



TRANSPORTATION and INFRASTRUCTURE COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, June 15th, 2023, 7:00 pm

North Berkeley Senior Center
1901 Hearst Avenue
Berkeley, CA, 94709

A. PRELIMINARY BUSINESS

1. Call to order

7:02 pm: Chair Parolek called the meeting to order

2. Roll call

7:03 pm

Commissioners Present: Noelani Fixler, Barnali Ghosh, Adrian Leung, Liza Lutzker, Bryce Nesbitt, Karen Parolek, Rick Raffanti, Kim Walton, Ray Yep

Staff Present: LaTanya Bellow, Hamid Mostowfi, Ron Nevels, Srinivas Muktevi, Aram Kouyoumdjian, Noah Budnick

3. Public comment on items not on the agenda

7:03 pm: 3 public comments (including two attachments)

4. Approval of minutes from May 18th, 2023

7:14 pm Action: It was Moved / Seconded (Yep / Ghosh) to approve the minutes:

Discussion:

Ghosh asked that “AAPI” Heritage Month be spelled out as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month; Parolek asked that “capabilities that have not been activated” be added to agenda item B2 regarding the HAWK (High-Intensity Activated crossWalk) signal informational presentation; Walton corrected the spelling of Caltrans; Nesbitt asked that the US DOT Federal Highway Administration’s written guidance on appropriate signage for HAWK signals be included as an attachment.

7:20 pm Action: It was Moved / Seconded (Yep / Ghosh) to approve the minutes as amended:

Ayes: Fixler, Ghosh, Leung, Lutzker, Nesbitt, Parolek, Raffanti, Walton, Yep
Noes: None
Abstain: None
Absent: None
Recused: None

7:20 pm Motion passed 9-0-0-0-0

5. Approval and Order of Agenda

7:20 pm: No changes suggested.

6. Update on administration and staff

7:21 pm: Acting Secretary Mostowfi (Public Works Acting Transportation Manager) provided updates and answered Commissioners' questions on the following: MLK Quick Build project, I-80/Gilman interchange construction, staff hiring and transitions, Bicycle Plan update and HAWK signal installation. No action.

7. Announcements

7:29 pm: Ghosh attended a Federal Transit Authority listening session about safety on public transit for Asian Americans; Nesbitt announced that the Federal Highway Administration will be opening comment on a revised proposal for speed-limiters on over-the-road trucks; Yep stated that the Public Works Commission had previously spent a lot of time discussing "Rule 20 A," regarding undergrounding utilities, and Rule 20 A is now cancelled, which makes funding more difficult; Parolek wished everyone happy Juneteenth; Ghosh wished everyone happy Pride Month.

B. DISCUSSION / ACTION ITEMS

1. Commission letter to Berkeley City Council regarding the current staffing crisis in the City's Transportation Division

7:34 pm: Commissioners discussed their draft letter to the City Council regarding staffing, retention, vacancies and hiring at Public Works' Transportation Division (attached). One member of the public commented to thank the Commission for drafting the letter and to ask for accountability among City leaders who contributed to the "abusive" treatment of division staff. Deputy City Manager Bellow and Director of Human Resources Kouyoumdjian presented on the City's recruiting efforts, the Employer of Choice initiative, the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on staffing, generational shifts in the workforce, peer cities' staff vacancy

rates, recruiting strategies, existing eligibility lists, the need to reconcile the staffing numbers presented in the Commission's draft letter with data from the Human Resources Department, and the City Manager's commitment to addressing the staffing challenges in the Transportation Division. Commissioners and staff discussed retention efforts, addressing Berkeley's reputation for having a "hostile" work environment for government workers, the loss of institutional knowledge, the delay between City staff analyses from FY18 to FY22 and Transportation Division staff departures in 2022 and 2023, recruiting diverse job applicants, the complex challenge of staffing and how to describe departures in the Transportation Division.

8:59 pm Action: It was Moved / Seconded (Ghosh / Nesbitt) to postpone agenda item B2 (Informational Briefing from Berkeley Public Works staff on the City of Berkeley's Street Maintenance and Rehabilitation Policy) to a future meeting:

Ayes: Fixler, Ghosh, Leung, Lutzker, Nesbitt, Parolek, Raffanti, Walton,
Yep

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

Recused: None

8:59 pm Motion passed 9-0-0-0-0

Commissioners discussed the draft letter.

9:26 pm Action: It was Moved / Seconded (Walton / Fixler) to extend the meeting to 10 pm:

Ayes: Fixler, Ghosh, Leung, Lutzker, Nesbitt, Parolek, Raffanti, Walton,
Yep

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

Recused: None

9:27 pm Motion passed 9-0-0-0-0

Commissioners discussed the draft letter.

9:50 pm Action: It was Moved / Seconded (Leung / Fixler) to approve the letter as amended and send to the City Council:

Ayes: Fixler, Ghosh, Leung, Lutzker, Nesbitt, Parolek, Raffanti, Walton, Yep
Noes: None
Abstain: None
Absent: None
Recused: None

9:51 pm Motion passed 9-0-0-0-0

C. INFORMATION ITEMS AND SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

1. **9:52 pm:** Subcommittee reports & assignments: verbal reports from subcommittees
 - a. The Liaison to the Climate and Energy Commission's Transportation Subcommittee reported that the subcommittee is looking at where there are not sufficient loading zones for on-demand delivery
 - b. The 5-Year Paving Plan subcommittee reported that the subcommittee reviewed and discussed the plan with staff

9:59 pm Action: It was Moved / Seconded (Parolek / Ghosh) to extend the meeting to 10:05 pm:

Ayes: Fixler, Ghosh, Leung, Lutzker, Nesbitt, Parolek, Raffanti, Walton, Yep
Noes: None
Abstain: None
Absent: None
Recused: None

9:59 pm Motion passed 9-0-0-0-0

9:59 pm Action: It was Moved / Seconded (Lutzker / Ghosh) to nominate Commissioner Leung with Commissioner Fixler as a back up to speak on the Commission's letter about Transportation Division staffing as an off-agenda item at the City Council:

Ayes: Fixler, Ghosh, Leung, Lutzker, Nesbitt, Parolek, Raffanti, Walton, Yep
Noes: None
Abstain: None
Absent: None
Recused: None

10 pm Motion passed 9-0-0-0-0

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- c. The Safe and Delightful Streets for All subcommittee gave an update about using data, sensors and outreach to students and renters to better inform decision-making
 - d. The Transit Liaison reported that BART parking fees are up going up
- 2. TIC Mission Statement (enclosed)
 - 3. Public Works' [Top Goals and Projects](#) and [progress report](#)
 - 4. Council Summary Actions 2022*
 - 5. [Link to Council and Committee Agendas and Minutes](#)

D. COMMUNICATIONS

E. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

Nesbitt requested a 5-minute presentation at a future Commission meeting on a new crowdsource device that can count traffic.

F. ADJOURNMENT

10:05 pm Action: It was Moved / Seconded (Ghosh / Parolek) to close the meeting:

Ayes: Fixler, Ghosh, Leung, Lutzker, Nesbitt, Parolek, Raffanti, Walton, Yep

Noes: None

Abstain: None

Absent: None

Recused: None

10 pm Motion passed 9-0-0-0-0

Public Present:

Six members of the public at 7:03 pm

Two members of the public at 9:05 pm

One member of the public at 9:20 pm

Zero members of the public at 9:52 pm

Speakers: 3

The next meeting of the Transportation and Infrastructure Commission is scheduled for Thursday, July 20th, 2023 at 7:00 pm at the North Berkeley Senior Center, 1901 Hearst Ave, Berkeley, CA 94709.

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Administrative Procedures

From the City of Berkeley Commissioners' Manual, 2019 Edition, page 70 regarding minutes:

Although the Brown Act does not require minutes, except for closed sessions, the Commissioners' Manual does require minutes of commission meetings but not for subcommittee meetings. When required, minutes are limited to action minutes only. Minutes are unofficial until approved by the commission. The minutes are converted to PDF and posted on the City's website.

The secretary shall keep an accurate record of the commission's proceedings and transactions. The secretary shall provide action minutes similar to those provided to the Council by the City Clerk. Action minutes list the date, time, and place of the meetings; the staff in attendance; the commissioners present and absent; and a clear and concise description of final actions taken. Approved motions are indicated by "moved, seconded, and carried" and include a breakdown of the vote. The vote breakdown includes the commissioners voting yes, no, abstain, absent, recused, and reason for recusal. Reasons for making a motion, debate, content of public comments, and audience reaction are not to be included.

Commission Co-Secretary: Hamid Mostowfi, Acting Transportation Division Manager,
Public Works

Commission Co-Secretary: Ron Nevels, Acting Manager of Engineering, Public Works
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Telephone (510) 981-7061 / Fax: (510) 981-7060 / TDD: (510) 981-6903

Email: hmostowfi@berkeleyca.gov

Email: rnevels@berkeleyca.gov

From: Donna DeDiemar <dediemar@sbcglobal.net>

Sent: Friday, June 16, 2023 12:20 AM

To: transportation <transportation@ci.berkeley.ca.us>

Subject: Comments Made to Traffic and Infrastructure Commissioners on 6/15/23 by Donna DeDiemar

WARNING: This is not a City of Berkeley email. Do not click links or attachments unless you trust the sender and know the content is safe.

Commissioners:

My name is Donna DeDiemar, and I'm a member of Friends of Hopkins Street.

I was motivated to come to the commission meeting tonight because of a comment made at Tuesday night's council meeting by CM Kesarwani during discussion of the allocation of T1 money.

CM Kesarwani, who represents me on council, complained about the volume of letters she had received requesting that Hopkins continue to be scheduled for repaving, despite the fact that the Class IV cycle track had been put on hold. She listed a number of things in the city for which there are insufficient funds, and then said to the writers of those letters that we had to understand that – and this is a direct quote – “It isn't about you all the time.”

Those same letters were sent to this commission, too, and I want to convey to you, in the strongest words possible and before you formulate your opinion (if you haven't already done so) about what should happen to Hopkins paving money that we have never, ever made this issue about us, and that CM Kesarwani was as wrong as she was out of line.

This is an issue of safety. Period. Hopkins, particularly upper Hopkins, in its current deteriorated condition, is unsafe for everyone. And yes, there are lots of severely deteriorated streets in Berkeley, and they all deserve attention as soon as funds are available. But Hopkins had been allocated funds for the 2023 fiscal year, and for several fiscal years before 2023, and nothing about the street has improved by waiting.

The fight over a cycle track is a separate issue, and it is also one of safety. The proponents are certain the cycle track is the only way to make Hopkins safe for cyclists; the opponents are just as certain

that the cycle track will make the street unsafe for cyclists, and will be an impediment to the city and personal services needed by the residents of the area.

But I repeat, it is a separate issue, and it will not be resolved in the near future. And even when it is resolved, there will be a years-long wait for funding the improvements, whatever they may be. In the meantime, the street itself will become less and less safe, and at some point, someone will get seriously hurt.

Drivers on the street will be jostled around, and their wheel alignments may be affected, but they will not die because of the ruts and potholes. Pedestrians may twist ankles, but they won't die either. But a cyclist who hits one of the defects in the paving may be thrown from his/her bike, and the kids that are being toted along may go sprawling. And they will get hurt, some seriously, and some fatally. All because someone thinks we have to wait for a decision that may never come on installing a cycle track.

The risk is not worth it. It isn't even reasonable to consider it. Hopkins was supposed to be paved in 2023 in order to save money by being able to simultaneously install a cycle track that has yet to be approved for the full length of Hopkins.

Missing the 2023 deadline does not mean the Hopkins money should be reallocated to another area of the city, just because Hopkins exists in an area that wasn't historically redlined. We support efforts to emphasize equity zones, but dismissing the users of Hopkins, who very well may be residents of equity zones who chose to use the facilities at the north Berkeley branch of the library or King Park, or shop in the commercial area, or like to come to Cedar-Rose Park, as people who think "it is all about them" is unjust.

Please do not make that same mistake. Preserve the funding to repave Hopkins for Hopkins, and schedule it for fiscal 2024. Repaving the street now does not preclude the possibility of the cycle track later; it just changes the potential form it will take.

And it is the safest thing to do.

Rose St - Safe Routes to School and Bike Blvd



Naveen Gattu
naveen.gattu@gmail.com

Martin Luther King Jr. Middle and Ruth Acty Elementary schools participate in the SR2S (Safe Routes to School) program developed by the Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTC). SR2S periodically provides recommendations for infrastructure improvements to allow safe, active transportation to schools across Alameda County. The latest School Safety Assessment ¹ was performed in 2017 at the same time as the Berkeley Bike Plan. Among other things it recommends the following for Rose St:

- Install curb extensions at all for corners of Grant and North/South at Edith.
- Install high-visibility crosswalks
- Pedestrian countdown and push button to existing traffic signal at MLK
- **Implement recommendations of the 2017 Bike Plan² to install bicycle blvd along Rose St**, including additional traffic calming, traffic circles and vehicle access restrictions at major crossings.



Martin Luther King Jr. Middle School, Berkeley
DRAFT
Safe Routes to Schools Improvement Plan
Site Assessment held March 2017

- 9 Edith Street / Rose Street**
 - 9a. Install curb extensions at southeast corner and north side of Rose Street
 - 9b. Implement recommendations of City of Berkeley Bicycle Plan to install a bicycle boulevard along Rose Street, including additional traffic calming, traffic circles, and vehicle access restrictions at major crossings.
 - 9c. Extend white curb loading zone 50 feet to the west to accommodate more vehicles and reduce congestion on Grant Street
- 10 Grant Street / Rose Street**
 - 10a. Install curb extensions with updated accessible curb ramps at all 4 corners*
 - 10b. Install high visibility crosswalks at all 4 legs
- 11 M.L.K. Jr Way / Rose Street**
 - 11a. Consider adding a pedestrian countdown and push button to the existing traffic signal
 - 11b. Install advance stop bar markings at all approaches
 - 11c. Consider signal modification to reduce pedestrian-vehicle conflicts. Improvements are subject to traffic operations analysis.

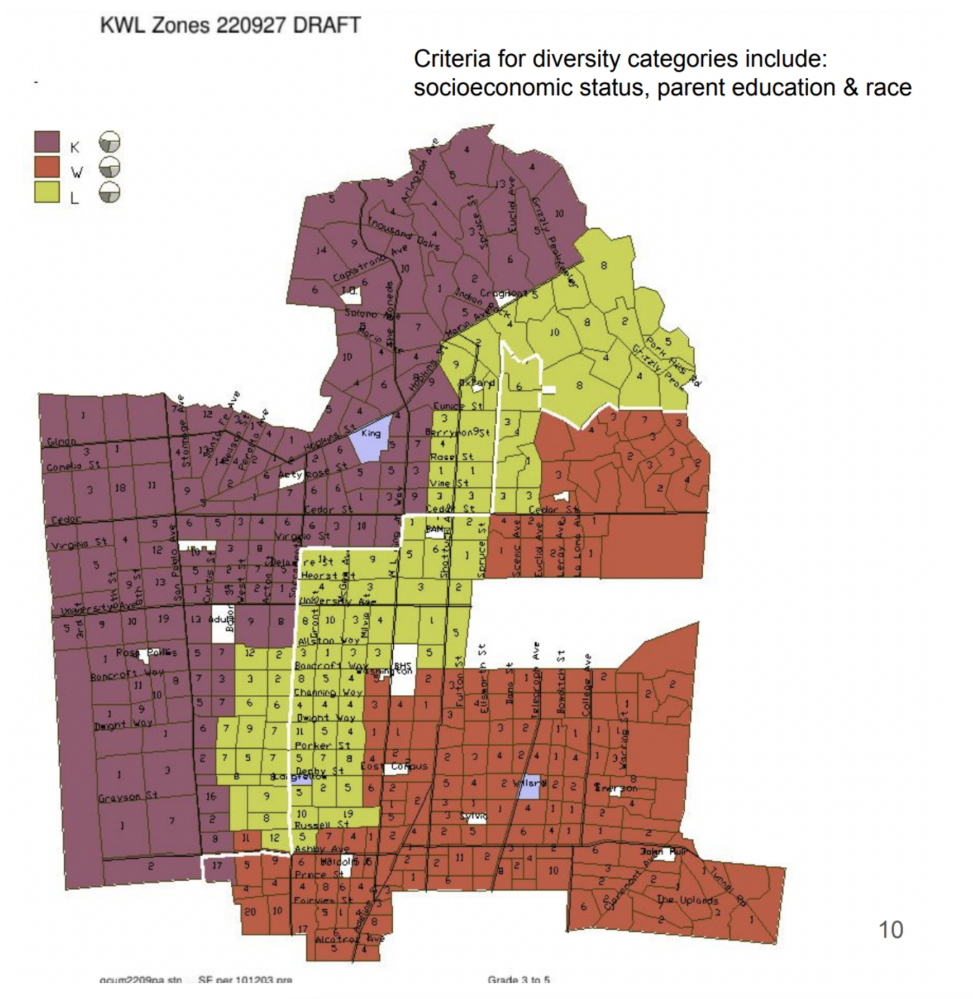
Improvements not to scale
0 300ft



- PAGE 2 -

¹ ACTC SR2S: <https://alamedacountysr2s.org/our-program/school-safety-assessments/#berkeley>
² 2017 Bike Plan: <https://berkeleyca.gov/your-government/our-work/adopted-plans/berkeley-bicycle-plan>

King, being one of only 3 Berkeley middle schools, serves 9,400 children from all of North and West Berkeley³. Many of whom regularly walk and cycle, crossing the busy streets of MLK, Sacramento, and McGee. They are regularly forced to walk and cycle in close proximity to impatient, fast moving cars during rush hour and my constant fear is a negligent driver taking too many liberties on the narrow street of Rose.



Rose is being repaved this summer, after being moved up in the paving schedule due to Hopkins being put on hold. The section of road being paved from Sacramento to MLK, includes the entrance to King Middle where the SR2S makes recommendations for Rose and coincidentally also where the secure bike storage for the school is located.

³ Enrollment map: <https://www.berkeleyside.org/2022/11/10/busd-middle-school-enrollment-draft-map>

Since the City places a five-year moratorium on planned construction work involving pavement cuts after a street rehabilitation project, it is imperative that we prioritize Rose as a SR2S route now and adopt the recommendations set forth in the SSA and the 2017 Bike Plan.

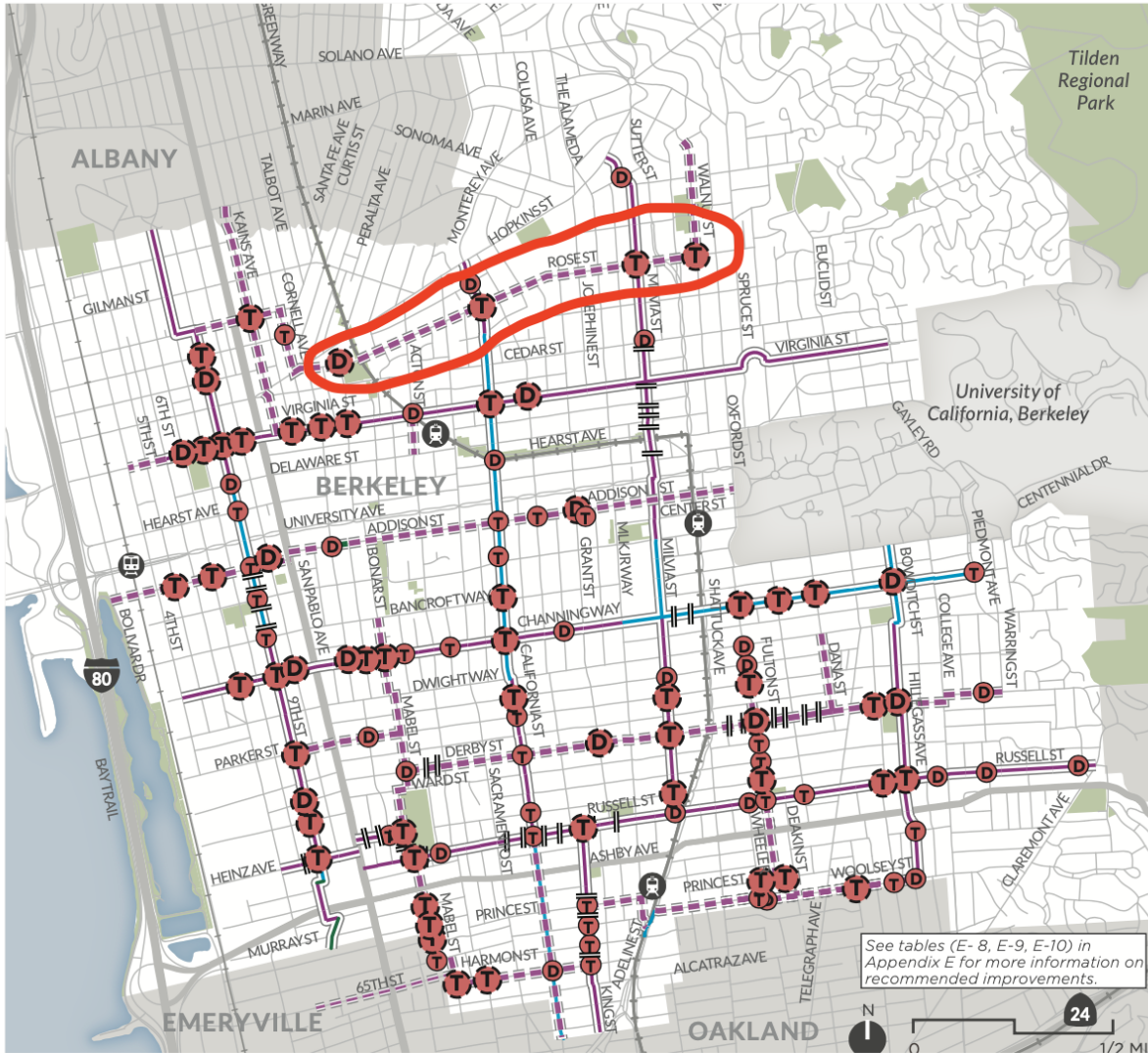
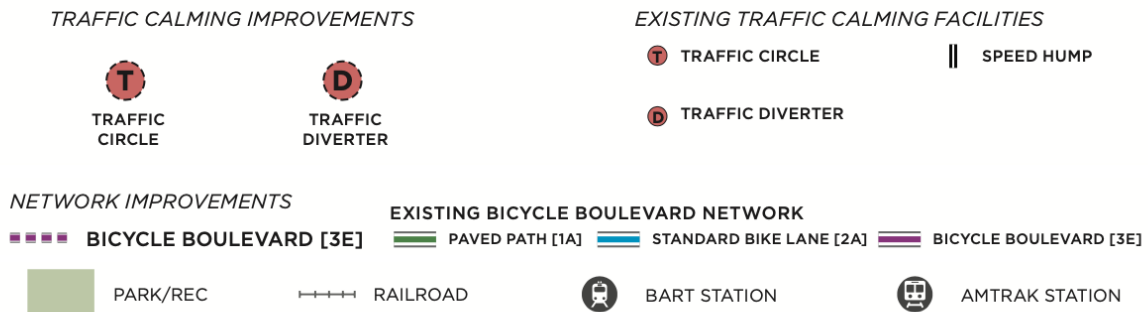


FIGURE 5-15: RECOMMENDED LOW STRESS BIKE BOULEVARD TRAFFIC CALMING IMPROVEMENTS



The schedules are tight and transportation staffing is at historic lows. However, In lieu of these modifications during paving, we should pursue quick-build solutions to install diverters and traffic circles at California and Milvia as well as the recommended curb extensions at Grant and Edith. At the very least we should install 4-way stop signs at McGee/Rose to shorten the distances between consecutive stop controlled intersections, as well as closing the slip lane at Sacramento as has been mentioned prior.

In addition to serving King school, completing Rose as a traffic calmed bike blvd would supply an additional low stress east/west bike route north of the Virginia bike blvd, directly connecting the Milvia and California bike blvd's with the Ohlone greenway and the Hopkins commercial corridor. At present, Rose is a very high stress bike route as it's used regularly as a cut-through for cars and heavy delivery trucks, rather than the Cedar or Hopkins collector roads. Other traffic calming interventions would include traffic diverters in the same vein as the Virginia bike blvd which is modal filtered at McGee and split speed tables as on lower Rose between Juanita and Ordway⁴. These are interventions that can be done at low cost and relatively quickly, since bike blvd's have been implemented throughout the city and the toolbox would be no different for Rose.

⁴ *Rose St west of Sacramento has been included in a speed table pilot in 2011. A "split speed table" was installed between Juanita and Ordway and received positive feedback from BFD, as Rose is a fire/evac route.* https://drive.google.com/file/d/1vqQ8fXDBRXt1HmC070O_tgw-P-JnXK2R/view?usp=sharing

To the Members of the City Council,

We write to you today as the Transportation and Infrastructure Commission, given our role to “advise the City Council on matters related to transportation and public works infrastructure policies, facilities, and services in the City.” The current staffing crisis in the City’s Transportation Division existentially questions the relevance of what our commission undertakes when we discuss matters of transportation in this City.

Recent losses to the city of Berkeley’s Transportation Division have been numerous and unacceptable. Within only one year, departures (and impending departures) of dedicated staff have included Ryan Murray, Beth Thomas, Diane Yee, Ian Bronswick, Jesse Peoples, Gordon Hansen, Danette Perry, Roger Mason, and Farid Javandel. The Transportation Division's vacancy rate will reach a staggering 45% in July. These departures of dedicated mid-, senior-, and management-level staff have left a chasm in our city, preventing the implementation of the City’s multimodal, sustainable, equitable, safety-focused plans like Vision Zero and BerkDOT.

Impact

These vacancies will directly challenge the specific work City Council has prioritized. For example, in April’s Reweighted Range Voting (RRV) ranking process, one-third of all referrals were directed to the Transportation Division, including a whopping 75% of the top 8 referrals. Vision Zero, which was Council’s #1 priority in 2018 has languished with a 75% vacancy rate among the transportation planners leading this work. Even before the loss of an additional 4 senior- and management-level staff in 2023, the number of programs noted by the [City Manager](#) as being on-hold, delayed or reduced due to staffing concerns within the Transportation Division is overwhelming:

PROGRAMS & POLICY	
Bicycle Plan	Delayed due to staffing
Berkeley Strategic Transportation (BeST) Plan Update	Delayed due to staffing
Transit First Policy Implementation Plan	Delayed due to staffing
Vision Zero Action Plan Implementation	Delayed due to staffing
BerkDOT	On hold pending staffing
Traffic fine & fee reform	On hold pending staffing
AB 43 (speed limit reform)	On hold pending staffing
Micromobility	Reduced service
E-bikes for City Staff	On hold pending staffing
Bike parking	Reduced service due to staffing
Transit Coordination	Reduced service due to staffing
SR2S Coordination	Reduced service due to staffing
Major Grant Funding Coordination/Liaison	Reduced service due to staffing
G2nd & King	On hold pending staffing
Telegraph Ave Project (spin-off from Southside Complete Streets, formerly Car-Free Telegraph)	On hold pending staffing and funding
Claremont/Eton+Claremont/Russell RRFBs	One in construction, one on hold due to s
Newbury Street & Ashby Avenue traffic diverter & improvements	On hold pending staffing
Pedestrian safety where Sidewalks not provided	On hold pending staffing
Dwight Way Traffic Calming between Grant and California	On hold pending staffing

The years of work that Council and staff have dedicated to creating and funding excellent plans to improve safety, increase equity in transportation, and reduce our city’s climate footprint are all indefinitely stalled due to our staffing crisis, leaving the people of Berkeley in limbo and at risk.

Safety: Vision Zero work in our City has all but come to a halt due to the staffing crisis and wavering commitments to safety projects among City Council. The real losers here are the people of Berkeley, who have and will continue to die and be maimed in the public right of way from poor bike

infrastructure and unsafe street design. This crisis sends a message that the most vulnerable road users are not valued in Berkeley; that only motorists have a seat at the table with regards to the future.

Equity: Without the strong leadership of Farid Javandel, there is now no one to lead the City's work on BerkDOT, one of the most innovative and heralded reforms promised by our Reimagining Public Safety Process. This could not come at a worse time, as SB50 which would allow Berkeley to pilot traffic enforcement by unarmed city staff has just passed the Senate. Further, our inability to complete safe street infrastructure projects will increase our need to rely on punitive enforcement, rather than create safe, self-enforcing streets.

Climate: Berkeley likes to showcase itself as a leader in the climate world, but a city that fails to adequately address its #1 contributor to carbon emissions is no leader at all. As more and more Berkeley residents desire to switch their trips away from cars and over to active and shared modes of transportation, any city that claims to be a climate leader needs to facilitate that shift. The safety improvements people need to feel comfortable making that shift are simply not possible given the current crisis in staffing in the Transportation Division, and the lack of support for these staff makes Berkeley a failed city when it comes to the climate crisis.

Moving forward

In order to move forward, the city must take important steps and ask difficult questions to understand the reasons why staff are departing at such high numbers and ensure we can retain any remaining staff. How has the current situation, especially the sudden departure of Farid Javandel, been handled by the City Manager's office and what sorts of communications are remaining Transportation Division staff receiving about the string of departures? What is city management doing to ensure that staff are feeling supported in the wake of Farid's departure and in the midst of a severe staffing crisis?

The answer cannot simply be to fill vacancies. When filling new roles, it is imperative that city management and City Council work hand-in-hand toward making Berkeley a professionally and emotionally safe work environment, without which, we cannot reasonably expect to attract and retain the most experienced and talented transportation professionals. Already, transportation professionals from across the Bay are sharing messages that Berkeley is not a safe and supportive workplace.

What Berkeley needs moving forward is a full cadre of experienced and talented professionals who have a deep understanding of transportation best practices. This includes transportation staff at all levels from associate planners and engineers all the way up through a deputy City Manager who has strong transportation knowledge. As it stands, the losses of multiple division managers and deputy City Manager Paul Buddenhagen have created an unacceptable situation for Berkeley, with decades of institutional memory lost. We must do everything possible to change the current reality of transportation staffing at the city, including the retention and promotion of remaining staff to preserve what little institutional knowledge remains.

Frankly, it is an affront to the people of Berkeley to allocate over a million dollars to consultants and HR staff for [Berkeley's Employer of Choice](#) initiative while not doing the simple work to support current city staff. Without a basic level of support and trust in the professional expertise of staff in our city's various departments to carry out our adopted policies and plans, the systemic issues with Berkeley's staffing crisis will persist and will have ripple effects across city employees well beyond the Transportation

Division. The precedent that has been set by the circumstances surrounding Farid Javandel's departure, in which making a simple mistake may result in job loss, makes Berkeley an unattractive place to work. Creating this sort of hostile work environment sends a clear message to current and future staff that Berkeley is not an ideal location to begin or advance one's career.

To rectify this situation, the City Manager must establish strong transportation leadership knowledge within the City Manager's office and step up to create a work environment that both supports and encourages staff leadership and innovation and promotes internal employees to fill the current leadership vacuum. The stakes for this work could not be higher - the derailment of Vision Zero, BerkDOT, and other critical projects shines a bright light on Berkeley, showing the world that our true commitment is to the status quo of climate arson, traffic violence and inequitable access to public and active transportation. We urge you to move forward with a great sense of urgency to rectify the current dire situation.

DRAFT