



AGENDA REPORT


TO: Jestin D. Johnson
City Administrator

FROM: Josh Rowan,
Director, Oakland
Department of
Transportation

SUBJECT: Informational Report On Safe Routes
To School And Traffic Calming
Programs

DATE: April 29, 2024

City Administrator Approval


Jestin Johnson (May 1, 2024 10:13 PDT)

Date: May 1, 2024

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive An Informational Report From The City Of Oakland And The Oakland Unified School District On Their Respective Traffic Safety Efforts Including But Not Limited To The City Of Oakland's Safe Routes To School Program, The Status Of And Plans For Measure KK/U Funds Allocated For The Safe Routes To School Program, The Status Of The Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-2023 And 2023-2025 Safe Routes To School Capital Projects And The Plans For The \$1,000,000 For Neighborhood Traffic Calming, As Well As The \$3,500,000 For Safe Routes To Schools Adopted In The FY 2023-2025 Biennial Budget.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This informational report responds to a request from Councilmember Reid at the Rules Committee meeting on October 12, 2023, for information related to the City of Oakland (City) Safe Routes to School and Neighborhood Traffic Calming Programs, associated budget, and status of capital projects under these programs.

The Safe Routes to Schools Program in Oakland is managed by the Oakland Department of Transportation (OakDOT) and aims to make it safer and easier to walk and bike to school while also facilitating safe and orderly school pick-up and drop-off. This work consists of responding to school traffic safety requests, overseeing school capital projects, and coordinating with other teams within OakDOT. The 2021-2023 School Capital Projects are entering construction, and the 2023-2025 School Capital Projects are moving from conceptual design to detailed design.

The Neighborhood Traffic Calming program installs speed bumps on local streets citywide, with specific locations identified through resident-driven petitions and evaluated according to engineering constraints and needs for emergency vehicle access. OakDOT reports progress on speed bump applications on a website for the program, provided in **Attachment A**. In total, the programs were allocated \$4,500,000 in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-25 budget, with \$3,500,000 for Safe Streets to Schools and \$1,000,000 to traffic calming.

Education Partnership Committee
May 6, 2024

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

OakDOT’s Safe Routes to Schools Program resides within the OakDOT Safe Streets Division, Traffic Engineering Section, and is staffed by a Transportation Engineer and a vacant Assistant Engineer position. The same staff may also support other prioritized projects within the Traffic Engineering Section. This group works closely with other teams within OakDOT, writing work orders for implementation by the Traffic Maintenance Section’s paint and sign staff and partnering with the Complete Streets Paving Section to efficiently deliver capital projects.

The Neighborhood Traffic Calming program resides with the Safe Street Division, Traffic Engineering Section, and installs speed bumps on local streets citywide. It is staffed by a Transportation Engineer and two supporting Assistant Engineers, who also attend to other traffic safety needs.

The programs are funded primarily with local funds and occasional support from outside grants. Of the \$4.5 million total allocated to Neighborhood Traffic Safety and Safe Routes to School in the FY 23-25 Capital Improvement Program (CIP), \$3.5 million is allocated for Safe Routes to School from Measure KK/Measure U, and \$1 million is allocated for Neighborhood Traffic Calming from Measure BB (see **Table 1**).

Table 1: Neighborhood Traffic Safety/Safe Routes to School Funding in the FY 23-25 CIP

Fund	Project	FY 24	FY 25	Total
2218 - Measure BB	Neighborhood Traffic Safety	\$ 500,000	\$ 500,000	\$ 1,000,000
5337- Measure KK	Safe Routes to School	\$ 1,750,000	\$ -	\$ 1,750,000
5340- Measure U	Safe Routes to School	\$ -	\$ 1,750,000	\$ 1,750,000
		\$ 2,250,000	\$ 2,250,000	\$ 4,500,000

ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES

This informational report addresses questions raised by City Council members related to the City of Oakland Safe Routes to School and Neighborhood Traffic Calming Programs, associated budget, and status of capital projects under these programs, and does not recommend any policy actions or alternatives. These programs support city priorities including: holistic community safety; vibrant, sustainable infrastructure; and responsive, trustworthy government, as further detailed below.

Safe Routes to School Program

The Safe Routes to School Program has three primary functions to support traffic safety at over 140 school sites in Oakland:

- Responding to school-initiated Traffic Safety Service Requests
- Delivering Safe Routes to Schools Capital Projects

- Coordinating with other teams within OakDOT to deliver traffic safety enhancements around schools.

The core functions are described in more detail below:

School Traffic Safety Service Requests: OakDOT's Safe Streets Traffic Engineering Section evaluates every roadway safety request submitted through OAK 311 or SeeClickFix and provides a response regarding whether OakDOT will be taking engineering action. Citywide, the number of requests (exceeding 1000 annually) outstrip the available resources to address them, and the team must prioritize among them. However, any request identifiable as originating from a school official (for example, in the email address or 311 request message content) are prioritized for review by Safe Routes to Schools staff, who investigate the request and may issue a work order to the Traffic Maintenance Section to address it. Improvements implemented through this program generally include signs, pavement marking, and curb paint. Safe-hit posts may also be used to implement near-term improvements in unique situations. Local residential streets near schools may also be eligible for the City's Speed Bump Program.

Staff are typically able to work with every school that identifies an issue in this manner, but the specific measures implemented are subject to local and state guidelines and engineering best practices. At other times, the tools available to the Traffic Maintenance Section may not be appropriate for the traffic safety challenges expressed by school officials. There is a substantial ebb and flow with school traffic safety requests, with more issues being raised in August and September when school starts each year and declining as people become more familiar with school traffic patterns throughout the year. The Safe Routes to Schools Program engages with approximately 30 schools per year.

Schools affiliated with Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) are encouraged to discuss their needs with OUSD transportation staff. Sometimes, a school's issues may be best addressed with changes on the school grounds or in its operations, and OUSD staff are better situated to recommend and enact those measures. OakDOT and OUSD hold a standing monthly meeting to discuss requests made through either OAK 311 or internally through OUSD transportation staff, though urgent issues may be discussed sooner.

OakDOT follows a similar process to work with schools unaffiliated with OUSD, such as charter schools authorized by Alameda County and private schools. These schools comprise a small percentage of schools in Oakland and, accordingly, a small percentage of traffic safety requests.

The rollout of 15 MPH School Zones at OUSD-affiliated elementary schools is a proactive citywide program implemented on eligible streets, with installation prioritized based on safety and equity factors. Thirty-four schools have gotten reduced school zone speed limit since the program launched in June 2022, with 23 more planned for installation by the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year. The current status of the rollout of 15 MPH School Zones is provided in **Attachment B**. Staff also update other signage adjacent to schools as needed through these efforts.

Safe Routes to Schools Capital Projects and the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program: The \$3.5 million allocated over two years to school traffic safety is invested in Safe Routes to Schools capital projects. These projects are usually more complex infrastructure improvements

requiring civil design. Examples include curb extensions, sidewalk construction, protected bike lanes, traffic circles, medians, curb ramps, and Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons. These projects are also more competitive for outside grant funding, and OakDOT was awarded a \$385,000 grant from the Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTC) for its 2021-2023 projects.

Project development for Safe Routes to Schools capital projects primarily occurs in school safety assessments, also known as walk audits, sponsored by ACTC, though staff also look for opportunities to include work that has been recommended in other City processes such as the Bicycle Plan. ACTC generally holds three to five walk audits annually at Oakland schools. They are attended by school officials, planning and engineering consultants, parents, and OakDOT staff.

OakDOT helps to identify schools for walk audits, attends the audit to contribute observations and share information about city processes, and reviews the audit report. In nominating schools for safety assessments, staff draws upon a database of Oakland schools that considers school site collision history, geographic equity, and any history of recent audits. Metrics include:

- Percentage of students receiving free or reduced-price meals
- Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) equity priority score
- Healthy Places Index
- Cal Enviro Screen 4.0
- Collisions within one quarter mile and one-half mile from the school site

Delivery time for these capital projects is substantially longer than for service request responses. Scheduling school safety assessments with a large group of stakeholders takes time, and ACTC's consultants also require several months to write the report, which again takes time to review and finalize. Capital projects include more complex engineering, and the plan sets require in-depth review from several City divisions, whereas work orders require approval only from a Transportation Engineer. Due to the long lead time and more formal processes, this program emphasizes durable improvements that are otherwise difficult for the Safe Routes to Schools Program to deliver, such as bulb-outs, sidewalk construction, traffic circles, median islands, Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons, and protected bike lanes.

Because of this additional planning and coordination, the set of capital projects now entering construction includes recommendations initially developed during the 2017-2018 school year, and the set of projects being planned for construction in 2025 includes recommendations through the 2021-2022 school year.

The Safe Routes to Schools capital projects that are about to enter construction are securing final approvals. They include improvements at five schools: Yu Ming Elementary, Martin Luther King Jr. Elementary, Lincoln Elementary, Westlake Middle, and East Oakland Pride Elementary.

The Safe Routes to Schools capital projects planned for construction in the FY2025-27 funding cycle are currently in early design and are anticipated to include improvements at 16 schools. Staff are issuing informal Requests for Proposals (RFPs) to firms with on-call Civil Engineering contracts with the City.

The Neighborhood Traffic Calming program installs speed bumps on local streets citywide, with specific locations identified through resident-driven petitions and evaluated according to

engineering constraints and needs for emergency vehicle access. OakDOT reports progress on speed bump applications on a website for the program, provided in **Attachment A**.

In total, the programs were allocated \$4,500,000 in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-25 budget, with \$3,500,000 for Safe Routes to Schools and \$1,000,000 to Neighborhood Traffic Calming.

Coordination within OakDOT: Coordinating school traffic safety improvements with other teams of OakDOT is a third key function of the Safe Routes to School Program, further described in the “Coordination” section below.

FISCAL IMPACT

This item is for informational purposes only and does not have fiscal impacts.

PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST

There is a high level of public interest and need in Oakland for school traffic safety. OakDOT maintains a website, which is provided in **Attachment C**, that serves as a general landing area for school traffic safety information. Specific websites are maintained for specific programs within Safe Routes to Schools and Neighborhood Traffic Calming, including the Crossing Guard Program, the 2021-2023 Safe Routes to Schools Capital Projects (**Attachment D**), the 2023-2025 Safe Routes to Schools Capital Projects (**Attachment E**), and the Speed Bump Program (**Attachment A**). These pages are included as attachments to this report. These online resources were developed to help support schools needing assistance with traffic safety and for transparency regarding what work is underway.

COORDINATION

OakDOT coordinates with OUSD and non-OUSD schools, as stated above, to deliver transportation improvements. Schools affiliated with Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) are encouraged to discuss their needs with OUSD transportation staff. Sometimes, a school’s issues may be best addressed with changes on the school grounds or in its operations, and OUSD staff are better situated to recommend and enact those measures. OakDOT and OUSD hold a standing monthly meeting to discuss requests made through either OAK 311 or internally through OUSD transportation staff, though urgent issues may be discussed sooner. OakDOT follows a similar process to work with schools unaffiliated with OUSD, such as charter schools authorized by Alameda County and private schools. These schools comprise a small percentage of schools in Oakland and, accordingly, a small percentage of traffic safety requests.

In addition to OakDOT’s Safe Routes to School staff, other OakDOT teams implement school traffic safety improvements when working near schools. When streets are repaved, standard crosswalks are upgraded to high-visibility crosswalks, and new curb ramps are installed where feasible. Safe Routes to Schools Program staff review plans developed by other teams within OakDOT, focusing primarily on the correct application of traffic engineering guidelines for school areas and opportunities to include additional elements supporting school traffic safety. This review includes plan sets from the Complete Streets Paving Section, the Safe Streets Bicycle

and Pedestrian Section, the Traffic Capital Projects Section, and other teams. While this function requires the fewest staff resources, it provides a tremendous opportunity to leverage school-specific insight to ensure that these larger projects advance school traffic safety to the extent possible. Finally, the School Crossing Guard program moved to OakDOT from the Oakland Police Department in 2021, is also a part of the Safe Streets Division, and works closely with OUSD. More information about this program, including the locations of crossing guards and information on how to apply to be a crossing guard, are available here:

<https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/the-oakdot-crossing-guard-program>

Because this item is for informational purposes only, there are no potential policy impacts on internal stakeholders.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: OakDOT's school traffic safety efforts do not have direct economic benefits. The program may have indirect economic benefits by slowing traffic and making Oakland more livable, preventing severe and fatal injuries and their associated direct and indirect costs, and encouraging inexpensive modes like walking and biking that reduce residents' transportation expenses.

Environmental: OakDOT's school traffic safety efforts work to create safer conditions for all road users and to support safer walking, bicycling, and access to transit. This, in turn, has the potential to encourage and support the use of sustainable modes instead of fossil fuel powered vehicles for transportation.

Race & Equity: Communities of color are disproportionately impacted by severe and fatal traffic crashes in Oakland. As such, the school traffic safety program maintains a database of schools with criteria related to race and equity, as well as student and neighborhood health metrics, to support any decisions that direct staff time or resources, as described in the section on Safe Routes to School Capital Projects.


Because OakDOT staff are typically able to work with every school that submits a 311 request or requests transportation improvements from OUSD transportation staff, these criteria aren't typically considered for school service requests. Instead, this database informs decisions about where to hold ACTC walk audits and how to prioritize the roll-out of citywide efforts like 15 MPH school zones.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive An Informational Report From The City Of Oakland And The Oakland Unified School District On Their Respective Traffic Safety Efforts Including But Not Limited To The City Of Oakland's Safe Routes To School Program, The Status Of And Plans For Measure U Funds Allocated For The Safe Routes To School Program, The Status Of The Fiscal Year (FY) 2021-2023 And 2023-2025 Safe Routes To School Capital Projects And The Plans For The \$1,000,000 For Neighborhood Traffic Calming, As Well As The \$750,000 For Safe Routes To Schools Adopted In The FY 2023-2025 Biennial Budget.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Joe Wang, Safe Streets Division Manager, at jwang@oaklandca.gov.

Respectfully submitted,


Josh Rowan (May 1, 2024 09:03 PDT)

JOSH ROWAN, Director, Oakland
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Attachments (5):

Attachment A. Webpage: Speed Bump Program

Attachment B. Implementation of School 15 MPH Zones

Attachment C. Webpage: School Traffic Safety in Oakland

Attachment D. Webpage: 2021-2023 Safe Routes to School Capital Projects

Attachment E. Webpage: 2023-2025 Safe Routes to School Capital Projects