




Office of the City Manager

April 6, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager 
Re: Vegetation and Tree Removal on East Side of Aquatic Park

Summary

This memo provides an overview of the Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) Berkeley Drill Track Rehabilitation Project, which is an Alameda County Transportation Commission (ACTC) mitigation project to restore portions of the third set of railroad tracks on Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) right of way south of Bancroft Street in Berkeley. This mitigation Project results from the 7th Street Grade Separation East Project (discussed below) and will have a material impact on trees and vegetation on the east side of Aquatic Park in Berkeley.

The 7th Street Grade Separation East Project

ACTC, in partnership with the City of Oakland and the Port of Oakland (Port), is implementing the Global Opportunities at the Port of Oakland (GoPort) Program, a package of transportation improvements within and near the Port. The GoPort Program includes the 7th Street Grade Separation East (7th Street) Project to reconstruct and improve a primary trucking and access route into the Port. The project will relieve truck and vehicle congestion, increase safety and air quality, and provide additional flexibility for seaport cargo operations. The project will also reconstruct a more than 90-year-old underpass that UPRR trains rely on to pass over 7th Street by increasing both vertical and horizontal clearances for trucks.

The 7th Street Project¹ obtained California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) clearance through the 2002 Oakland Army Base Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and the 2012 addendum. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) clearance through a Categorical Exclusion (CE) was completed in October 2018. The project's final design was completed in December 2022, and a construction contract was awarded to Ghilotti Construction, Inc. in May 2023. Public process included meetings with various

¹ https://www.alamedactc.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/03/1442001_7SGSE_FS_20260209

community groups, with the latest meeting on September 12, 2023.² Construction is anticipated to be completed by the summer of 2029.

The 7th Street Project is estimated to cost \$378M and is funded by State and local sources.

Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) Berkeley Drill Track Rehabilitation and tree removal along east side of Aquatic Park

The UPRR Berkeley Drill Track Rehabilitation Project is an operational mitigation to the impacts resulting from ACTC's 7th Street Project. Specifically, it provides UPRR with needed capacity to mitigate the temporary loss of tracks over 7th street while that bridge is reconstructed. Unfortunately, the scope of this project includes removing vegetation and trees on UPRR property in Berkeley's Aquatic Park and relocating the slope and berm to support the tracks to the edge of UPRR property. The western most portion of UPRR property is a part of what traditionally has been viewed as part of Aquatic Park, and the UPRR Berkeley Drill Track Rehabilitation Project will have visual and structural impacts to users of the park. The project will span from 250ft north of Dwight Street down to the end of the park (see Figure 1). The contract for this project has been awarded, and construction has begun in the track area. Vegetation and tree removal is anticipated to start in mid to late April 2026. All work will be completed on UPRR property and there will be no encroachments on City property.

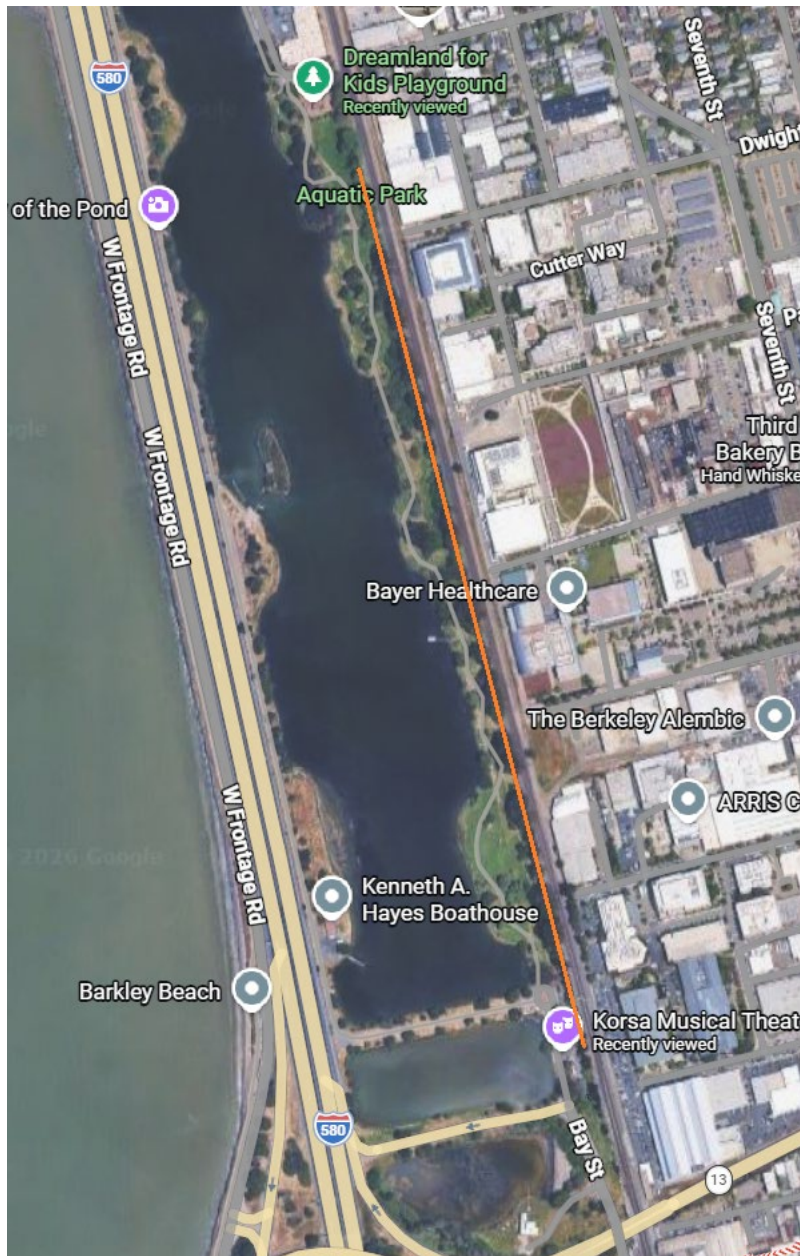
The Berkeley Drill Track Rehabilitation Project obtained CEQA exception in 2024 through the California Regional Water Quality Control Board. All the required permits were obtained for this work. UPRR has retained a wildlife biologist to inspect the affected trees for nesting birds and will repeat the inspections every two weeks of planned work. No additional community process was conducted outside of the GoPort community meetings which primarily focused on the 7th Street Project. The cost for the Berkeley Drill Track Rehabilitation Project is included in the 7th Street Project and is funded by State and local (not city) sources. While City staff have met recently with ACTC and UPRR staff, we have been unable to secure detailed construction plans for this project. Staff will continue to work on getting more details.

City of Berkeley Response

Staff will be informing the Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Commission and the Aquatic Park Stakeholders Group of the impact and proposed timeline for this project on, April 8, 2026. The Parks, Recreation and Waterfront Department's Urban Forestry unit is developing a tree planting plan for the east side of Aquatic Park adjacent to UPRR property. In addition, staff will be working with Disc Golf Association members to help relocate several tee and basket areas.

² <https://vimeo.com/881871426>

Figure 1: Location of the UPRR Berkeley Drill Track Rehabilitation Project



cc: David White, Deputy City Manager
Jenny Wong, City Auditor
Farimah Brown, City Attorney
Mark Numainville, City Clerk
Matthai Chakko, Assistant to the City Manager
Scott Ferris, Director, Parks, Recreation & Waterfront