



Office of the City Manager

INFORMATION CALENDAR

September 29, 2026

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Paul Buddenhagen, City Manager

Submitted by: Jamie Parks, Director, Public Works

Subject: Response to City Council's Motion Regarding Refinements to the Telegraph Multimodal Corridor Project Design Approved at the October 28, 2025 Meeting of the Berkeley City Council

SUMMARY

On October 28, 2025, the City Council approved Concept Design 3B for the Telegraph Multimodal Corridor Project (Dwight Way to Woolsey Street). Concept 3B was selected for its balance of safety, transit benefits, loading needs, and community preference. As part of the action to approve Concept Design 3B, Council provided three specific directives to ensure the design prioritizes transit and creates new public open space.

The Council directives are: 1) develop a final design that prioritizes decreasing transit travel time; 2) create a possibility for the City to eventually change course to replace parking with dedicated bus lanes; and 3) provide multiple designs that would close the Dwight Triangle slip lane.

Based on further design refinements and subsequent analysis, staff has refined the approved Concept 3B into a final concept design (referred to herein as "Concept 3C"). This memo addresses the three City Council directives and describes the changes made to Concept 3B in response. Staff plan to move forward with Concept 3C.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

DIRECTIVE 1: PRIORITIZE TRANSIT

Develop a final design that prioritizes decreasing transit travel time within the Concept 3B framework.

The initial Concept 3B design was modeled to result in a 4% increase in transit travel time compared to existing conditions. Put differently, it would take a transit vehicle 5.2-6.0 minutes to travel the 0.85-mile corridor compared to 4.8-6.1 minutes under existing conditions, depending on time of day and direction of travel. In response to Council's directive, the consultant team analyzed further refinements—specifically extending the length of bus-only lanes and adding more queue jumps to allow buses to bypass stopped traffic at intersections. The revised analysis that produced Concept 3C shows that extending bus-only lanes for two additional blocks and adding queue jumps at Stuart

Street in addition to Ashby Avenue results in a modeled 10% reduction in transit travel times compared to existing conditions. For example, under Concept 3C, transit vehicles would travel the project corridor in about 4.5-5.4 minutes, depending on time of day and direction of travel. These treatments recover significant transit travel time by allowing buses to bypass general traffic at key bottlenecks, shifting from a predicted transit delay to a net gain in transit speed and reliability.

The new Concept 3C design would remove 74 more parking spaces than Concept 3B to construct the extended bus-only lanes. These 74 parking spaces are in addition to the approximately 33 parking spaces already estimated for removal under Concept 3B, for a total net reduction of about 107 parking spaces on Telegraph Ave between Dwight Way and Woolsey St. There are currently about 257 existing parking spaces along this stretch of Telegraph Ave.

Based on the 2024 total parking revenue of \$251,346 collected across the 257 parking spaces on this stretch of Telegraph Avenue, the baseline average generates approximately \$978 per space annually. If a simple linear calculation were applied, eliminating 107 parking spaces would project a gross loss of \$104,646 in parking revenue per year. However, data from May 2026 indicates that parking occupancy on this stretch was only 45%, revealing a high vacancy rate of 55%. Because this substantial vacancy capacity allows the remaining parking supply to absorb the existing demand, this linear calculation is highly conservative and represents the maximum potential revenue loss to the Parking Meter Fund.

DIRECTIVE 2: FUTURE-PROOFING FOR BUS LANE CONVERSION

Create a possibility for Berkeley to eventually change course to replace parking with dedicated bus lanes.

With regard to a flexible design, Concept 3C that staff plan to implement includes safety features like concrete islands at intersections and medians, where feasible. While this design would be more costly to remove and replace in the future than a “quick-build” design featuring temporary materials, permanent concrete islands offer more safety benefits, reduced maintenance costs, and offer opportunities for green infrastructure to allow the City to comply with the San Francisco Bay Regional Water Quality Control Board's (Water Board) Municipal Regional Permit. The permit requires the City of Berkeley to include Low Impact Development features on public streets—such as bioswales, rain gardens, and permeable pavement—to capture and filter pollutants from stormwater runoff before it reaches the San Francisco Bay. These features are only possible with concrete islands.

Staff's plan is based on the experience of the City of Oakland on the southern portion of the Telegraph Avenue corridor between 20th Street to 29th Street. Oakland initially implemented "quick-build" protected bike lanes on Telegraph Avenue using plastic bollards, paint, and planters, which are typically more flexible and less costly to remove. However, the City of Oakland replaced these temporary features with concrete curbs

and islands due to several documented findings from a multi-year evaluation of the corridor:

- **Maintenance Challenges:** OakDOT's progress reports documented that the flexible plastic posts were frequently struck and destroyed by vehicles. This created an ongoing, resource-intensive burden for maintenance staff who had to repeatedly replace the posts to maintain the integrity of the bike lane buffer.
- **Parking and Loading Encroachment:** The plastic bollards failed to physically prevent vehicle encroachment. The evaluation showed that delivery drivers and private vehicles frequently ran over or parked between the plastic posts to load, compromising safety and forcing cyclists to merge into mixed traffic.
- **Merchant and Community Feedback on Aesthetics:** In public surveys and business outreach coordinated by the Koreatown Northgate (KONO) Business Improvement District, local merchants expressed strong dissatisfaction with the "interim" quick-build aesthetic. The community feedback indicated that the plastic posts looked cluttered and cheap, and businesses actively petitioned the city for permanent concrete curbs and landscaped planters to elevate the corridor's visual appeal.

DIRECTIVE 3: CLOSE THE DWIGHT TRIANGLE SLIP LANE

Provide multiple designs that would close the Dwight Triangle slip lane.

Staff developed two implementation options in response to this directive: 1) Option A, a "Tactical" approach, which has lower costs and can be constructed more quickly; and 2) Option B, a "Capital-intensive" approach, which has higher costs to transform the open space into a high-quality public plaza with opportunity for programming. Both options require modification to the intersection of Dwight/Telegraph, including the traffic signals, to provide for emergency vehicles (primary route) and AC Transit Buses turning right onto Telegraph from eastbound Dwight Way.

Given the immediate safety needs at this intersection, staff plan to implement Option A. With Option A, the City will make improvements faster than Option B. Option A also provides a "proof of concept" for the closure and opportunity to engage the community prior to committing to a permanent solution. Option A has a lower implementation cost, which is an important factor for obtaining grant funding for construction and delivering the overall Telegraph project on schedule.

Option A will use temporary materials like movable planters and decorative street painting to close the slip lane. This option allows for relatively quick implementation and affords the opportunity to "test" the configuration, engage the community with iterative design, and assess use patterns before designing a permanent solution. The estimated construction cost for Option A is \$1,200,000-\$1,300,000.

Option B would raise the slip lane to sidewalk grade, resolve impacts to stormwater flow, and install all curb and gutter closures creating a level area to develop as a plaza. The estimated construction cost for Option B is \$2,000,000-\$3,000,000.

The Telegraph Multimodal Corridor Project advances the Strategic Plan goal to provide state-of-the-art, well-maintained infrastructure, amenities, and facilities; create a resilient, safe, connected, and prepared city; and, be a global leader in addressing climate change, advancing environmental justice, and protecting the environment.

BACKGROUND

Aligned with past Council actions to address one of the City's top high-injury streets, the Telegraph Avenue project delivers on key local and regional plans. It advances the 2020 Vision Zero Action Plan by proactively building safer streets, fulfills the Bicycle Plan's call for a high-priority Tier 1 project, and aligns with the Pedestrian Plan and the General Plan's Transit-First Policy. Additionally, regional studies from AC Transit and the Alameda County Transportation Commission highlight Telegraph Avenue as a critical corridor with high potential for transit ridership growth, noting that redesigning the corridor could ultimately improve bus speeds and reliability beyond current conditions.

During the May 21, 2026 meeting of the Transportation and Infrastructure Commission, staff presented an informational update on the refined Concept 3C design, including the plans and responses above, and previewed upcoming project phases. Following the presentation, commissioners expressed their strong appreciation for the update and thanked City staff for integrating Commission and City Council feedback directly into these Concept 3C design modifications.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE IMPACTS

Installation of protected bikeways and improving pedestrian crossings is anticipated to increase walking and biking, which is consistent with the 2009 Berkeley Climate Action Plan Policy that calls for expanding and improving the City's bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. Installation of bus boarding islands, bus-only lanes, and queue jumps improve bus reliability and decrease travel times, making on-street transit a more attractive mode of transportation. The 2009 Berkeley Climate Action Plan sets targets of reducing transportation emissions 33% below year 2000 levels by 2020, and 80% below year 2000 levels by 2050. The Plan further states that transportation modes such as public transit, walking, and bicycling must become the primary means of fulfilling the City's mobility needs to meet these targets.

Environmental review per the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) will be conducted in the subsequent phase of the Project. It is anticipated that the Project will be statutorily or categorically exempt under CEQA Guidelines section 15304(h) – Minor Alterations to Land, 15301 – Existing Facilities, 21080.20 – Transportation Plans, Pedestrian Plans, and Bicycle Transportation Plans, or 21080.25. Staff anticipate filing a CEQA Notice of Exemption for this Project.

If the Project receives federal funding in the future, the Project would be subject to environmental review per the requirements of the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA). Based on recent similar projects such as the Southside Complete Streets Project, staff anticipate that the Project would be Categorically Excluded from significant environmental impacts under NEPA, but that determination would be made as part of a subsequent environmental phase if federal funding for construction is awarded.

FUTURE ACTION

The City will be initiating a Request for Proposal (RFP) to select a qualified consultant to assist staff with engineering Concept 3C to the 100% Plans, Specifications, and Estimates (PS&E) phase of the project.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF FUTURE ACTION

The PS&E phase is funded with \$1,011,000 from Measure BB Fund 135 and Vehicle Registration funds Fund 133 from the Alameda County Transportation Commission (approved by the Berkeley City Council on October 15, 2024 [Resolution No. 71,538-N.S.], and the Alameda County Transportation Commission on May 8, 2025). Construction of the project remains unfunded.

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