



AGENDA REPORT


TO: Jestin D. Johnson
City Administrator

FROM: Megan Wier
Acting Director, Oakland
Department of
Transportation

SUBJECT: Community-Led Traffic Safety
Pilot Program

DATE: March 25, 2024

City Administrator Approval


Jestin Johnson (Apr 11, 2024 21:53 PDT)

Date: Apr 11, 2024

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive an Informational Report Responding To The Questions Raised in Resolution No. 90051 CMS.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Oakland Department of Transportation (OakDOT) has conducted a thorough review of the proposed Community-Led Traffic Safety Pilot concept. As requested by City Council [Resolution No. 90051 CMS](#), the review included community meetings to gauge resident interest in community-led projects, research of peer cities with similar “tactical urbanism” programs, an assessment of what it would take to establish a such a pilot within OakDOT, and a plan and timeline for the City of Oakland (“City”) to become a Vision Zero Network member city. This report presents information requested by City Council regarding that research.

The City has been working toward the goals set forth by Vision Zero since 2020 through numerous efforts, most recently centralized under the Safe Oakland Streets (SOS) Initiative. Waiting to pursue full Vision Zero membership when one full-time equivalent (FTE) Transportation Planner III can be added to the budget would ensure active Vision Zero Network membership and participation is supported and sustainable.

The pilot concept proposes to have community members lead implementation of temporary traffic safety projects. However, while OakDOT would be relieved of certain implementation responsibilities, City staff--particularly Transportation Engineers--would still need to devote significant time to support the pilot program. OakDOT has a 23 percent vacancy rate, and the agency has more pending in-house traffic safety projects than it has staff capacity to execute. Introducing even a small number of community-led traffic safety projects would impact current OakDOT projects and programs, including several established and previously prioritized by Council. In particular, staffing would be diverted from the same limited pool of engineers responsible for the citywide Speed Bump Program, the Rapid Response Program, Safe Routes to School Capital Program, Sideshow Prevention Pilot Program, Council Discretionary and

Earmark projects, Speed Limit Management Program, and the Traffic Safety Requests Program, which may necessitate delaying or cancelling some projects.

The proposed program also presents a challenge to OakDOT and the City's shared commitment to undoing the impact of historic disparities in the allocation of transportation resources. Community-led programs inherently favor groups with more available time and financial resources. OakDOT's race and equity impact analysis, combined with input gleaned from research and interviews with staff from other cities, suggests that the Community-Led Traffic Safety Pilot concept would likely increase disparate resource allocations, requiring close attention to equity in program design. If a pilot is instituted that allows or requires residents to fund projects themselves, wealthier residents will be able to fund improvements in their own neighborhoods while lower-income residents cannot. When resources spent on enabling such a program are taken from programs that prioritize disadvantaged neighborhoods, the inequity compounds – essentially subsidizing a "pay-to-play" system with resources that could instead have been invested in lower-income communities to address decades of under-investment.

This report presents two primary alternatives for implementing the proposed traffic safety pilot concept.

Alternative 1 would direct OakDOT to work with City Council offices to refocus Council Discretionary funding and/or projects to respond to community-identified traffic safety concerns on the High Injury Network, in Priority Equity Neighborhoods, or to improve conditions for vulnerable populations (such as children, seniors, and people with disabilities). Council Discretionary projects generally arise from community concerns conveyed to Council offices and refocusing this existing funding source and OakDOT staff workflow would be an effective and efficient approach to identifying, prioritizing, and implementing improvements on the High Injury Network, in Priority Equity Neighborhoods, or to improve conditions for vulnerable populations in the nearer term.

Alternative 2 would establish a Community-Led Traffic Safety Pilot no later than March 2025. This alternative would require significant staffing, resource and prioritization tradeoffs that could impact the race and equity work in which OakDOT has been engaged since its creation in 2016. Any adopted pilot should carefully incorporate policies to counteract this tendency, and transparently evaluate their impacts.

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

Traffic violence is a nationwide issue that profoundly affects Oakland. To address this public safety epidemic, in 2021 Oakland launched the Safe Oakland Streets (SOS) initiative. The SOS core team includes OakDOT, the City Administrator's Office, the Oakland Police Department, and the Department of Race and Equity. The SOS core team works collaboratively on implementing this initiative and achieving its goals to:

1. Prevent severe and fatal crashes and related disparities impacting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities, persons with disabilities, seniors, and low-income populations.

2. Eliminate severe and fatal injury inequities including racial disparities impacting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities that exist today in Oakland.
3. Inform safety strategies that prevent injury and injury inequities and avoid adverse equity impacts on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities, seniors, persons with disabilities, and low-income populations.
4. Eliminate crash fatalities on all of Oakland's roadways by 2042 through targeted and strategic prevention.

The SOS initiative focuses on six areas of strategy implementation to eliminate traffic fatalities and prevent severe injuries while advancing equity: 1) Coordination and collaboration; 2) Engineering; 3) Policy; 4) Planning and evaluation; 5) Engagement, education, and programs; and 6) Enforcement. The City has made significant progress through focused investments in these strategies to date, and the urgent need for increased focus and investment in innovative strategies to save lives is evident in the persistent number of traffic fatalities on Oakland's streets – with 33 people killed in traffic crashes in 2023.

Existing Project Prioritization

The City prioritizes safety investments on the High Injury Network - defined as the 6% of City streets that account for 60% of severe and fatal crashes. A total of 95% of the High Injury Network is in neighborhoods rated as Medium to High Priority in OakDOT's Geographic Equity Toolkit. High Equity Priority Neighborhoods are areas with a high percentage of low-income households and high percentages of people of color, seniors, and people with disabilities. OakDOT's current processes to identify, develop, and prioritize infrastructure investments center and advance equitable outcomes for marginalized and historically underserved and underrepresented communities within Oakland. OakDOT's workflow prioritizes these Equity Priority neighborhoods for department services and capital investments first. These same neighborhoods also have the highest rates of traffic deaths and severe injuries.

OakDOT uses the Geographic Equity Toolbox¹ to identify Equity Priority Neighborhoods by analyzing seven different sociodemographic factors. Race and ethnicity data and income status comprise 50% of the Equity Priority Neighborhood ranking, while five other sociodemographic factors comprise the remainder. This numeric value is used to rate neighborhoods on a scale from least to highest priority, based on how impacted they are by intersecting systems of oppression.

OakDOT has institutionalized the use of the Geographic Equity Toolbox in many programs to focus and prioritize the Department's limited resources, including the scoring, prioritization, and ultimately funding of projects, programs, and plans in the City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP). The transportation investments of the fiscal year (FY) 2023-2025 CIP alone amount to more than \$114 million.

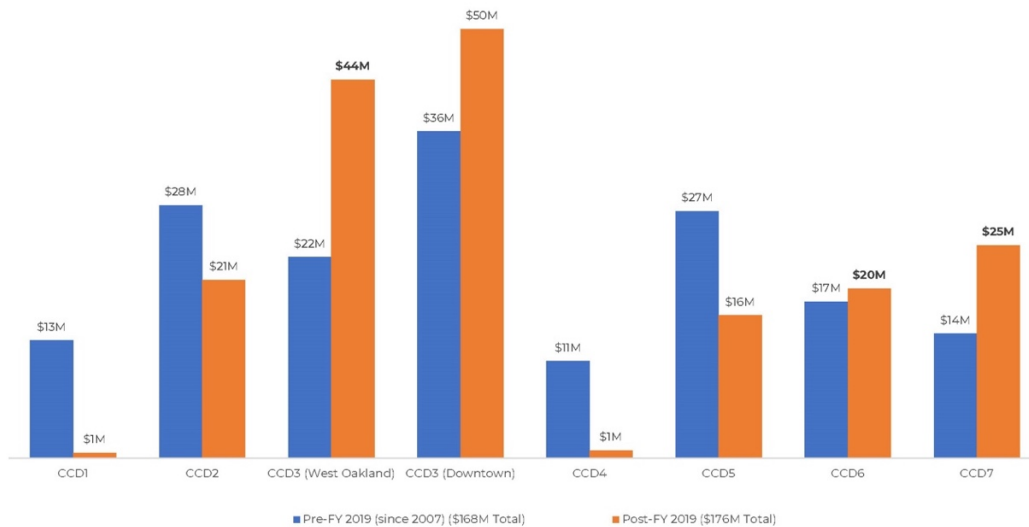
In 2018, the City Council adopted a scoring and prioritization framework ([Resolution No. 87376 CMS, 2018](#)) that centers an equity lens to make decisions about how and in which neighborhoods large capital investments will be invested. The Council-adopted framework

¹ The OakDOT Geographic Equity Toolbox, its data layers, and a methodology and literature review can be found here: <https://www.oaklandca.gov/resources/oakdot-geographic-equity-toolbox>

identifies nine factors to be considered for any proposed CIP project, with Equity as the most heavily weighted factor.

As a result of this change to CIP project prioritization, OakDOT has successfully pursued and secured grant funding for CIP projects in East and West Oakland—nearly doubling the amount of grant funding invested in West Oakland (Council District 3 west of Interstate-980) and Deep East Oakland (Council District 7)—between FY 2019-25 compared to prior CIP cycles without this prioritization framework between FY 2007-19 (see **Table 1**, below).

Table 1. Grant Funds Received by City Council District (CCD) Before and After Adoption of CIP Prioritization Process



Interest in Community-Led Traffic Calming

On May 17-18, 2023, a group of transportation safety advocates unaffiliated with the City staged a 2-day traffic safety demonstration in front of Oakland Technical High School (Oakland Tech) at 4351 Broadway. The advocates used traffic cones, chalk, and signage to narrow the width of the roadway and redirect vehicle traffic. The advocates also created a colorful midblock crosswalk which students used to cross from the school to the businesses and bus stop on the other side of Broadway. This temporary demonstration was not permitted by any City agency.

At the time of the demonstration, only utility companies with approved traffic control plans were permitted to manage traffic on City streets. Nevertheless, the demonstration helped to start a conversation about “tactical urbanism”, resident-led efforts to make public spaces safer and more active by installing low-cost, short-term infrastructure enhancements.

In December 2023, the City Council adopted Resolution No. 90051 CMS. The legislation requested additional research from staff and declared the intent to establish a 3-year pilot program that allows schools, businesses, and community centers serving vulnerable populations to apply for temporary encroachment permits to install removable traffic safety treatments and create traffic calming zones in City streets.

ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES

Resolution No. 90051 CMS directed the City Administrator to present a report to the City Council with additional information, including (1) cities in California or the United States that have successfully implemented similar programs to reduce accidents and fatalities, (2) recommendations of legislative or administrative changes needed to implement a similar program in Oakland, (3) input gathered from residents and community-based organizations at two community meetings assessing interest and ability to participate in the pilot program, (4) an analysis of staffing and budget needs to begin and sustain the pilot program, and (5) a report exploring the feasibility and developing a plan and timeline for the City to become a “Vision Zero Network” member city.

The following sections are organized according to the key requests for information from Resolution No. 90051 CMS enumerated above.

1. Information on Cities in California or the United States that have Successfully Implemented Similar Programs to Reduce the Number of Traffic Accidents and Fatalities and Increase Safety for All Who Travel on Public Streets

OakDOT conducted interviews with government agencies and community organizations involved in programs highlighted by the District 3 Council Office report accompanying Resolution No. 90051 CMS. These interviews indicated very few programs that are truly comparable to the proposed Community-Led Traffic Safety pilot concept in Oakland, with two important areas of difference.

First, there were differences in the types of projects permitted. For example, Shasta Living Streets (a Redding, CA non-profit engaged in tactical urbanism) projects involved a limited scope; all permanent installations were parklets. Shasta Living Streets also organized open streets events, which are one-day full street closure events, not the type of sustained installation proposed for the Oakland pilot.

Similarly, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Go Human Program permits demonstrations that last several days at most, with affected streets generally closed to traffic for the duration of the event, whereas Oakland’s Community-Led Traffic Safety pilot concept envisions installations that would remain in place for three to six months.

Second, the actual level of community involvement in proposing or installing projects varied, with significant involvement by city crews and/or contractors typical. For instance, all projects implemented through the City of Orlando’s program are engineered in-house by the Orlando DOT and are installed by the DOT’s on-call contractor under supervision of DOT staff. Most of the proposed projects originated within the Orlando DOT and were financed with city funds. The Orlando program was not created with the expectation that residents would take the lead in proposing, designing, funding, or installing traffic calming projects.

A recurring theme from peer city interviews was the staff resources required for these programs to function. Most cities dedicated 0.5-1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff just to manage the application review process. Every city spoke to the need for additional *engineering* time—

engineers are needed for the development and/or oversight of traffic calming plans, traffic control for installation activities, and for input regarding other concerns, including maintenance. A final topic discussed with each city was street selection. Most projects were installed on local roads, with a few smaller collectors² included, and most programs actively discouraged potential installations by community residents on arterial streets. One exception was Orlando, which implemented traffic calming measures on mid-sized collectors. This was possible because the Orlando projects were performed in-house and implemented by in house city staff.

2. Recommendations to Council About Legislative or Administrative Changes Needed to Implement a Similar Program in Oakland

The California Vehicle Code (CVC) §21351 provides the basic authority to local agencies to place and maintain official traffic control devices in streets under their jurisdictions. However, the CVC requires that all traffic control devices comply with uniform standards and specifications adopted by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) (CVC §21100.1 and §21401). Caltrans publishes the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA MUTCD) to provide uniform standards and specifications for all official traffic control devices in California pursuant to CVC §21400.

Traffic control devices—such as stop signs, traffic signals, crosswalk markings, flashing beacons, etc.—should be distinguished from traffic calming treatments, such as curb extensions/bulb-outs, speed bumps, traffic circles, and traffic diverters. To maintain compliance with State standards and requirements, OakDOT recommends that any community-led traffic safety installation only focus on traffic calming treatments as opposed to traffic control devices.

3. Information Gathered from Residents and Community-Based Organizations at Two Community Meetings Assessing their Interest and Ability to Participate in the Pilot Program

OakDOT worked with the Office of District 3 Councilmember Carroll Fife and Transport Oakland, a transportation advocacy organization, to hold two community meetings to discuss the transportation safety pilot concept. Consistent with the City Council mandate in Resolution No. 90051 CMS, the two meetings were held in locations that were on or near the High Injury Network (more information about each meeting shown in **Table 2**, below).

² A “collector road” or “collector” is a low-to-moderate capacity road which serves to move traffic from local streets (often residential) to arterial roads.

Table 2 - Community Meetings

Date	Location	Nearby HIN	Number of Attendees
February 24, 2024	81st Avenue Branch Oakland Public Library (1021 81st Avenue)	International Boulevard from Hegenberger Road to 91st Avenue	25-30
March 2, 2024	St. Paul's Episcopal School (116 Montecito Avenue)	Grand Avenue from Broadway to MacArthur Boulevard	30-35

Both meetings involved opening remarks by Councilmembers in attendance, as well as presentations by Transport Oakland (see **Attachment A**) and by OakDOT (see **Attachment B**), but with community feedback differing significantly between the two meetings.

At the 81st Avenue Library Branch meeting, attendees showed little interest in discussing the Community-Led Traffic Safety pilot. Instead of discussing the pilot, residents brought up other traffic safety concerns that they felt were more pressing; and would call for infrastructure modifications and/or traffic enforcement that are beyond the scope of this pilot. One resident commented that she would not enter the street to install traffic calming devices because she does not even feel it is safe to bicycle on the streets in her neighborhood.

The attendees at this meeting did not inquire about using the pilot program, the program parameters, or how to get involved, and did not share quick build projects that they would be excited to see in their neighborhood. When shown a tactical urbanism traffic circle from Montana, one resident responded, "Not in Oakland." When parklets and bike parking were presented, a community member took a few minutes to explain that this infrastructure would not work in her neighborhood, that the City needs to stop forcing ideas on East Oakland, and that proposals like these need to "consider the culture of East Oakland."

AC Transit's Tempo Bus Rapid Transit line (BRT) on International Boulevard was a major safety concern. Residents expressed frustration regarding the BRT itself and the timing of the planned quick-build project intended to prevent motorists from using the dedicated bus lane as a high-speed passing lane. Other streets mentioned as high priority for safety improvement included arterials such as 73rd Avenue and 98th Avenue. The sentiment that affecting real change in these areas requires concrete to be poured was expressed on multiple occasions.

General concerns about speeding traffic in the area was another topic, and many attendees expressed interest in traffic enforcement by the Oakland Police Department.

The St. Paul's Episcopal School community meeting focused primarily on the pilot and the potential scope of projects that might be allowed if the program were to be enacted. While OakDOT suggested promotion of existing agency programs supplemented by modest community-led projects that could be implemented safely and with less demand on OakDOT staff time, many attendees expressed an interest in more ambitious projects—such as traffic circles and lane reductions—that would make a "real difference".

Several attendees also suggested that up front work, done by OakDOT, could ensure that ambitious traffic safety projects could be safely implemented by members of the community. Among the options discussed was the idea of OakDOT preparing standard plans for a short list of projects and traffic calming devices that could be handed to community members for implementation. Some in attendance spoke in favor of identifying stalled OakDOT projects where detailed planning and engineering has been completed and carving off portions of those projects for implementation by members of the public.

Another concept discussed at the St. Paul's meeting was the idea of OakDOT serving as a matchmaker for volunteer or other resources. The suggestion was that OakDOT could serve as a clearinghouse matching lower-resourced communities or projects with individuals or groups that would be willing to provide labor or materials to help move a community-led project forward.

4. An Analysis of Staffing and Budget Needs in Order to Sustain the Pilot Program

Staff presents two alternatives for achieving the aims of a Community-Led Traffic Safety program concept (the pilot). Each alternative is intended to advance the Citywide priority of supporting **vibrant, safe and sustainable infrastructure**. These alternatives are based on experience with current OakDOT projects and programs, research on community-led transportation safety project programs in other US cities, and input from Oakland residents and transportation safety stakeholders at two community meetings held in connection with the pilot.

Alternative 1 – Work with Council Offices to Refocus Council Discretionary Projects To Respond to Community-Identified Traffic Safety Concerns on the High Injury Network, in High Equity Priority Neighborhoods, or That Improve Conditions for Vulnerable Populations (Including Children, Seniors, and People with Disabilities).

As part of the adopted budgets for FY 2021-23 and FY 2023-25, the City Council identified 15 Earmark projects, established the Violence Prevention Pilot and Sideshow Prevention Pilot programs, and authorized \$100,000 per Council member for Council Discretionary Projects. Alternative 1 would direct OakDOT work with City Council Offices to refocus the scope and delivery of these projects to address community traffic safety concerns on the High Injury Network, in Priority Equity Neighborhoods, or to improve conditions for vulnerable populations. While Council Discretionary and Earmark projects generally arise from community concerns conveyed to Council offices, the SOS Annual Reports (File ID# [23-0251](#) and [File ID# 22-0236](#)) showed only 3 out of 14 completed Council Earmark and Discretionary projects located on the High Injury Network.

Table 3, below, presents a sampling of completed OakDOT projects addressing violence prevention in addition to traffic safety priorities, demonstrating department delivery capacity and responsiveness to community concerns.

Table 3 - OakDOT Council/Community Priority Projects

Location	Project	Funding/Delivery Mechanism	Year
Courtland Avenue	Cul-de-sac reconfiguration to prevent illegal dumping and auto abandonment	FY 21-23 Council Earmark Project	Pending Construction
East 15th Street	Intersection diagonal diverters to disrupt human trafficking	FY 21-23 Violence Prevention Pilot Program	2023
Crest Avenue	Parking barriers to curtail night-time crowd gathering	FY 21-23 Council Discretionary Project	2022
Ney Avenue/75th Avenue	Intersection diagonal diverter to prevent cut-through traffic	FY 21-23 Council Discretionary Project	2022
Park Boulevard (Glenview)	Lane reductions on approaches to marked crosswalks	FY 21-23 Council Discretionary Project	2021

Alternative 1 would direct OakDOT to work with Council members to prioritize remaining Discretionary funding toward projects on the High Injury Network, in Equity Priority Neighborhoods, and/or to otherwise improve conditions for vulnerable populations. Additionally, because of the existing allocated funding and workflow with Council offices, OakDOT is positioned to deliver these projects with the least impact to the existing queue of other traffic safety projects. **Attachment C** catalogues the remaining Discretionary Project fund balances for each Council office available to achieve the goal of the Community-Led Traffic Safety Program concept. **Attachment D** also summarizes the current queue for minor capital improvement projects.

Alternative 2 – Establish Community Traffic Safety Permit Pilot with Consultant Support

Under Alternative 2, OakDOT would develop detailed program guidelines, including location criteria, standard plans for typical traffic calming devices, approved and recommended materials lists, and traffic control plans to guide community implementation. Materials would be available to support a program launch in March 2025. Having plans prepared and available will reduce demand for OakDOT staff time and ensure timely review of applications. However, OakDOT engineers, construction inspectors, field crews, and permit counter staff would still be required - and those staffing resources will need to be diverted from other OakDOT programs and projects which may cause them to be delayed or cancelled.

The permitting process

A high-level overview of the pilot program permitting process would be as follows.

1. A community member identifies a traffic safety opportunity in their neighborhood location criteria in the program guidelines. Location criteria will focus on vulnerable populations and other equity criteria to be defined for the program.

2. Identify business, school, or community group sponsor.
3. Submit permit application and other required materials to OakDOT.
4. OakDOT staff review application for compliance with program guidelines and request revisions as needed.
5. OakDOT issues an Obstruction permit to selected applicants.
6. Community members install the project at the approved location.

OakDOT will consider applications in batches on a quarterly basis. Applicants would be limited to Business Improvement Districts (BID) or other organized business associations, schools or school district, community development corporation, or incorporated non-profit or community-based organizations.

Applications should conform to standard plans provided in the program guidelines, with any deviations from the standard plans signed by a registered Civil Engineer or Traffic Engineer.

Applications would require proof of insurance that lists the City as an Additional Insured on a General Liability Insurance policy, with minimum amounts specified to be determined by the City's Risk Manager. For reference, the Tactical Urbanism program in the City of Atlanta requires proof of coverage of at least \$1 million per occurrence.

Applicants would also sign and submit a maintenance agreement outlining general obligations, including responsibility for removal of installations at the City's request and at the cost of the applicant.

Permits would be issued as Obstruction permits for three months, with the opportunity to apply for a single permit renewal for an additional three months. Applicants will be required to meet defined equity criteria, which could include borrowing privileges for materials procured and stored by OakDOT.

Approved Project Types

The pilot program would encompass three project types: Traffic Circles, Curb Extensions, and Lane Reduction Special Events. Specific allowable materials in this program will be evaluated, and a final approved list of materials and specifications would be included in the program guidelines.

A traffic circle, or roundabout (see **Figure 1**), is created by placing a circular obstruction in the center of an intersection. Traffic circles encourage lower vehicle speeds, reduce the likelihood of head-on collisions, and reduce the number of vehicle/pedestrian conflicts.

Figure 1 - Traffic Circle



Curb extensions (see **Figure 2**) use paint, and/or barriers, to reclaim a portion of a road as part of the sidewalk. Curb extensions reduce turning vehicle speeds, reinforce no parking restrictions near crosswalks, and reduce pedestrian crossing distances.

Figure 2 - Curb extension example, Redwood Heights Elem School, 39th Avenue and Reinhardt Drive



Traffic Circles and Curb Extensions would only be permitted for installation on local streets or minor collectors, as defined in the program guidelines. Local roads are the lowest classification of streets within the City, and they are intended primarily to provide access to the residences

and businesses fronting them. Local roads are generally characterized by their lack of a painted yellow centerline.

Two-day lane reduction projects would be permitted on wider, higher classification roads, including collectors and arterials. Lane reduction projects are potentially the most disruptive safety projects, and carry the most risk, especially when pedestrians or cyclists are invited to occupy a repurposed lane(s) next to vehicle traffic. Limiting the number of these projects to a maximum of two per year, and limiting their duration to two days per event, is intended to ensure careful consideration of each implementation.

The Tradeoffs

Establishing a Community-Led Traffic Safety program has the potential to engage businesses, the public, and transportation safety proponents in changing the public right of way to make it safer. However, this new program would require OakDOT staff to review submissions, meet with applicants, and inspect projects once they have been installed in the right of way. In particular, staffing would be diverted from the same limited pool of engineers responsible for the citywide Speed Bump Program, the Rapid Response Program, Safe Routes to School Capital Program, Sideshow Prevention Pilot Program, Council Discretionary and Earmark projects, citywide Speed Limit Management Program, and the Traffic Safety Requests Program, which will necessitate delaying or cancelling some projects (see ***Attachment D***).

In addition, OakDOT would have to spend between \$150,000 and \$200,000 for a consultant to prepare the program guidelines. To address potential disparities between applicants' ability to access physical materials for pilot installations, OakDOT also anticipates requiring at least \$50,000 for materials that applicants meeting defined equity criteria would be able to access and borrow for their pilot installation.

Table 4 - Pilot Program (Alternative 2) OakDOT Staff Hour Estimates (Annual)

	Hours	Days per Week
Traffic Safety Engineers	975	2.5
Field Crews	80	0.2
ROW Inspectors	56	0.1
Permit Counter	55	0.1

Race and Equity Impact Analysis

Oakland defines equity through its “fair and just” clause (Ordinance No. 14442 CMS), recognizing that fairness in opportunity and outcome are created by the City taking action to eliminate long-standing differences that advantage one community at the cost of another.³ Equity is achieved by intentionally counteracting historical disadvantages, and resources spent on programs that do not actively redress infrastructure inequity are resources spent on sustaining that inequity.

³ Summarized from Ordinance No. 13442 CMS, § 2.29.170.2, https://library.municode.com/ca/oakland/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT2ADPE_CH2.29CIAGDE_OF_2.29.170DERAEQ

The City acknowledges that equity in transportation means that everyone has “safe, efficient, affordable, convenient and reliable mobility options including public transit, walking, carpooling and biking.”⁴ In Oakland, achieving this vision of transportation equity includes closing the gap in traffic violence burden. The 2018 Oakland Equity Indicators Report shows that pedestrian safety is a major source of inequity, identified as one of twelve highest-priority indicators.⁵ The SOS Initiative has shown that the highest number of pedestrian high-injury road segments are in majority-Asian census tracts. They have also shown that Black Oaklanders are twice as likely to be killed or severely injured in a traffic collision and three times as likely to be killed or severely injured while walking.⁶

As described above, OakDOT’s current prioritization processes attempt to center and focus on advancing equitable outcomes for marginalized and historically underserved and underrepresented communities within Oakland through a data-driven process.

Community engagement is also a core value at OakDOT. However, a program that requires residents to investigate and initiate their own solutions may also foster continued disparity. Given that OakDOT’s overall approach to implementing traffic safety projects is grounded in an equity prioritization process, traffic calming projects conducted outside this process create a potential pathway for overserved communities to jump the prioritized queue that grants more urgency to neighborhoods that have been previously neglected.

If the Community-Led Traffic Safety pilot is implemented on a first-come, first-served basis, as is the case for most OakDOT permits, staff expect that most permitted traffic safety installations would happen in neighborhoods where affluent, white, and otherwise privileged Oaklanders are overrepresented. Representatives of an Atlanta program told OakDOT that in the few years since the program’s inception, two thirds of the applications have come from non-equity-priority neighborhoods. Furthermore, the applications from priority areas tended to be smaller projects with no direct impact on traffic safety (e.g., utility box art). The unequal distribution permit applications and safety impacts persists despite some efforts to counter them.

Any adopted pilot should carefully incorporate policies to counteract this tendency, and transparently evaluate potential impacts. For instance, applications should go through a prioritization scoring system just as internal projects do. In addition, to encourage submissions from more neighborhoods, the City would likely need to proactively solicit and subsidize projects in priority equity neighborhoods.

However, staff determined that even these efforts likely will not completely correct the disparity in permit applications. The City of Atlanta’s community-led program offered to provide the material supplies for projects in equity priority areas—taking on one of the biggest expenses for an installation. However, the majority of project applications still come from low-priority Atlanta neighborhoods.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ <https://cao-94612.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/documents/2018-Equity-Indicators-Full-Report.pdf>

⁶ Oakland Citywide Crash Analysis, https://cao-94612.s3.us-west-2.amazonaws.com/documents/CityofOakland_CrashAnalysis_Infographic_08.29.18.pdf

The Oakland Equity Indicators report shows that White Oaklanders have incomes nearly three times that of Black Oaklanders, and a program that places the burden of cost onto community members is inequitable. If a pilot is instituted that allows or requires residents to fund projects themselves, wealthier residents are likely to have the necessary resources to fund improvements in their own neighborhoods where lower-income residents cannot. When resources spent on enabling such a program are taken from programs that prioritize disadvantaged neighborhoods, the inequity compounds – essentially subsidizing a “pay-to-play” system with resources that could otherwise be invested in lower-income communities.

Long-Term Alternative – Quick-Build Program

A longer-term alternative for OakDOT would be to secure funding and fill positions to establish an in-house Quick Build Team to implement selected traffic safety projects efficiently and effectively. Instead of diverting scarce staff time and resources and suffering the delay or abandonment of existing projects or programs, this alternative would fund new OakDOT staff and materials while protecting the important projects and programs already in the department’s queue.

To establish a new Quick Build Team section, per OakDOT’s preliminary estimates, would require 12 full-time equivalent (FTE) positions: two, four-person Construction Crews, one Crew Lead, two Civil Engineers, and a Supervising Engineer section lead. A pro forma cost estimate of Year 1 Quick Build Team costs is presented in **Table 5** below.

Table 5 - Budget Estimate for Future OakDOT Quick Build Team

	Units	Est. Expense
<u>Personnel</u>		
Section Lead	1 FTE	\$ 478,984
Civil Engineer	1 FTE	\$ 398,708
Assistant Engineer	1 FTE	\$ 232,325
Public Works Supervisor I	1 FTE	\$ 236,630
Maintenance Worker	8 FTE	\$ 1,541,624
Fully Burdened Personnel		\$ 2,888,271
<u>Equipment</u>		
Vehicles	4	\$ 260,000
Materials	tbd	\$ 600,000
Equipment		\$ 860,000
Total Budget		\$ 3,748,271

For reference, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) Quick-Build program, established in 2019, has an annual budget of approximately \$8,000,000.

5. Exploring the Feasibility and Developing a Plan and Timeline for the City to Become a “Vision Zero Network” Member City

Introduction to Vision Zero and Vision Zero Network

Vision Zero is a commitment and multidisciplinary strategy to eliminate all traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, and equitable mobility for all. The strategy was first implemented in Sweden in the 1990’s, and due to its success has since expanded across Europe and North America. The framework uses a safe systems approach that emphasizes the role of planners, policy makers, and traffic engineers responsible for creating safe systems that prevent crashes, rather than a traditional approach which focuses on human behavior and sees crashes as “accidents.” The Vision Zero Network is a non-profit organization that advances the goals and strategies of Vision Zero in North America. There are currently more than 45 member cities in the United States that are part of the network. The Vision Zero Network facilitates intercity learning and support among city leaders and staff, supports the advancement of these cities’ action plans, and works to advance broader traffic safety policy goals nationally.

Vision Zero Network Membership Requirements

There are three requirements to become a Vision Zero Network member: 1) a Vision Zero Action Plan that identifies a High Injury Network—where traffic fatalities and severe injuries are concentrated—and accompanying strategies based on the safe systems model to prevent fatalities and severe injuries from occurring in the first place; 2) a Vision Zero Task Force that meets regularly and is comprised of partnering organizations and community stakeholders; and 3) a public and official commitment from city leadership—in the form of a Mayoral Executive Order or City Council Resolution—to eliminating fatal and severe traffic collisions within a certain timeframe and support for the implementation of a city’s Vision Zero Action Plan.

Vision Zero Action Plans must use a Safe System Approach that treats humans as vulnerable and accounts for human error. This approach shifts the onus of preventing crashes from road users to policymakers, engineers, and other city leaders. A Vision Zero Action Plan generally includes the following components:

- *Leadership and Commitment* - This includes a public high-level commitment to the strategies set forth and to achieving zero traffic deaths: utilizing authentic community engagement in the planning process, as well as strategic planning, and project delivery.
- *Safe Roadways and Safe Speeds* - Complete streets concepts—transportation planning and design that enables safe access for all roadway users including people walking, biking, riding transit, and driving—must be integrated into transportation plans and implemented through all aspects project delivery. Vehicular speed should be managed through roadway design and other proven speed management policies and practices.
- *Data-Driven* - Resources should be prioritized in Equity Priority communities. Action Plans should employ a systemic safety approach (as compared to a hotspot/location-by-location approach) to identify and mitigate potential crashes and crash severity, and a city’s High Injury Network should be up-to-date and used to guide priority actions and funding. City staff should routinely evaluate and share progress publicly with decision makers to inform priorities, budgets, and updates to the Vision Zero Action Plan.

Once the baseline requirements are met, an interested city must submit an application and questionnaire to the Vision Zero Network along with supplemental data and supporting documents. There is no application fee and no membership fee to be part of the Vision Zero Network. Cities may submit new and additional materials, until they satisfy the requirements for becoming a member city.

Current City Actions and Vision Zero Network Requirements

The City has a history of setting policy goals regarding traffic and public safety and advancing equitable outcomes through the City's services. In 2013, the City adopted a "Complete Streets Policy" (Resolution No. 84204 CMS), committing to supporting roadways designed and operated to enable safe, attractive, and comfortable access and travel for all users. In 2014, City Council established the Bicyclist and Pedestrian Advisory Commission (BPAC) to provide a formal forum for public participation in reviewing transportation plans, and to act as an advisory body. The BPAC is comprised of nine members and meets monthly, focusing on providing input to improve safety for all road users and provide review and input to OakDOT staff on projects, plans, and funding matters.

In 2015, the City established the Department of Race and Equity to advance its vision of being a city where its diversity has been maintained, racial disparities have been eliminated, and racial equity has been achieved. In 2016, OakDOT developed a strategic plan committed to building better and safer streets, including reviewing speed limits to support safe travel on roadways; providing safe access to all Oakland schools; and the goal of zero traffic deaths and serious injuries.

In response to an upward trajectory in traffic fatalities despite concerted investments in traffic safety improvement projects, OakDOT led the development of the SOS Initiative in 2021, in partnership with the City Administrator's Office, Department of Race and Equity, and Oakland Police Department. The goals of the SOS Initiative are to:

1. Prevent severe and fatal crashes and related disparities impacting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities, persons with disabilities, seniors, and low-income populations.
2. Eliminate severe and fatal injury inequities including racial disparities impacting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities that exist today in Oakland.
3. Inform safety strategies that prevent injury and injury inequities, and do not have adverse equity impacts on BIPOC communities, seniors, persons with disabilities, and low-income populations.
4. Eliminate crash fatalities on all of Oakland's roadways by 2042 through targeted and strategic prevention.

The SOS team presented an informational report on the SOS initiative ([File ID# 21-0167](#)) to the Public Works and Transportation Committee (PWTC) on March 23, 2021 and to the full City Council on April 20, 2021. The SOS team presents an annual informational report to City Council that assesses the work of the previous year and outlines action items for the upcoming year. The SOS team presented the inaugural Annual Report to the PTWC on June 28, 2022 ([File ID# 22-0236](#))—which included the finalization of the City Local Road Safety Plan—and the 2022 Annual Report to the PWTC on May 23, 2023 ([File ID# 23-0251](#)). The Local Road Safety

Plan identified six strategy areas that continue to guide the SOS Initiative's actions: 1) Coordination and collaboration; 2) Engineering; 3) Policy; 4) Planning and evaluation; 5) Engagement, education, and programs; and 6) Enforcement. The Local Road Safety Plan also included a citywide crash analysis that unearthed numerous disparities in traffic safety outcomes which reinforce the SOS Initiative's equity-forward approach, including:

- People walking, biking, and taking public transit make up under 30% of commute trips but experience nearly 50% of severe or fatal injuries;
- Black Oaklanders are twice as likely to be killed or severely injured in a crash and three times as likely while walking when compared to all other Oaklanders; and
- Older Oaklanders (65+) are more than twice as likely to be killed in a crash compared to all other Oaklanders.

Given the clearly articulated goals, strategies, actions, as well as ongoing public reporting on progress and challenges to City Council, staff believe that the SOS Initiative likely meets most of the requirements to become a Vision Zero Network Member.

The Vision Zero Network membership requirements that Oakland does not currently satisfy include:

- A public commitment by City elected officials to achieving Vision Zero within a set timeframe.
- Establishment of a Vision Zero Task Force that includes key city departments, other agencies, and key community stakeholders to oversee, monitor, and evaluate Action Plan implementation progress. The SOS Initiative convenes internal interdepartmental and interagency coordination meetings with City staff and also reports annually to Oakland's BPAC on initiative progress as well as on an ongoing basis on specific policies and programs but does not meet regularly with key community stakeholders in any formalized manner.

If the City pursues Vision Zero Network Membership, these two requirements would be addressed prior to applying. Once the membership application is submitted, the Vision Zero Network estimates approximately three to six months to process and review the application. The Vision Zero Network may also request additional information and action steps before membership is approved.

The Vision Zero Network is currently updating their membership requirements to ensure cities have data and actionable steps for meeting equity goals as well as zero traffic deaths. Based on preliminary conversations with Vision Zero Network staff, the City's existing efforts would most likely satisfy the new requirements; however, the exact new requirements will need to be reviewed upon their release to assess additional actions necessary to satisfy membership requirements.

With City Council direction and accounting for the current membership requirements, staff would anticipate the following timeline for successfully becoming a Vision Zero Member city, assuming adequate staffing:

- **Months 0-6**
 - Solicit input from key community stakeholders on City Council Resolution/Mayoral Executive Order and on structure and scope of Vision Zero Task Force;
 - Draft Resolution or Mayoral Executive Order per Vision Zero Network membership requirements;
 - Identify staffing resources for and establish Vision Zero Task Force;
 - Solicit and/or appoint members to the Task Force;
- **Months 7-12**
 - Convene Task Force and work with Task Force to finalize City Council Resolution/Mayoral Executive Order;
 - City Council action on Resolution or Mayor action on Executive Order;
 - Submit Vision Zero Network Membership application;
- **Months 13-18**
 - Provide supplemental information or documents to Vision Zero Network, as requested;
 - Vision Zero Network review of membership application; and
 - Vision Zero Network approval of membership.

Costs and Benefits of Becoming a Vision Zero Network Member City

Currently, there is no application fee or ongoing membership fee for becoming a Vision Zero Network Member City. The process to prepare a membership application will require staff time, as will the organization and ongoing coordination and facilitation of the required Task Force. The primary benefit to becoming a member city is ongoing organized technical support and capacity building for city staff working to reach Oakland's goals to equitably achieve zero traffic fatalities and eliminate traffic crash disparities. Many cities and agencies across the nation are grappling with the ongoing traffic safety crisis and limited resources available to respond. The Vision Zero Network organizes listservs and meetings that are only available for member cities where best practices and emerging trends and solutions are developed and shared. While Oakland has been at the forefront of institutionalizing actionable steps toward transportation equity, the community of practice the Vision Zero Network offers can help strengthen and deepen OakDOT's work in this area.

OakDOT currently funds 1.0 FTE Transportation Planner II to serve as the SOS coordinator. This position coordinates the various departments and agencies, monitors progress of SOS Initiative actions, and prepares the SOS Annual Report. The full anticipated workload for the additional administrative responsibilities that would be required by Vision Zero Network membership would amount to roughly 1.0 FTE and would include fully staffing a Vision Zero Task Force, actively engaging OakDOT staff in Vision Zero Network activities and best/emerging practice implementation, preparing Task Force meeting materials, serving as liaison to Task Force members, ensuring compliance with Brown Act open meeting laws, preparing and publicly posting meeting agendas, minutes, and materials, monitoring and delivering Task Force action items, etc.

Depending on how this advisory body is structured, many ongoing administrative responsibilities may be absorbed by the existing SOS coordinator position. However, cities with a Vision Zero program generally have, at minimum, a designated higher-level program manager position to lead and oversee efforts at a strategic level, and it would be recommended that 1.0 FTE Transportation Planner III be assigned to oversee this effort given the strategic and policy nature of the work. In addition to support city staff development and capacity building, Vision Zero Network membership could send a message to residents that City leadership is committed to continuing the efforts of the SOS Initiative until its goals are achieved.

Vision Zero Network Membership Conclusion

The City has been working toward the goals set forth by Vision Zero since 2020 through numerous efforts, most recently centralized under the SOS Initiative. Becoming a Vision Zero Network member is not essential for continuing the work that is already underway; however, it could further formalize the Initiative's Action Plan and bolster the effort through support from other member cities. Given current staffing and resource constraints, waiting to pursue Vision Zero membership when one Transportation Planner III FTE can be added to the budget would ensure that active Vision Zero Network membership and participation is supported and sustainable.

FISCAL IMPACT

Since Alternative 1 involves refocusing funded projects that are already part of the OakDOT workplan, this alternative would have no fiscal impact. Implementation of the Community-Led Traffic Safety pilot (Alternative 2) in March of 2025 would require expenditure of \$150,000 to \$200,000 for consultant services. The contracted firm would prepare program guidelines, including standard plans, material lists and traffic control plans for the three project options proposed for program launch. The pilot would be supported using existing OakDOT staff. To address equity challenges, OakDOT would purchase and warehouse barriers, paint, and other supplies for use by permittees in the implementation of their safety projects. OakDOT estimates at least \$50,000 to fund the purchase of these materials.

PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST

OakDOT conducted two community meetings as part of the research for this report. Insights from the community meetings are presented above.

COORDINATION

OakDOT worked closely with the Department of Race & Equity in the development of this report. This report and legislation were prepared in coordination with the Budget Bureau and Office of the City Attorney.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: There are no economic opportunities associated with this report.

Environmental: There are no economic opportunities associated with this report.


Race & Equity: OakDOT collaborated with the Department of Race and Equity to develop the Race and Equity Impact Analysis of this report, including identifying opportunities to mitigate potential negative equity impacts. The Race and Equity Analysis is presented above.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive An Informational Report Responding To The Questions Raised in Resolution No. 90051 CMS.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Reginald Bazile, Assistant to the Director at 510.507.6752.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamie Parks for 
MEGAN WIER
Acting Director, Department of Transportation

Reviewed by:
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Financial Planning & Analysis

Attachments (4):

- A. OakDOT Community Meeting Presentation
- B. Transport Oakland Community Meeting Presentation
- C. Council Discretionary Project Fund Balances by City Council District
- D. Minor Capital Improvement Projects Queue (as of March 28, 2024)