



CITY OF OAKLAND
Lynette Gibson McElhaney

COUNCILMEMBER ~ DISTRICT 3

CITY HALL ■ 1 FRANK H. OGAWA PLAZA, 2nd Floor ■ OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA 94612

Date: Thursday, July 23, 2020

To: Members of the City Council

Cc: Ed Reiskin, City Administrator
Barbara Parker, City Attorney

From: Councilmember Lynette Gibson McElhaney

Re: Improving the Protected Bicycle Lanes on Telegraph in KONO

Colleagues:

Regretfully, I am writing to ask your support in affirming the direction of the Council to ensure equity in transportation planning and project implementation in District 3. As you know, District 3 is a collection of racially, ethnically and economically diverse neighborhoods – many of which include transit rich corridors once home to Oakland’s historic key system routes. In recognition of the important role these corridors hold in reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions, the merchants and residents in the Koreatown/Northgate (KONO) merchants and communities supported a protected bike lane pilot. At that time, several residents and merchants noted that the planned pilot lacked community engagement and expressed concerns that the anticipated road diet would negatively impact emergency access to the area hospitals and would be in compatible with the shipping and receiving needs of the area’s remaining retailers and restaurants.

Since the installation there have been persistent challenges and, as expected community feedback about the pilot’s failures. In response, the Oakland Department of Transportation (OakDOT) has periodically tweaked the installation but has failed to provide any significant corrections to the safety and aesthetic concerns raised by residents and merchants in the corridor.

In December 2018 OakDOT approached the Council to implement an installation of an enhanced and improved protected bike lane in the Temescal area as a second phase to the Telegraph bike lane project. Citing lessons learned in KONO, OakDOT revealed enhanced plans complete with greater protections and improved aesthetics for the Temescal segment – a neighborhood more affluent and influential than KONO. Similar to criticisms cited in the KONO, Temescal merchants (who successfully denied the BRT expansion into Temescal) complained that OakDOT failed to engage them to help design the improvements and to discuss safety mitigations. Many of the working-class merchants are ethnic immigrants, Blacks and women – groups that are often marginalized in our government processes.

At the December 11, 2018 meeting, Council President Kaplan and I conditioned our vote to move forward the Temescal installation after the proposed improved upgrades were installed to the KONO district first. This condition was a critical component of our support so that OakDOT would have time to improve communication with the Temescal BID merchants and residents and demonstrate that the proposed improvements would in fact demonstrate improvements and aesthetic enhancements described by OakDOT. Our motion was also intended to improve community relations along the Telegraph corridor, especially with the poor and marginalized residents in District 3’s KONO district. OakDOT returned to the Council in 2019 while I was out on bereavement and has recently informed me that they obtained Council approval to install



upgraded bike lanes in the Temescal while leaving the dangerous and ugly temporary bike lane pilot largely untouched in the KONO. **This is inequitable and unacceptable.**

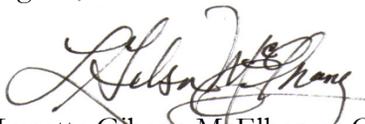
Time and again, KONO merchants and residents have raised the alarm that pilot design was failing: senior citizens (a majority of whom are monolingual Chinese elders) fear crossing a street with severely limited visibility; numerous bicyclists and motorist clash with the bus boarding ramp which doesn't extend the width of the lane; the bike lane is frequently obstructed by cars and delivery trucks; and long tenured business owners of color repeatedly report that their regular customers avoid the area due to the confusion and perceived danger of the poorly implemented street changes.

I fully support the Council's overall policy to install more pedestrian and bicycle protections, and to improve our quality of life by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. These noble objectives must be fully aligned with our commitment to equity and to lifting up the voices of our Black, immigrant and poor communities. Like each of you, I am elected to stand up for our residents. I believe we must value their lived experience above that of the insufficient quantitative data¹ to contradict it. I am also deeply disturbed by the OakDOT's failure to maintain trust with the community I represent. Sadly this is becoming OakDOT's reputation – even among those who support the Department's objectives. My constituents repeatedly report that they are not heard or valued both in this instance and regarding the installation of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system along Broadway.

For these reasons, I urge you to support our resolution directing the Administration to coordinate no fewer than two public meetings with the District 3 office with the communities that live and do business along the KONO section of Telegraph so that they may co-create a street design that meets the needs of the local community, and provides complete street safety for all users that transit through KONO on Telegraph.

The Resolution before you also directs the OakDOT to work with the Department of Race and Equity to do an analysis of how they have solicited, listened to, and incorporated community feedback in their capital improvement projects.

Signed,



Lynette Gibson McElhaney, Councilmember
Oakland District 3 – West Oakland | KONO | Adams Point | Downtown/Uptown

¹ (1) OPD crash data is biased by the fact that communities of color don't call 911 if they can at all help it, including when severely injured as evidenced by how many Black Oaklanders arrive on their own at hospitals with gun shot wounds instead of calling for an ambulance. (2) Reduced speed and improved yielding rates proxy for improved safety but don't actually measure if fewer collisions or near misses are happening. (3) Increased gross receipts for the area most likely reflect the existence of Frist Fridays and don't answer the more difficult questions of a) what gross receipts would have been absent the capital improvements or b) how businesses serving communities of color have fared during this time period.

