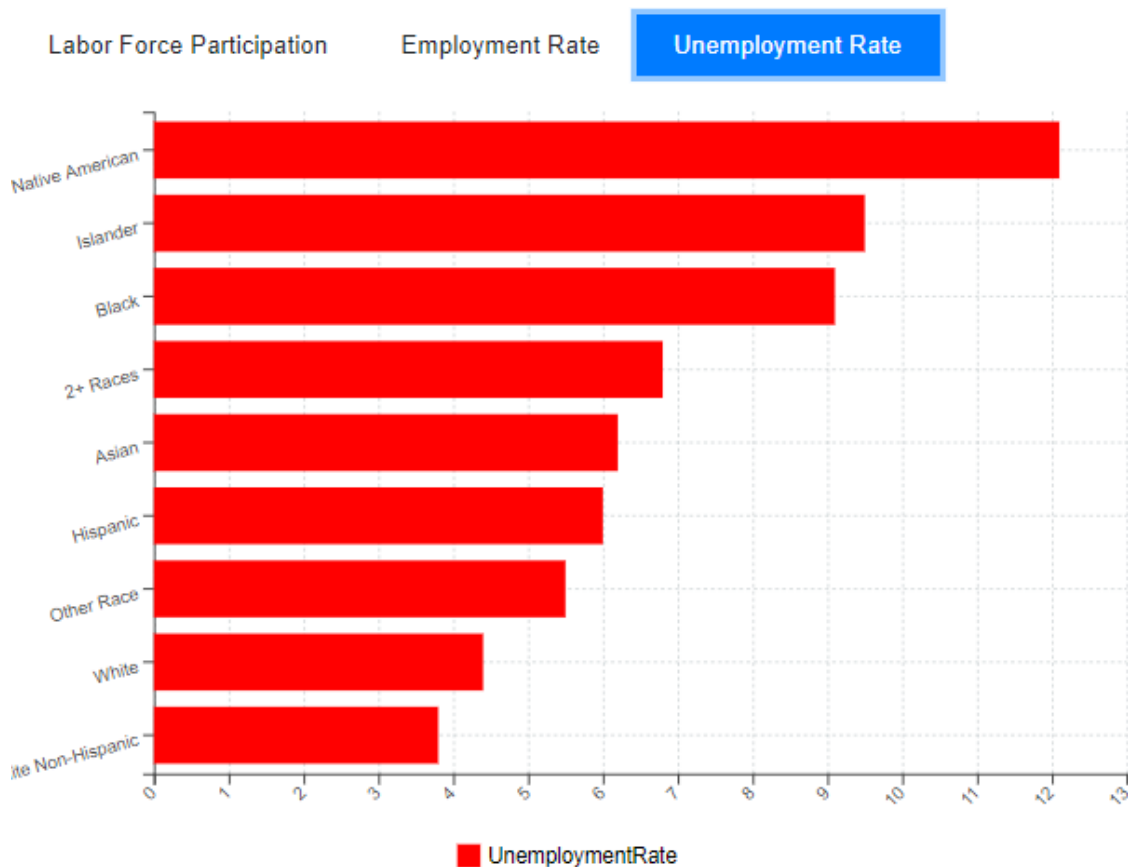
The buffered bike lane OakDOT recommended is a meaningful equity approach because it offers both effective safety design and addresses burdens placed on the KONO District by the Telegraph Street protected bike lane pilot.

The following 2021 data from World Population Review, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/us-cities/oakland-ca-population> provides examples of underlying economic conditions impacting BIPOC communities in Oakland that the City is committed to addressing through equity conscious actions.

Oakland Poverty by Race







The KONO district is one of the most diverse business districts in the City, and it has already been impacted by gentrification and displacement of their customer base, who have been priced out of living in Oakland. While it is beloved by many remaining residential neighbors, the affordable housing crisis has scattered the many POC residents across the region, making them auto dependent to access the culturally relevant services offered in KONO. It is understood that business operators generally prefer easy auto access, but in this situation, the additional challenges facing people of color owned businesses increases the potential for poor outcomes.

See: [Urban Displacement Project](https://www.urbandisplacement.org/san-francisco/sf-bay-area-gentrification-and-displacement), SF Bay Area Gentrification and Displacement - <https://www.urbandisplacement.org/san-francisco/sf-bay-area-gentrification-and-displacement>

Centering the experiences and perspectives of those most impacted by racial disparities is fundamental to completing a racial equity impact review. Elevating voices of marginalized groups balances the scales with those who tend to have a more influence in City processes because of greater socioeconomic power and access. It is also necessary to equity for BIPOC who live, own businesses and work in KONO to have a say that shapes changes that will impact their everyday lives. Their lived experience, the wisdom they are positioned to bring to the design process is unique and imperative to advancing equitable outcomes.

When traditional outreach and engagement efforts fell short due to pandemic restrictions, the KONO Business Improvement District (BID) staff worked closely with organizations, businesses and City Staff to gather feedback from the District as completely as possible. Both protected and

buffered bike lane configurations under consideration provide street parking for visitors to the KONO District, however, based on observations and reports from the merchant community and other street users, the protected bike lane has introduced a level of confusion, a perception of chaos and a complexity that a more traditional configuration does not.

KONO District Bike Lane Merchant Survey Report

KONO [Business Improvement District] staff solicited feedback on the protected bike lane pilot project running along Telegraph from W. Grand to 30th Street. They conducted in-person interviews with merchants whose shops have the bike lanes in front of them, and they conducted a MailChimp survey.

Interviews

Staff interviewed the owners of 18 businesses along the bike lanes. Of those 13 are owned by people of color (African American, Asian and Middle Eastern):

- Beauty Supply Warehouse (which also owns Young's Wigs)
- Braid Genie
- Telegraph Wine and Spirits
- Sankofa African Arts
- Cigarette Depot
- Abyssinia Market
- Marie's African Hair Braiding
- Telegraph Cleaners
- Yaegerbat Market
- Marwa Halal Market
- Kingston 11
- Gogi Time
- Sara Market
- Louisiana Fish and Chips

We also spoke to:

- Econo Jam Records
- ECO Cannabis
- Shaver and Cutlery Shop
- As-yet-unopened hair salon

Of these businesses, only two had no opinion on the bike lanes (one of those, Gogi Time, said it was not an issue for them because they have off-street parking). Of the remaining sixteen, all had a negative opinion of the current bike lane configuration. A majority of merchants expressed these two concerns [about the protected bike lane pilot]:

- **They are unsafe.** Drivers are confused by the arrangement, traffic turning from Telegraph has its view of approaching cyclists blocked by parked cars and traffic turning onto Telegraph has to block the bicycle lane in order to see oncoming traffic. Most businesses reported seeing multiple accidents and near misses, especially because of the speed at which bicycles and scooters often travel in the protected lane.

- **They have a negative impact on business.** Aside from the wholesale loss of parking spaces when the project was installed, multiple businesses reported complaints from customers who

were confused by the arrangement. Since the meters are still at the curb many park in the bike lane without realizing it's illegal and come out to find they've been ticketed, souring them on their experience shopping in KONO.

Other concerns expressed included a lack of lighting and signage to alert riders and drivers to the hazards, traffic backing up when more than one car is waiting to turn left and has to occupy the only traffic lane, and traffic problems because delivery trucks have to park in the traffic lane, forcing cars to go around them in the left-turn lane. Also noted were situations including a moving crate left in the middle of the bike lane for days, and the hazard for pedestrians who may not stop to look for bike traffic as they cross the street.

Merchants at the W. Grand and 30th Street ends of the bike lane project noted particular dangers as cars enter the area and are confused by the lane shift. One business owner noted that as a bicyclist she supports making Oakland more bike-friendly, but that the current lanes cause as many problems as they solve. A KONO employee noted that when cycling to work she comes down Broadway rather than Telegraph because she doesn't think the lanes are safe.

The StreetPlus Ambassadors contracted by KONO also reported seeing many problems, from injury-accidents to cars driving down the bike lanes, sometimes at excessive speeds.

Of the various solutions, most merchants favored moving parking back to the curb and putting the bike lane next to the traffic lane. This would open street space for all traffic and most importantly, it would increase visibility for both drivers and bicyclists.

About half of these businesses were very emphatic in their negative assessments, and responses included:

- "They are terrible"
- "Don't do it!" (referring to the plan to apply the same plan in Temescal)
- "They suck."
- "Get rid of them."
- "Change it back."
- "They are confusing."
- "They are dangerous."

Online Survey:

28 survey respondents identified themselves as KONO merchants, although the survey did not track which businesses, or whether they were located along the bike lanes.

Summary Results:

- 71% said the impact of the protected bike lanes in KONO was negative, 14% said it was positive.
- 67% said the bike lanes had made cycling in the neighborhood somewhat or much less safe, and 25% said they made cycling in the neighborhood somewhat or much more safe.
- 65% said that the impact on any fix on the Oakland First Fridays community festival was an important consideration.
- Of four proposed solutions (including leaving them as is) the largest number (40%) preferred a buffered bike lane, with cars parked along the curb.
- While 66% said the bike lanes had no impact on their sales, 33% said the impact was negative and no respondents said the impact was positive.

Because of economic constraints, most of the businesses surveyed above do not own their business location and have limited access to capital. They tend to be specialty businesses as opposed to high volume operations and face displacement pressures themselves. The addition of an unwelcoming, and for some unsafe, street configuration has the potential to negatively impact the viability of this culturally significant business district that attracts shoppers to Oakland. Further, these businesses provide employment that may be irreplaceable to people largely excluded from other opportunities. Therefore, based on the concerns expressed by these businesses, installing permanent protected bike lanes may disproportionately negatively affect these businesses.

It should be noted that this area is also the home to 'First Friday', which draws customers into the area and boosts the visibility and business traffic by introducing those unfamiliar with KONO to the area. This monthly event is integral to economic survival in this fragile business district. The pilot changes interfered with this use and permanent, hard built protected bike lanes, as recommended by the Public Works Committee, would narrow the roadway further and threatens to make the event unworkable.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

In consideration of these findings, the Department of Race and Equity supports OakDOT's June 6, 2021 agenda report and recommends: That the City Council Adopt a Resolution to Modify Telegraph Avenue From 20th Street To 29th Street with Enhanced Buffered Bike Lanes with Curb Management and Adopt California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Findings. This approach improves pedestrian, senior and cycling safety, and maintains conditions that better support the business district that provides economic opportunity and culturally diverse services historically available in the KONO neighborhood.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Darlene Flynn, dflynn2@oaklandca.gov.

Respectfully submitted,



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