



AGENDA REPORT

TO: Edward D. Reiskin
City Administrator

FROM: Ryan Russo, Director
Oakland Department of
Transportation

SUBJECT: Alameda CTC San Pablo Avenue
Corridor Project

DATE: May 11, 2022

City Administrator Approval

Date: Jun 15, 2022

RECOMMENDATION

Staff Recommends That The City Council Approve A Resolution Authorizing The City Administrator To Sign A Letter Of Support For The San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project Led By the Alameda County Transportation Commission To Begin The Detailed Design Phase.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The proposed resolution authorizes the City Administrator to sign a letter of support (**Attachment A**) to be sent to the Alameda County Transportation Commission (CTC). The letter supports additional development of the San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project near-term bus/bike lane concept (Project), including continued public engagement, detailed design, preliminary engineering, environmental documentation, Caltrans approvals¹, and seeking Project funding. Following a long-term visioning phase for the corridor from 2017-2020, Alameda CTC partnered with AC Transit, Caltrans, and the cities of Oakland, Emeryville, Berkeley, and Albany to identify a near-term, cost-effective project for Alameda County to address the needs of this corridor in a 3-5-year time horizon (pending full funding acquisition). Upon receipt of this support, Alameda CTC will advance the Project and pursue funding to implement the Project. Securing consensus and support at this time is critical to enabling Alameda CTC to submit funding applications this summer. There are numerous anticipated multi-year grant funding cycles in 2022, for which Alameda CTC staff believes this project could be competitive.

The Project concept (**Attachment B**) in Oakland, Emeryville, and South Berkeley includes a dedicated side-running transit-only lane, a protected bike lane separated from vehicle traffic by raised concrete islands, and pedestrian safety enhancements. The Project envisions that the current outside travel lane be converted to a transit-only lane and the current parking/loading spaces along the curb be converted to a protected bike lane. The Project concept eliminates

¹ San Pablo Avenue between the Berkeley-Oakland border and 34th Street is Caltrans Route 123.

most of the on-street parking spaces along San Pablo Avenue, but the concept does propose on-street loading and paratransit pick-up and drop-off spaces in select locations where side street or off-street loading is unavailable. During the detailed design process, the team will seek to maximize safety for all roadway users, while optimizing performance for buses within the design constraints of this corridor.

The recommended pedestrian crossing improvements and bike lane in Oakland, Emeryville, and South Berkeley will provide significant improvements to safety and comfort on one of Oakland and Alameda County's highest-injury corridors, while the transit-only lane will offer significant bus speed and reliability benefits on this high-ridership route. The recommended design concept is consistent with existing City policies. Alameda CTC is committed to delivering this critical project to make concrete progress towards addressing safety, transit efficiency, and place-keeping as quickly as possible.

BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY

Alameda CTC is leading the San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project, which is central to achieve the goals and strategies that were adopted in its 2020 Countywide Transportation Plan, specifically improving safety. San Pablo Avenue is on the countywide High-injury Network and has the third highest incidence of injury collisions in all of Alameda County. There is an urgent need to improve safety for all users.

San Pablo Avenue is also one of the streets with the highest bus ridership in the East Bay, but buses are often slow and unreliable. Bus Lines 72/72M/72R on average carry 12,587 riders on weekdays, representing 12.67% of AC Transit's ridership in Oakland/Emeryville. However, buses travel 30% slower than vehicles during the peak hour, and the City and AC Transit's Transit Action Strategy (2020) finds that AC Transit's routes on San Pablo Avenue are on-time less than 60% of the time, making it the least reliable corridor compared to other medium and high frequency routes throughout the City. This lack of reliability can make commute and other trips infeasible, shifting bus riders to automobile trips, which further exacerbates traffic congestion and the bus's ability to stay on-time along San Pablo Avenue. Providing dedicated bus lanes can improve on-time performance, speed and reliability for the many Oaklanders who rely on the bus and can make non-commute transit trips more feasible. Providing better bus service can improve transportation equity by providing high-quality service for the 51.6% of residents within a half-mile of the project who don't have access to a car.

Reprioritizing space on San Pablo Avenue to address these safety and access issues is consistent with multiple City plans and policies, as well as regional efforts. The City's Let's Bike Oakland Bike Plan Update (Bike Plan), adopted on July 9, 2019, via Resolution No. 87808 C.M.S, calls for fully protected Class IV bicycle lanes for the entirety of the street's length within Oakland. A key pillar of the Equitable Climate Action Plan, adopted by the City Council on July 28, 2020, via Resolution No. 88267 C.M.S, is to implement the City's Bike Plan and to "allocate curb space for mobility needs for public transit and active transportation, such as walking and biking." The Bike Plan states that the City recognizes "the importance of significantly shifting people away from private auto trips – one of the top five strategies needed for Oakland to meet its climate targets," and that "active transportation (walking and biking) and public transportation are the top priorities." The City's and AC Transit's Transit Action Strategy published in 2020 identifies San Pablo Avenue as a priority corridor for major multimodal improvements, as well as transit signal priority and queue jumps. The West Oakland Specific Plan (2014) strategy

“Complete Streets-1” also calls for complete streets improvements to better support vehicle movement, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian uses.

Consistent City and regional priorities, the goals of the Project are to:

- Enhance safety for all travel modes
- Improve comfort and quality of trips for all users
- Support a strong local economy and efficiently address the needs of existing residents and business owners, while accommodating growth along the corridor and respecting local contexts
- Promote equitable transportation and design solutions

The Project was initiated in 2017. Phase 1 of the Project, which concluded in summer 2020, considered potential long-term concepts for the corridor within Alameda and Contra Costa Counties – including bus rapid transit and protected bike facilities – through extensive outreach and technical analysis. Due to the complex and constrained nature of the corridor, with only 73 feet available curb-to-curb in Alameda County, every concept that was considered entailed notable trade-offs, especially at intersections. At the end of Phase 1, there was not consensus around a single long-term vision to advance throughout the seven jurisdictions and two counties along the corridor.²

Despite this lack of full corridor consensus, Alameda CTC did receive strong community support to advance near-term improvements focused on the critical needs of safety improvements for pedestrians and cyclists on this high injury corridor, transit efficiency, and supporting existing communities and placemaking. Most rapid transit projects in the Bay region have taken decades to develop and deliver and stakeholders expressed a strong desire to get something done more quickly. Support for substantial changes to the corridor, including bus and bike lanes, was greatest in Oakland and Emeryville.

In Phase 2 of the Project (2020 – 2022), Alameda CTC worked closely with community members, AC Transit, Caltrans, and the cities of Oakland, Emeryville, Berkeley, and Albany to identify a smaller-scale, cost-effective, near-term project concept for the Alameda County section of the corridor to begin to make concrete progress towards addressing the urgent needs on this corridor. Staff conducted door-to-door engagement with storefronts along the corridor to identify the most pressing needs of business owners, discuss safety concerns and potential remedies, and identify locations for targeted loading zones on San Pablo Avenue. Staff are working with East Bay Paratransit and relevant advisory committees to incorporate curbside pick-up and drop-off access for seniors and people with disabilities.

The concept identified in Phase 2 includes pedestrian safety improvements, dedicated bus lanes, and dedicated bike lanes. To make sure the Project meets the goals identified above, without unintended consequences, the team also analyzed the benefits and impacts of the Project, as discussed in the Analysis and Policy Alternatives section below.

On March 24, 2022, the Alameda CTC approved the funding and contracts to complete all phases of the Project through final design. The Alameda CTC also approved the near-term bus/bike lane project concept for further project development in Oakland, Emeryville, and South Berkeley. On March 15, 2022, the Emeryville City Council approved a letter of support for the

² See Project History tab of the project webpage: www.alamedactc.org/sanpablo.

concept within its jurisdiction. The AC Transit Board has provided supportive input, and Alameda CTC is now seeking support of this concept from the Oakland City Council and the Berkeley City Council. Upon receipt of this support, Alameda CTC will advance the Project and pursue funding to implement the Project. Securing consensus and support at this time is critical to enabling Alameda CTC to submit funding applications this summer. There are numerous anticipated multi-year grant funding cycles in 2022, for which Alameda CTC staff believes this project could be competitive.

ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES

Accepting the staff recommendation and directing the City Administrator to sign the letter of support for the Project reinforces Oakland's commitment to a safer, more equitable transportation system that is articulated in the City's plans and policies.

Alignment with City Goals and Priorities

The following sections will illustrate how this Project meets Oakland's Citywide Priorities of 1) *holistic community safety*, 2) *housing, economic and cultural security*, 3) *vibrant and sustainable infrastructure*, and 4) *responsive, trustworthy government*.

1. *Holistic Community Safety*: San Pablo Avenue today is the third highest-injury corridor in Alameda County and West Oakland is especially impacted by traffic injuries and fatalities. Looking at all collisions that occurred between 2015 and 2019 along San Pablo Avenue between downtown Oakland and South Berkeley, 80% of fatal collisions and more than half of severe collisions occurred in the West Oakland segment, despite only representing one third of the Project length. Almost 1 in 6 of the collisions in West Oakland was fatal or severe. In Oakland, severe and fatal traffic crash victims are predominantly Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). This project responds to an immediate and pressing safety need.
2. *Housing, Economic, and Cultural Security*: Many Oaklanders cannot afford access to an automobile. Walking, bicycling, riding a scooter, and taking the bus are often cost-effective means of travel. Substantial growth is planned and underway along the San Pablo Avenue corridor, including a substantial number of affordable housing developments. However, slow and unreliable bus service and a lack of safe, attractive, and comfortable facilities may dissuade Oaklanders from walking, biking, riding a scooter or taking the bus. After Project completion, people riding the bus on San Pablo Avenue will experience faster more reliable service and will be able to access bus stops more safely. People using bicycles, scooters, and other mobility devices will be able to ride in a protected lane along the corridor. Alameda CTC and the City have engaged affected residents and storefronts during outreach, and will work closely with them during detailed design to identify side-street parking, off-street parking, and targeted San Pablo Avenue loading solutions. During detailed design, Alameda CTC will also work with East Bay Paratransit to provide curb to curb and door to door access.
3. *Vibrant and Sustainable Infrastructure*: San Pablo Avenue is a key corridor in Oakland's transportation network for all modes. It provides the most direct access between Downtown, much of West Oakland, North Oakland, and other cities; serves as State Route 123 north of I-580, is one of AC Transit's highest ridership routes, and is identified by City plans as a key pedestrian and bicycle corridor. Preliminary analysis indicates

corridor transit riders would benefit from a 10 to 20 percent travel time improvement and an over 50 percent reliability improvement due to the new bus lane and transit islands. The proposed project concept improves the safety, comfort, and efficiency of the corridor for walking, biking, and transit to create a truly complete street. The project will also provide upgraded crosswalks, new pedestrian crossing signals, ADA-compliant curb ramps at all intersections, and new transit stop amenities.

4. *Responsive, Trustworthy Government*: This near-term design concept responds to the strong community desire for safety and transit improvements in the Oakland and Emeryville segments to be implemented as quickly as possible. Alameda CTC and OakDOT staff will continue working with stakeholders through the detailed design process to address issues and concerns.

Withholding support for the Project delays pressing safety issues for all roadway users. No on-street parking or loading spaces would be impacted. Bus transit along San Pablo Avenue will continue to be significantly slower than driving, relatively unreliable and inconvenient. People biking along San Pablo will share a lane with moving vehicles. This alternative would also take no action to improve travel times and reliability for Oakland residents who currently rely on the bus and takes no action to meet transportation sustainability goals by choosing transit improvements that can help shift trips away from driving to transit, bicycling, and walking.

FISCAL IMPACT

Approval of this resolution would have no fiscal impact to the City. Alameda CTC has funding to advance the Project through design, approvals, and environmental. After receiving support for the recommended design concept, Alameda CTC will work to identify funding sources for construction.

PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST

Phase 1 Outreach

For Phase 1 of the project, which began in 2017, Alameda CTC conducted two rounds of broad engagement on corridor needs and potential design concepts for the entire corridor in Alameda and Contra Costa counties, gathering input from over 1,000 Oakland residents. Outreach included surveys in Spanish, English, and Chinese distributed online and in person at busy locations along the corridor; popup events; focus groups with transit riders, seniors and people with disabilities, bicyclists, and merchants; public workshops; and an initial merchant loading survey. Multilingual notifications of opportunities to participate were provided via email, postcards, bus cards, and flyers.³

This engagement found Oakland stakeholders were highly supportive of changes to the corridor, with 78 percent of survey respondents favoring design options with bus lanes and 66 percent favoring design options with bike lanes. Only four percent of respondents indicated a

³ Phase 1 outreach results are documented on the Project History tab of the project webpage: www.alamedactc.org/sanpablo.

preference for the corridor to remain as it is today. Concerns about the loss of travel and parking lanes was significantly less than in cities along the corridor to the north. Overall, there was strong support for addressing safety issues in the corridor, slowing traffic speeds, and implementing improvements in the near-term.

Phase 2 Outreach

In Phase 2, Alameda CTC in partnership with OakDOT staff conducted additional targeted stakeholder engagement aimed at reaching people who hadn't previously participated as robustly as other stakeholders, specifically people who live and work on San Pablo Avenue. In a series of storefront surveys and conversations, staff heard concerns about personal safety, traffic safety, and parking and loading. Alameda CTC conducted focus groups in partnership with community-based organizations focused on reaching residents in Equity Priority Communities⁴ or historically underserved communities. Alameda CTC formed a project-specific Active Transportation Working Group, comprised of stakeholders from all four Alameda County cities along the corridor, to discuss pedestrian and bicycle design issues. The project team has also shared updates on the project and sought input from agency advisory committees, including the Oakland Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee, AC Transit Accessibility Advisory Committee, and East Bay Paratransit Service Review Advisory Committee. Alameda CTC staff hope to review this project with the City of Oakland Mayor's Commission of Persons with Disabilities in the coming months.

Input received in Phase 2 supports the need for safety and transit improvements along the corridor while identifying a set of issues that will need to be addressed during detailed design to ensure the Project meets the needs of all stakeholders. Although the project team's analysis indicates workable side- or off-street parking and loading solutions are possible for most locations, many businesses and other storefront uses have concerns including safety, security, encampments, and residential parking on side streets, the distance to the nearest loading zone and potential for loading to still occur in the bus or bike lane on San Pablo, and caveats to specific potential solutions that will need to be addressed case by case during the design phase. Active transportation stakeholders expressed the desire to minimize the amount of mixing between bikes and autos or buses, while accessibility stakeholders emphasized the need for door-to-door paratransit service to remain possible and a desire to minimize sidewalk conflicts with bikes by providing a dedicated bikeway. Focus group participants expressed a range of opinions, with a number concerned about the effects of consolidating bus stops.

Alameda CTC will incorporate these concerns into its development of detailed block-by-block designs of the bus and bike lanes and conduct another round of targeted stakeholder engagement during the detailed design phase to get further input on the design details. This outreach will include:

- One-on-one storefront engagement (door-to-door, phone, meetings, etc.)
- Community organization presentations and partnerships
- Active Transportation Working Group
- Other targeted outreach around specific design issues/locations

Additional rounds of outreach will be conducted in advance of construction and as part of the post-implementation evaluation.

⁴ <https://mtc.ca.gov/planning/transportation/access-equity-mobility/equity-priority-communities>

COORDINATION

Alameda CTC has led the Project in close coordination with the City of Oakland; the cities of Emeryville, Berkeley, and Albany; AC Transit; and Caltrans. Within the City, OakDOT staff has coordinated with the Office of the City Attorney and the Budget Bureau in the preparation of this report. Pending City Council support to move forward with the Project design, Alameda CTC staff will continue to work closely with City staff to develop the detailed design, prepare documentation and seek environmental approvals, and seek construction funding.

Caltrans will also be a key project partner in approving any final design concepts to advance, in particular on SR 123, the right-of-way north of I-580. Alameda CTC staff is working closely with Caltrans staff to advance required project development processes towards a Caltrans approval in 2023.

The Economic and Workforce Development Department, Budget Bureau and City Attorney's Office were consulted in preparation of this report.

SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES

Economic: Evaluations of similar projects find that people arriving on transit, on bike and on foot shop more frequently and spend more money overall at local businesses after investments in pedestrian and bicycle safety are made. Although the loss of parking and loading space on San Pablo Avenue is likely to be challenging for some businesses, Alameda CTC and City staff will work with the needs of individual blocks and storefronts during design to address parking and loading concerns with measures that could include:

- Better management and metering of side street curb space,
- Abandoned vehicle removal
- Addition of lighting on side streets to help address safety issues, and
- Adding spot loading zone treatments on San Pablo Avenue where no other viable options are available.

Alameda CTC and OakDOT will also seek opportunities to incorporate art and place keeping opportunities into the project design to enhance the neighborhood commercial corridor. Providing safer, low-cost transportation options can also increase access to jobs and economic opportunity, an item of particular importance on streets like San Pablo Avenue which connects Downtown to both West Oakland and North Oakland's Golden Gate neighborhood.

Environmental: Safer streets for walking and bicycling as well as faster and more reliable transit service can help reduce environmental impacts associated with transportation by helping shift people's trip choices away from single occupancy vehicles and towards walking, bicycling, and transit. This project is also consistent with the City's Equitable Climate Action Plan, which aims to reduce Oakland's climate emissions by, in part, providing robust, low emissions transportation options.

Race & Equity: San Pablo Avenue is the third highest-injury corridor in Alameda County, and the West Oakland segment in particular has a disproportionate concentration of injuries and fatalities. Sixty-seven percent of residents within a quarter mile of the corridor are people of color, with a higher proportion of Black residents than in Oakland as a whole. The corridor also has a high concentration of low-income residents, particularly in West Oakland where 15

percent of households are in poverty.⁵ In 2018, the Oakland Equity Indicators Report found troubling disparities in traffic deaths in Oakland.⁶ The City as a whole experiences approximately two severe or fatal traffic crashes each week, with crashes disproportionately impacting BIPOC and high priority communities. Public improvements to improve safety and prioritize people walking and biking also allow for more convenient, affordable, and safer forms of transportation. Providing protected pedestrian crossing safety treatments and bike lanes improves safety, helps address collision disparities by race, and reduces barriers to accessing active transportation. Alameda CTC's Racial Equity Impact Analysis of this project contains more information **(See Attachment C)**.

AC Transit riders are also disproportionately BIPOC and low-income community members. Fifty-one percent of transit riders living near the corridor do not have a vehicle.⁷ The Project's bus lanes and transit islands will significantly improve transit speed and reliability, which benefits these largely low-income and BIPOC community members. However, the proposed stop consolidation will increase the walking distance of some transit riders (by approximately 25 percent) to the nearest transit stop, which most affects seniors and people with disabilities who may have difficulty walking farther to a stop. During design, the project team will work with the community to ensure stops are located to best serve the most critical locations for these populations. The project team will also work to ensure paratransit can serve each address along San Pablo Avenue during the detailed design phase.

Many of the storefronts along the corridor are neighborhood-serving, occupied by small businesses and organizations, many of which may be BIPOC-owned (data on storefront occupancy by race is unavailable at this time). Although improved pedestrian, bicycle, and transit access may improve the attractiveness and access of businesses for people using those modes, many businesses expressed concerns about the elimination of parking and loading spaces on San Pablo Avenue and the potential effects that doing so could have on customer, employee, and delivery access. Some storefronts also expressed concerns about increased congestion and longer auto travel times for customer and employee access. The project team's surveys and analysis indicate most businesses have available side street and/or off-street parking/loading solutions that are likely workable, but design details will need to be refined during preliminary engineering and solutions identified from among the measures listed under the economic discussion above.

⁵ Demographics data from 2015-2019 American Community Survey

⁶ Oakland Equity Indicators Report. 2018. <https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/2018-Equity-Indicators-Full-Report.pdf>

⁷ 2017 AC Transit On-Board Survey

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA)


Once the project concept is confirmed and design is underway, Alameda CTC will conduct CEQA analysis of the project. A Categorical Exemption is anticipated.

ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL

Staff Recommends That The City Council Approve A Resolution Authorizing The City Administrator To Sign A Letter Of Support For The San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project Led By the Alameda County Transportation Commission To Begin The Detailed Design Phase.

For questions regarding this report, please contact Colin Piethe, Transportation Planner, at cpiethe@oaklandca.gov.

Respectfully submitted,


[Ryan Russo](#) Jan 14, 2022 16:23 PDT

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Attachments (3):

Attachment A: Oakland Letter of Support

Attachment B: Alameda CTC Presentation of San Pablo Avenue Design Concept Development

Attachment C: Alameda CTC Racial Equity Impact Analysis of San Pablo Avenue Corridor Project

