

CITY OF OAKLAND



CITY HALL • 1 FRANK H. OGAWA PLAZA • OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94612

REBECCA KAPLAN
Council President
atlarge@oaklandnet.com

(510) 238-7008
FAX: (510) 238-6910
TDD: (510) 839-6451

MEMO

To: Members of the Oakland City Council and the Members of the Public
From: Council President Kaplan, Councilmember Fortunato Bas, Councilmember Kalb,
& Councilmember Thao
Date: October 6, 2020
Subject: More Effective Methods for Speeding Enforcement

Dear Fellow Councilmembers and Members of the Public:

It seems that every day there is a report of a fatal hit and run or reckless speeding that has resulted in serious injury on Oakland's streets. It has become a precarious endeavor for anyone, but especially the elderly and children, to cross the street or even walk on the sidewalk. We need stronger action to make our streets safer for pedestrians, bicyclists, and others. The practice has been to rely exclusively on police officers for speeding enforcement, but this has not been working well. The city of Oakland is 77.89 square miles, which creates 831 miles of City maintained streets. It is difficult to imagine that the Oakland Police Department, the agency currently responsible for traffic enforcement on the streets of Oakland, would be able to create a sufficient presence to be an effective means of deterrence and apprehension of drivers violating speeding limits.

When an officer does make a traffic stop, there is an additional cause for concern for African-American community members. These systems can reduce racial disparities. "Driving While Black," is the familiar term to describe the racial profiling used by law enforcement when an African American driver is stopped for little to no reason. The fear of a traffic stop escalated with no apparent reason is well-known in communities of color. With the use of cameras looking at license plates rather than individuals, automated systems, and local civilian staffing, communities of color could get a ticket for speeding, and it would no longer be a potentially life-threatening situation.

We need strategies that avoid racial disparities, prevent traffic stops from escalating into police shootings, while making speeding enforcement more effective and more broadly implemented. The answer is alternative traffic enforcement. Alternative traffic enforcement would consist of automated cameras and the use of civilian personnel, such as parking enforcement. This combination would be more effective since more of Oakland's streets would have speeding actively enforced. It also represents a savings because the cameras

and the parking enforcement personnel would cost the city less than sworn police officers performing the same task.

The City of Berkeley has already taken steps in this direction. In July, Berkeley approved the use of transportation personnel to conduct traffic stops. The City of San Francisco has also previously expressed interest in alternative methods of speeding enforcement. Oakland is also now working on strategies to provide for options beyond using an armed officer for these situations. But allowing cities flexibility for these solutions requires a change in State law in California.

In the interests of safety, equity and savings, alternate speeding enforcement is what Oakland needs now. The inflexibility of the state of California should not stand between the city of Oakland and safer streets. This Council should support the state legislature in efforts to enact legislation that would give municipalities greater flexibilities to enforce speeding laws.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Rebecca Kaplan", is enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Council President Rebecca Kaplan