

# CITY OF OAKLAND



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**To the Concerned Citizens of Oakland**

**Re: Park Boulevard Corridor Safety Study**

Thank you for taking the time to write and for giving us the opportunity to correct some unfortunate misinformation that appears to be circulating about the Park Boulevard Pedestrian, Bicycle and School Safety Study.

This letter attempts to correct these misunderstandings, clarify the actual status of potential improvements to Park Boulevard and provide an outline for next steps. It primarily addresses Middle Park Boulevard because this section of the corridor was the subject of most of the email we have received. Upper and Lower Park Boulevard are addressed at the end of this letter.

### **Correcting misunderstandings**

The lane reduction (road diet) that was the subject of recent community meetings is not yet a funded project on Middle Park Boulevard. Per community members' requests in November 2016, we evaluated a road diet and concluded that a lane reduction would improve Park Boulevard for pedestrians and bicyclists without increasing travel times in the corridor. This proposal would require five new traffic signals and other intersection improvements to improve pedestrian crossings. The operational analysis report prepared by Fehr & Peers concluded that a road diet within the Middle section of Park Boulevard needs these features to make the lane reduction work. Funding for this potential project has not yet been identified.

If funding is identified, the City would then conduct a detailed traffic study, which would include an analysis of the potential for traffic to choose alternate routes through adjacent neighborhoods. The operational analysis study that was presented on January 24, 2018 showed that the road diet alternative, in conjunction with five new traffic signals, would allow through traffic on Park with similar travel times as we see now; that is, it would not create additional delays for Park Boulevard traffic. In contrast, without the five additional traffic signals, the analysis shows that this "paint-only" road diet option would cause delays of up to five minutes for drivers traveling along the corridor and drivers turning from unsignalized side streets. More assessment is needed to identify the best locations for additional traffic signals and other infrastructure improvements to avoid the serious delays.

### **Current status of potential improvements to Middle Park Boulevard**

As we announced at the January 24, 2018 community meeting, the City has received funding to make safety improvements at two intersections that serve Edna Brewer Middle School by installing/modifying traffic signals, bulb-outs, pedestrian refuges and high-visibility crosswalks on Park Boulevard at Excelsior Ave/ Grosvenor Place and on Park Boulevard at 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue/East 38th Street. These improvements are in early development. A meeting in the field will be scheduled to discuss the final configuration of these intersection improvements.

As presented at the January 24, 2018 community meeting, the City did what we promised in November 2016: we prepared an initial evaluation of options for making it safer to cross Park Boulevard on foot, particularly at school crossings along the corridor. We looked at three alternatives, which were developed based on what community members requested us to study in 2016 and 2017:

1. A paint-only road diet with low-cost pedestrian improvements and no new traffic signals
2. Five new traffic signals and other crossing improvements, with no road diet
3. Five new traffic signals, other pedestrian crossing improvements and a road diet

Our assessment is that the second and third alternatives are feasible from a technical standpoint; the first alternative, a paint-only road diet without five new traffic signals, is not a staff supported alternative: Although the paint-only road diet could help pedestrians cross the street during commute periods by slowing down traffic in a single lane in each direction, it would cause delays of up to five minutes for drivers traveling along the corridor and drivers turning from unsignalized side streets.

### **Next steps on Middle Park Boulevard**

The City will schedule a community field walk later this spring/summer. The purpose of this outing will be to review locations along the corridor that most need improving, based on our preliminary study and area residents' experiences. We will also highlight the proposed improvements associated with the two funded projects near Edna Brewer Middle School.

The suite of improvements, e.g. new traffic signals plus other pedestrian crossing improvements at unsignalized locations, will then be considered for funding in the City's next Capital Improvement Program (2019-2021). The City Council will review and consider all projects, citywide, and make decisions based on staff recommendations and public input for funding.

### **Next steps on Trestle Glen Rd**

Residents on Trestle Glen Road have been expressing concern about the potential impacts that improvements on Park Boulevard, namely a road diet, would have on their street. This concern was one of the reasons the City embarked on the current effort to consolidate outreach and communication along all segments of Park Boulevard, and to present specific, relevant and factual information pertinent to each particular area.

In addition to potential impacts of a future project on Park, residents voiced concerns about existing traffic safety issues on Trestle Glen. In response, City staff will be meeting with residents and Councilmember Guillen on Friday March 9 to perform a walk-through and identify problem areas for improvement.

#### **Upper Park Boulevard**

At the January 24 meeting, we presented a potential design for an Upper Park Boulevard road diet, including new bike lanes. We heard concerns about building a westbound (downhill) bike lane adjacent to the hillside, which commonly sheds debris. We also heard a misunderstanding about how recent Caltrans work in the Upper portion of Park Boulevard compares to conditions under a road diet. While the Caltrans work reduced lanes at the intersections, a road diet would accomplish the goal of slowing down drivers without creating delays by reducing the number of lanes between intersections i.e., the lanes at the intersections would remain unchanged. Therefore, the City plans to study and implement a road diet on Upper Park Boulevard when this section of roadway is scheduled for resurfacing. At that time, the City will engage residents to evaluate potential design alternatives.

#### **Lower Park Boulevard**

Residents at the November 2016 community meeting voiced consistent support for a road diet between MacArthur Blvd and Lake Merritt. Unlike on Middle Park Boulevard, where a road diet will require additional traffic signals, on Lower Park Boulevard the project can be done with striping and minimal additional investment. This is possible because the traffic volumes on Lower Park Blvd are lower than on Middle Park Blvd; there are fewer tradeoffs; and there is more agreement amongst stakeholders. This project is anticipated to be implemented in Summer 2019, in conjunction with its repaving.

Please continue to refer to our webpage for the most up to date information at <http://www2.oaklandnet.com/government/o/PWA/o/EC/o/TS/parkblvdsafety/index.htm>

Please let us know if you have further questions.

Sincerely,



Ryan Russo

Director

Department of Transportation, City of Oakland