

CITY OF OAKLAND
SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA REPORT

2007 JAN 09 11:35

TO: Office of the City Administrator
ATTN: Deborah Edgerly
FROM: Community and Economic Development Agency
DATE: January 9, 2007

RE: A Supplemental Report Authorizing the Design of the Latham Square and Telegraph Avenue Streetscape Improvement Project (Estimated Construction Cost of \$8,600,000), on Telegraph Avenue Between Broadway and 20th Street, Including Reducing the Travel Lanes Between 16th Street and 20th Street

SUMMARY

At the City Council meeting held on December 19, 2006, staff was directed to provide additional information regarding the provision of bicycle access through the Inner-Telegraph Avenue project area, located between 16th and 20th Streets. A second issue was raised regarding the continuity of bicycle facilities for the entire Telegraph Avenue corridor. As discussed in detail below, staff believes that the use of "sharrows" will provide a much improved bicycle experience and that a Class II bicycle lane is not appropriate here. The project balances the needs of pedestrians, bicyclists and motorized traffic to create the best feasible access for all. Moreover, the proposed project does not create any design issues for providing continuous bicycle access in the Telegraph Avenue corridor.

KEY ISSUES AND IMPACTS

The primary goals of the Latham Square and Telegraph Avenue Streetscape Improvement project are to create a unique pedestrian-friendly environment through widening of the existing sidewalk area, thereby stimulating uses such as sidewalk cafes, restaurants and pedestrian-oriented shopping. This project would also improve pedestrian safety and access using traffic calming elements, and would accommodate safe and convenient bicycle access through the project area.

In the original report to the City Council on December 19, 2006, the creation of widened, shared vehicular and bicycle lanes or "sharrows" was proposed along Inner-Telegraph Avenue. This design includes a wide travel lane (14 feet instead of the typical 11 feet) and the use of a pavement stencil, known as a "sharrow." (Please see attachment A, explaining the use of "sharrows"). The purpose of the "sharrow" is to alert drivers to the presence of bicyclists and to direct bicyclists to ride outside of the "door zone," thereby reducing the hazards created by opening car doors.

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The design was presented to the community several times in 2005 and there was support for both the proposed pedestrian and bicycle improvements. The project was also presented to the Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, (BPAC) in October of 2005. The BPAC was supportive of the design proposal for pedestrian improvements. Bicycle facilities were discussed in greater detail, especially the recommendation to employ “sharrows” rather than Class II bicycle lanes. Staff explained that the use of sharrows was proposed for the following reasons:

- The widening of the sidewalk area and introduction of traffic calming elements, such as pedestrian refuges, corner curb bulb outs, and lane reductions are intended to significantly calm traffic, thereby reducing the need for Class II bike lanes.
- With the recent completion of the newly created Uptown Transit Center, bus service will be eliminated from Inner-Telegraph Avenue in the upcoming months, thereby eliminating conflicts between buses and bicyclists.
- “Sharrows” will improve the overall bicyclist experience in the project area significantly from conditions that exist today.

Staff considered the creation of Class II bike lanes along Inner-Telegraph Avenue, but there is limited right of way in this very dense area of downtown. The proposed sidewalk widening would not leave sufficient space for Class II bike lanes. Staff evaluated the option of narrowing the travel lanes and parking lanes to accommodate the Class II bike lanes, but recommended the “sharrows” given the proposed street geometrics. Staff determined that narrowing the travel lanes to 10 feet, narrowing the parking lane from 8 feet to 7 feet and including a 5 foot bicycle lane was less desirable for bicycle safety. In particular, these minimum widths for bicycle lanes and parking lanes cause the door zone to extend into a significant portion of the bicycle lane. Staff recommended the shared lane treatment given the particular circumstances of this project. Circumstances include expected high rates of turnover with the parallel parking, limitations on available street width, and the project’s overall approach to improving safety through traffic calming.

Bicycle parking was also discussed in the BPAC meeting. Staff discussed that there is a plan to provide bike racks throughout the project area. There is also the potential to reduce the on-street parking facilities by a stall or two to accommodate a larger bike parking area.

Bicycle Planning and Access to the Downtown

Inner-Telegraph is part of the proposed bikeway network for downtown that would provide rider access to major employers, Frank Ogawa Plaza, and BART stations on the following key streets: On the west side of Broadway, the Telegraph Avenue bikeway would connect to Clay Street via

16th and 17th Streets. This bikeway would continue down Clay Street and connect to an existing bike route on Clay Street and Washington Street in Old Oakland. Overall, this bikeway would provide continuous access between Inner-Telegraph, Frank Ogawa Plaza, Old Oakland, Jack London Square, and the Oakland-Alameda Ferry Terminal. This alignment was developed to avoid Broadway, with its high number of buses and the limited opportunities for bicycle improvements, given current traffic volumes. On the east side of Broadway, access would be provided on Franklin (north bound) and Webster (south bound) Streets.

The northern end of the Inner-Telegraph project connects to a proposed bikeway on 20th Street that would provide the primary east-west bikeway across this part of downtown. In particular, it would connect Uptown to the 19th Street BART station, Lake Merritt, and the bikeways around the lake and along the channel included in the Measure DD projects.

Compatibility of Bike Access between Inner-Telegraph Avenue (area south of 20th Street) and Outer Telegraph Avenue(area north of 20th Street)

The proposed project on Telegraph Avenue south of 20th Street and the proposed lane reduction have been reviewed by staff. The proposed use of sharrows along Inner-Telegraph Avenue has been determined to be compatible with the bike facilities planned for outer Telegraph Avenue. In particular, the bicycle lanes proposed for Telegraph Avenue above 20th Street are consistent with the four travel lanes and higher traffic volumes for this portion of the roadway. Because of the Inner-Telegraph proposed improvements, the lower portion will have significantly lower traffic volumes, lower speeds, and no buses. This transition will occur in the vicinity of 20th Street. Because Telegraph at 20th Street is a major intersection and 20th Street is also a bikeway, this transition will not create design issues for providing continuous bicycle access in the Telegraph Avenue corridor.

RECOMMENDATION AND RATIONALE

Staff recommends that the City Council approve the final design of the Latham Square and Telegraph Avenue Streetscape Improvement Project on Telegraph Avenue between Broadway and 20th Street, including authorizing reducing the vehicular travel lanes between 16th Street and 20th Street. Approval of this project would be consistent with the substantial public and private investment being made in the Uptown area and would eliminate blighted conditions.

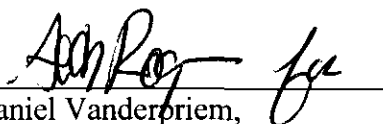
The proposed project will improve pedestrian and bicycle access and safety in the area, and provide a number of new streetscape amenities.

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ACTION REQUEST OF THE COUNCIL

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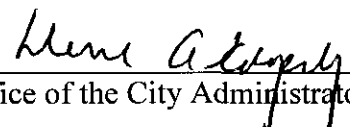
Respectively submitted,



Daniel Vanderprie,
Director of Redevelopment, Economic
Development, and Housing and
Community Development

Prepared by: George Durney
Project Manager, Redevelopment Agency

APPROVED AND FORWARDED TO
THE PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE:



Office of the City Administrator

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Attachment A

Shared Lane Markings (aka “Sharrows”) Answers to Frequently Asked Questions

Q. I've seen new pavement markings with a bike and two chevrons/arrows above it on streets in Oakland and San Francisco. What do they mean?

A. These are “Shared Lane Markings” (aka “sharrows”) that show where cyclists should ride to avoid being hit by a suddenly-opened car door. Although it is motorists' responsibility to check before opening the door, riding too close to parked cars (in the “door zone”) can lead to serious injury.

Q. But on some streets, cyclists riding over the sharrows will take the entire lane. Aren't they supposed to move to the right?

A. Not always. According to the California Vehicle Code (CVC) Section 21202, cyclists must stay to the right *except* to pass other cyclists or vehicles, to prepare to make a left turn, or when necessary to avoid conditions that make it unsafe to continue along the right. Such conditions include fixed or moving objects, surface hazards, or lanes too narrow for a bicycle and vehicle to travel side by side. Moving to the left in the lane to avoid car doors, for instance, even if it means taking the entire lane, is permitted by the CVC.

Q. Can't cyclists just look into parked cars as they ride and see if someone is about to open the door?

A. This can be very difficult. All road users need to constantly scan the entire roadway for safety. Checking every parked car for a driver diverts cyclists' attention from other roadway hazards. Also, it is often impossible to see drivers when large parked vehicles block the view of other parked vehicles, or due to tinted windows, headrests, etc. Car drivers should check their side-view mirror or look back prior to opening their door. It is the driver's responsibility should any collision occur (CVC Section 22517).



Q. If I see sharrows in a lane, is the lane only for bikes?

A. No. Sharrows are used in lanes shared by bicyclists and motorists when there is not sufficient width or a need for a bike lane. In contrast, bike lanes set aside a pavement area for bicyclists and are marked by a solid white line and a different symbol.

Q. So, if I don't see sharrows, then it's not a shared lane and bicyclists aren't supposed to be there?

A. No. Cyclists can ride on any street in California except for limited access freeways with signs that prohibit cyclists. Just as every street in Oakland has a 25mph speed limit unless stated otherwise (even if there is no speed limit sign), cyclists are allowed on every street with or without sharrows, bike lanes, or bike route signs.

Q. Are sharrows going to be on every street that does not have a bike lane?

A. No. These markings will be used primarily on streets designated as part of the Oakland Bikeway Network, particularly on streets that form a crucial link but do not have sufficient street width to allow for bike lanes and have a safe speed limit.

Q. I've never seen these sharrows before. Why are they being used now?

A. Oakland was one of the first cities to pilot the shared lane marking on Grand Ave. Until recently, however, there was no “official” marking. The City of San Francisco studied different types of markings and made recommendations to Caltrans based on the study results. In September 2005, Caltrans approved the shared lane marking (pictured above) for use statewide, making California the first state to adopt a marking for shared lanes. Oakland's first official “sharrows” are on Foothill Blvd. between 36th and 41st Avenues.

Adapted from materials developed by the San Francisco Department of Parking and Traffic, with thanks to San Francisco