



CONSENT CALENDAR  
March 22, 2022

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Terry Taplin

Subject: Budget Referral: West Berkeley Transportation Plan

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council refer \$300,000 to the FY23-24 budget process for the hiring of a consultant to conduct a study and draft a comprehensive plan for transportation in West Berkeley through 2050.

FISCAL IMPACTS

An estimated \$300,000 for the hiring of a consultant to study West Berkeley transportation patterns and craft the West Berkeley Transportation Plan.

BACKGROUND

Out of all the unique areas in the City of Berkeley, it is arguable that none have undergone more changes in the past century than the residential, commercial, and industrial sector of West Berkeley, which encompasses the City west of Sacramento Street. What is now known as West Berkeley was home to the native Ohlone people for thousands of years, who lived on or near the West Berkeley Shellmound. Following the European colonization of North America and the Bay Area, Berkeley was eventually incorporated in 1878 and West Berkeley became a quickly growing industrial and residential area. This growth, encouraged by the proximity of the waterfront, the Central Pacific Railroad, and the University of California, led to West Berkeley's development into one of the Bay Area's primary industrial areas during the first half of the twentieth century.

Initiated in 1985 and adopted in 1993, the West Berkeley Plan sought to reexamine and reinforce West Berkeley's traditionally diverse use of light-industrial, commercial, and residential zoning in a way that would bring more economic life back to West Berkeley and plan for the area's development through 2005.<sup>1</sup> Though written nearly three decades ago, the Transportation section of the West Berkeley Plan raises many of the same concerns and goals that the City is still grappling with today.

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<sup>1</sup>[https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Planning\\_and\\_Development/Redevelopment\\_Agency/West\\_Berkeley\\_Plan\\_\(The\).aspx](https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Planning_and_Development/Redevelopment_Agency/West_Berkeley_Plan_(The).aspx)

The Transportation section of the West Berkeley Plan highlighted West Berkeley's historically poor public transportation service and large amount of free parking, while seeking to plan for a West Berkeley with the reduced use of single-occupant automobiles, protection of local residential streets from through-traffic, reduced congestion, improved public transportation, and an overall improved environment for pedestrians and cyclists.<sup>2</sup> All of these and more are issues for West Berkeley transportation in 2022. Automobile use is still much higher than is necessary to meet Berkeley's climate and Vision Zero goals. Bus service has been reduced as AC Transit suspended Line 80, which serviced West Berkeley along Sixth Street, following pandemic-related budget cuts.

Encompassing almost the entirety of the Equity Priority Area under the Vision Zero Action Plan, West Berkeley is also the most dangerous part of all of Berkeley for pedestrians.<sup>3</sup> Decades after the West Berkeley Plan, it is clear that the City Council must reexamine the state of transportation in West Berkeley and plan for a more accessible and sustainable future.

#### RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

As the City of Berkeley undergoes a Housing Element process to plan for the addition of a minimum of 8,943 new homes by 2031, West Berkeley corridors of San Pablo Avenue and University Avenue are among the Priority Development Areas (PDAs) targeted for infill housing in early plans.<sup>4</sup> While the growth in West Berkeley's population in the next decade will bring a welcome burst of new life and community to the City as a whole, the continued poor condition of transportation in West Berkeley as the population grows will only encourage these thousands of new residents to continue their reliance on cars and threaten Berkeley's climate and Vision Zero goals. Transportation planning in West Berkeley must be updated in order to finally address the deficiencies of transportation that the area has faced for decades, while also planning for the future of West Berkeley so that new residents will move to a historic district that allows them to give up their car, feel safe as pedestrians and cyclists, and be connected to the broader Bay Area with a world-class public transportation system.

To achieve this vision, no possibilities should be left off the table. Berkeley must draw on old ideas from the West Berkeley Plan like removing Ashby Avenue from the State Highway system, working closely with AC Transit for the expansion of low-emission bus services, institute charges for parking, expanding bicycle parking, and improved traffic control devices. Furthermore, the City can draw from its strong community of cyclists, urbanists, and the new generation of planners who are already clamoring for more ambitious ideas such as bus-only lanes, the wider use of protected bike lanes, redesigning the directions that cars can currently travel on streets, and even the full pedestrianization of some streets.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Planning\\_and\\_Development/Home/West\\_Berkeley\\_-\\_Transportation.aspx](https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Planning_and_Development/Home/West_Berkeley_-_Transportation.aspx)

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Public\\_Works/Level\\_3\\_-\\_Transportation/Berkeley\\_Vision\\_Zero\\_Action\\_Plan\\_Approved\\_03102020.pdf](https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Public_Works/Level_3_-_Transportation/Berkeley_Vision_Zero_Action_Plan_Approved_03102020.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.berkeleyaside.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Item-1-Pres-Planning-1.pdf>

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

By planning for a West Berkeley that is less reliant on the use of private automobiles through the strengthening of the area's network of bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, the expansion of public transportation service, and the placing of limitations on car traffic, a West Berkeley Transportation Plan stands to aide Berkeley in its climate goals in incalculable ways.

CONTACT

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