

October 28, 2020

Alameda County Transportation Commission  
1111 Broadway, Suite 800 Oakland, CA 94607

Re: The Oakland Alameda Connector Project (OAAP)

We would like to thank Alameda CTC and Caltrans for the opportunity to review the Oakland Alameda Access Project (OAAP) Draft Environmental Document. We appreciate the outreach the Alameda CTC staff has provided in last few years to Chinatown, the Jack London District and Bike East Bay to move this project forward after 30 years of numerous failed attempts.

While we believe there are several elements of the project that must be strengthened and refined, we support the overall project to improve the safety of pedestrians and bicyclists and reduce traffic in Chinatown. We especially believe that the main “horseshoe” project element is essential in achieving these goals for Chinatown. However, we ask that this project include additional improvements (listed below) to improve mobility, connectivity and safety for our communities, which is the primary purpose of this project.

Our organizations collectively represent thousands of small local businesses, tens of thousands of residents, and tens of thousands of daily visitors and workers within the project area. Our organizations agree that in 2020, with climate change-driven fires burning all around us and freeways vastly overwhelmed by capacity at all hours, we must quickly prioritize active transportation, transit, and non-motorized alternatives and address long-standing community priorities of safety and connectivity. The best way to reduce traffic to and from Alameda, in the tunnel, on Oakland’s streets, and on the freeways, is to take people out of cars and cars out of the overburdened system. This project should provide and encourage viable alternatives.

As proposed, this project prioritizes getting Alameda residents on and off the freeway as quickly as possible. While there are improvements for people traveling in vehicles leaving Alameda, there are few improvements for people traveling in vehicles into Alameda except for those exiting I-880 at Oak Street. The widening of the Webster Tube pathways are not a substantive improvement for pedestrians and cyclists. We would like to see pedestrian safety improvements and better transit service between Alameda and Downtown Oakland as part of this project.

**To make this an Oakland AND Alameda Access Project for 2020 and for all, the project should incorporate the following three goals:**

**1) Improve pedestrian safety and mobility at the street level in Chinatown and Jack London.**

This is perhaps the most urgent, fundamental goal. Putting freeway traffic on local streets does not make them safer. We support the horseshoe feature because it gets huge amounts of traffic off of 7<sup>th</sup> Street, one of Oakland’s highest injury streets. But rerouting traffic away from 7<sup>th</sup> Street is not enough. We would like to see the project include the following:

- Create shorter, safer pedestrian crossings—and increased enhanced pedestrian crossing points. No removal of pedestrian crossing points.
- Include vehicular speed as a metric for evaluating 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> streets. Design all streets in Jack London and Chinatown for 25 mph speeds, appropriate to their neighborhood context. Measure post-project speeds and create mechanisms to

- revise signal timing or on-street geometry to reduce vehicle speeds if vehicles are not abiding to the 25-mph speed limit.
- Ensure bike infrastructure improvements actually connect and enhance Oakland's network.
- Add parking on 6<sup>th</sup> to serve adjacent commercial districts and temper traffic speed.
- Add pedestrian lighting and create expedited approval of art in the I-880 underpasses.
- Align with the City of Oakland policy to move towards two-way streets, instead of constructing 4-lane wide one-way streets. Implement two-way conversion of 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Streets.
- Maintain and repair existing lighting attached to the underside of the freeway structure as soon as possible. It will be needed for safety during construction and at least until pedestrian lighting is installed and operating.
- Study current traffic on impacted local streets and intersections. Figure 1-4 shows the Existing Travel Routes between I-880 and the Tubes. One of the Routes has northbound I-880 traffic exiting at Oak Street, making a left at Oak, making a right at 4<sup>th</sup> Street, making a right on Broadway, and then a right on 5<sup>th</sup> Street into the Webster Street tube. Given that at 4<sup>th</sup> Street/Broadway (pages 2-85 to 2-88), LOS drops to E and F at 2045 AM, we would like to see additional study on the impact the project may have on these local streets and intersections.
- Include street modifications in the project description (Page 1-28, Paragraph 8): The description of street modifications does not include the new restrictive right-turns movement at southbound 6<sup>th</sup>/Jackson so that southbound Jackson Street traffic can no longer access the NB I-880/Jackson Street on-ramp with a right turn.

## **2) Improve Connections Between JL and Chinatown and reduce the I-880 Freeway Barrier**

The barrier of the I-880 is a major impediment to quality of life and economic development in the areas adjacent to the freeway, and connecting Jack London and Chinatown is a decades-old Downtown Oakland priority. Thank you for verbally committing to improving the pedestrian under crossings of the 880 in our most recent call on 10/23. Please include the following as part of this project:

- Upgrade under-freeway uses, particularly parking operations.
- Reduce overall crossing distance of high-speed streets and freeway infrastructure at the street level. 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Streets as designed will contribute to the freeway barrier effect; they must be narrowed and slowed to reduce it.
- Improve cross-ability of 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> streets for pedestrians. Streets in Oakland's neighborhoods should behave like neighborhood streets, not freeway onramps. We are concerned that construction of new one-way high-speed streets is out of line with Oakland's transportation policies to convert one-way streets into safer, slower two-way streets.
- Page 1-32: Address traffic signal timing modifications. All traffic impacts between Chinatown and Jack London at new 6th Street intersections between Oak and Broadway should have protected pedestrian phases.
- Install pedestrian lighting and new sidewalks at each undercrossing: Broadway, Webster, Webster Place, Jackson (east side), Madison, and Oak. Community input should be encouraged. Differences from street to street should not be discouraged.

- Construct the new ped/bike connector on Harrison Street from 4<sup>th</sup> Street to 6<sup>th</sup> Street as soon as possible to be completed before the sidewalk on Jackson Street is closed.
- Improve signage on both sides of the freeway at each undercrossing with a goal of connecting Chinatown with Jack London and Jack London with Chinatown.

### 3) Minimize Construction Impacts

The construction phase of a project of this scale will have a significant impact on our neighborhoods. Access challenges for residents, customers, workers, and visitors will have a significant quality-of-life and economic impact. Please ensure the following:

- Provide a clear phasing plan for construction to minimize construction disruption impacts
- Provide a clear plan for construction impact mitigation including signage and ability/commitment to respond to community needs that arise during the project
- Commit to construct pedestrian improvements first, as practical

We are the key stakeholders representing the communities impacted by the project, and have been engaged for many, many years — some of us for decades. Ours are the communities that the project is intended to benefit. So please ensure that the stated goals are met given the tremendous disruption to our neighborhoods and public investment the project will entail. Even though the project was initiated decades ago, there's still an opportunity to improve and meet our mutual goals to focus on 2020's priorities. We are committed to working with Alameda CTC throughout the process to refocus the project in order to make significant positive impacts in reversing the enormous decades-old damage of freeway prioritization that disproportionately burdens and endangers our neighborhoods, and equitably improve mobility and safety — an urgent need for Jack London's and Chinatown's communities.

Signed,  
Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce  
Jack London Improvement District  
Bike East Bay

Represented by:  
Carl Chan, Board President, Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce  
Rick da Silva, Board Member, Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce  
Gary Knecht, Founding Board Member, Jack London Improvement District  
Savlan Hauser, Executive Director, Jack London Improvement District  
Greg Pasquali, Board Member, Jack London Improvement District; CP V JLS, LLC  
property owner of 1.5 blocks adjacent to proposed project  
Dave Campbell, Advocacy Director, Bike East Bay

