

MAY 2021

FOCUS GROUP PRESENTATION

WALK THIS WAY!

An Underpass Improvement Toolkit





UNDERPASS IMPROVEMENT TOOLKIT CONTENTS

Improve Safety
Lessen Negative Sensory Impacts
Neighborhood Connectivity GOALS

Design Solutions

TOOLS

Lighting
Signage
Furnishings
Surface Treatments
Public Art
Planting
Architecture+Engineering

Caltrans
City of Oakland
BART
PG&E

Agency Navigation

HOW?

Permits
Fees
Meetings
Signatures

Summer 2021





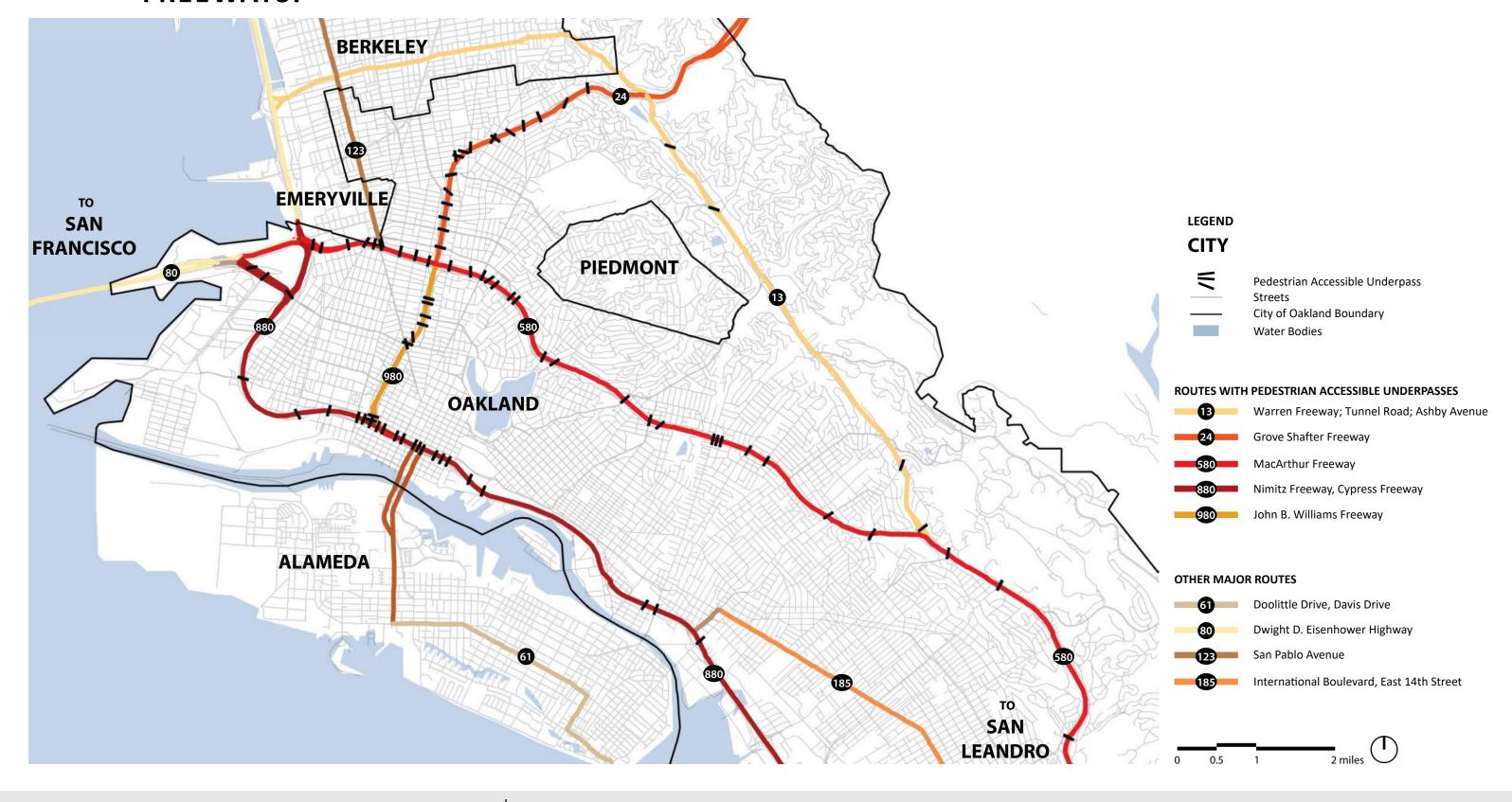
WHO?

POST-PRESENTATION PROMPTS ON PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IN OAKLAND'S UNDERPASSES

- 1. Which underpasses are the most uninviting, concerning, or unsafe?
- 2. What are typical improvements for underpasses, and what else would you like to see?
- 3. What types of partnerships are needed to accomplish and maintain improvements?



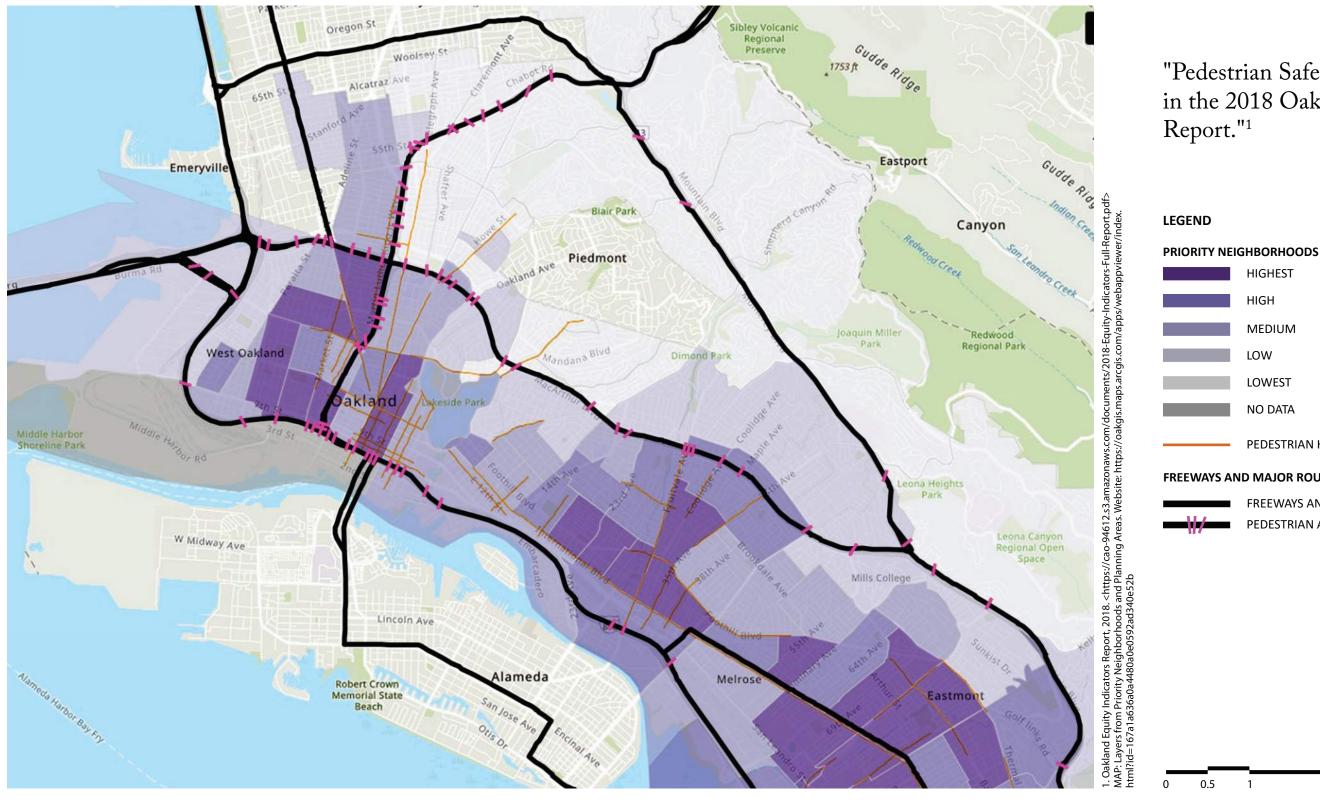
OAKLAND HAS OVER 85 PEDESTRIAN-ACCESSIBLE UNDERPASSES ACROSS 5 DIFFERENT FREEWAYS.







THE CITY'S DEPARTMENT OF RACE AND EQUITY OAKLAND EQUITY MAP VISUALIZES PRIORITY NEIGHBORHOODS AND PEDESTRIAN HIGH INJURY CORRIDORS.



"Pedestrian Safety scored 1 out of 100 in the 2018 Oakland Equity Indicators

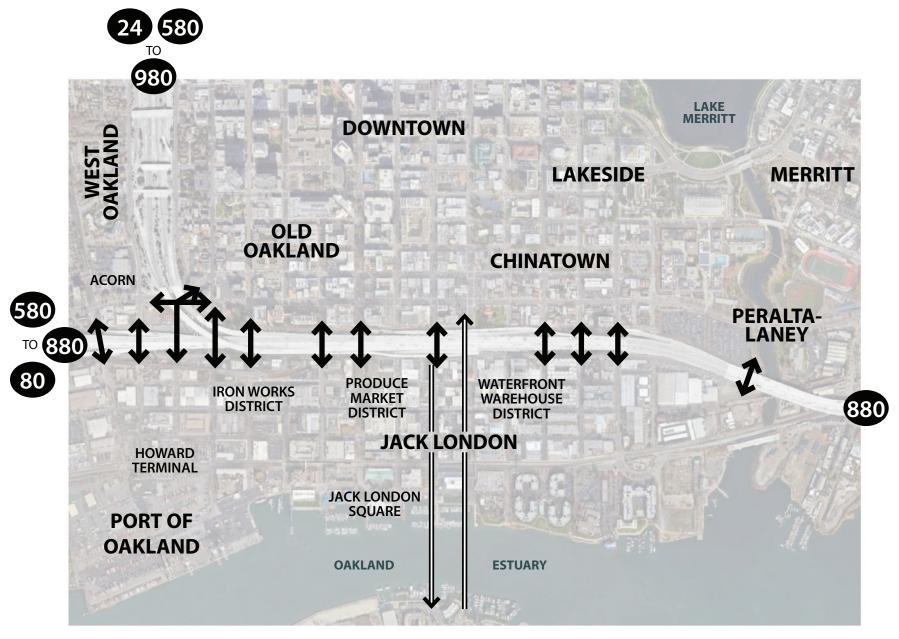






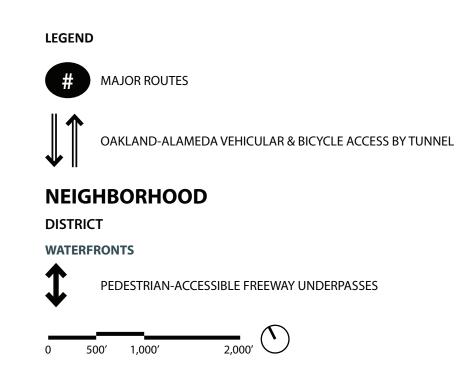


NEIGHBORHOODS ARE OVERLAID WITH AND DIVIDED BY FREEWAY INFRASTRUCTURE. FREEWAY UNDERPASSES ARE ESPECIALLY CHALLENGING TO PEDESTRIAN SAFETY AND MOBILITY.



1. Downtown Oakland Specific Plan Public Review Draft Plan (08/28/2019)

"The I-980 and I-880 **freeway crossings** separate the downtown core from West Oakland, Jack London, and other surrounding neighborhoods. The **access roads** adjoining the freeways and **on/off-ramps** are unpleasant walking environments that disrupt the pedestrian grid and create a barrier to walking safety to downtown from surrounding neighborhoods."¹





STUDY AREA: THE TOOLKIT STUDIES 4 UNDERPASSES TO DEVELOP DESIGN SOLUTIONS AND AGENCY NAVIGATION FOR UNDERPASS IMPROVEMENTS.



 $MAP: Layers from \ Priority \ Neighborhoods \ and \ Planning \ Areas. Website: https://oakgis.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=167a1a636a0a4480a0e0592ad340e52backs. The substitution of the$

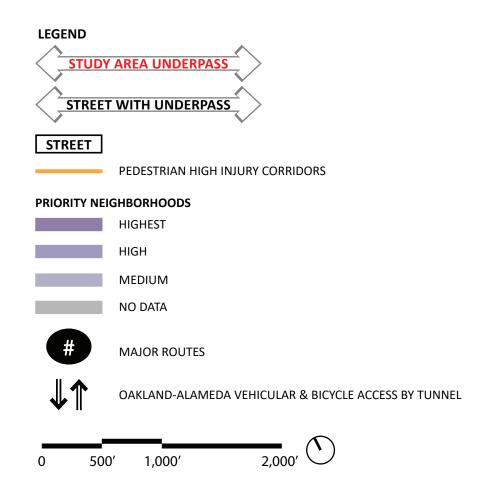
1. U.S. Census Bureau (2019). American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Retrieved from Census Reporter Profile page for Census Tract 4030, Alameda, CA http://censusreporter.org/profiles/14000US06001403000-census-tract-4030-alameda-ca/

2. Oakland Equity Indicators Report, 2018. https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/2018-Equity-Indicators-Full-Report.pdf

In Chinatown:

- 57% of people walk or take public transit to work;
- over 70% of people speak a language other than English at home;
- 39.5% of residents are 65 years old or older 1

30% of streets in majority Asian census tracts fall on the City of Oakland Pedestrian High Injury Network - the highest percentage of any ethnicity. ²







THE EXISTING CONDITIONS STUDY IDENTIFIES NEGATIVE SENSORY IMPACTS & COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF UNDERPASSES.

OAK STREET UNDERPASS FACING NORTH



OAK STREET UNDERPASS FACING SOUTH



VEGETATION

1 Mature street trees parallel to I-880

SIGNAGE

2 Crosswalks at every street crossing; traffic & walk signals

5 Directional Signage for On/Off-Ramp Traffic

FENCING

3 50% Permeable Galvanized Steel Picket Fence

4 Chain Link with Screening; Locked gates

AIRSPACE

4 Oak Street Community Cabins; Parking

ON/OFF-RAMP 6 Greater fluctuations of vehicular speeds

UTILITIES New Utilities Adjacent to, Within Sidewalk

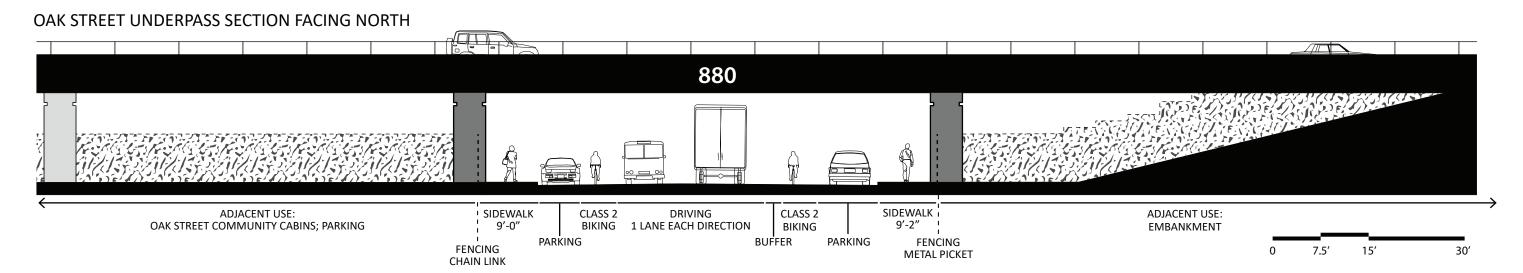
EMBANKMENT 8 Dense Groundcover, Mature Trees

VISIBILITY 9 High-contrast darkness in underpass





PLAN AND SECTION DRAWINGS FURTHER DEFINE THE PHYSICAL ELEMENTS THAT IMPACT A PEDESTRIAN'S EXPERIENCE.





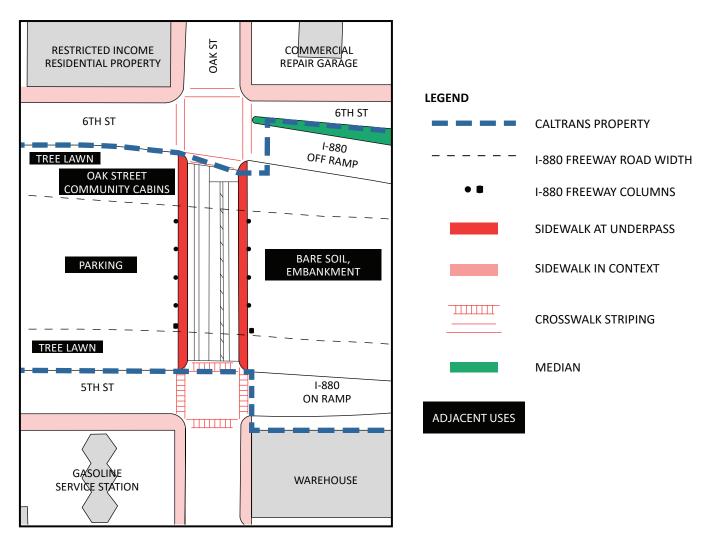
COLUMNS

AIRSPACE

FENCING

RIGHT-OF-WAY

ON/OFF-RAMP





CONDITIONS UNIQUE TO EACH UNDERPASS ARE OBSERVED AND NOTED.















UNDERPASS SIZE	14'-5" high, 130' deep			
SIDEWALK SIZE	East: 9'-2" / West: 9'-0"			
ADJACENT USES	East: Sloped Soil Embankment West: Airspace leased for: Oak Street Community Cabins (north of freeway); parking beneath and south of freeway. Freeway on- and off-ramps introduce additional tension between pedestrian crossings and freeway traffic.			
FENCING	East: Chain link fence (6'), permeable metal picket fence (7'-6" - 8') West: Chain link fence (6'), with privacy screening at/near Cabins; gates secured with locks, chains, and electronic keypads.			
VEGETATION	East: Sloped embankment, bare soil in shade and wild growth in sun. West: Mature trees parallel to the freeway. Weeds and overgrown vegetation on both sides.			
SIGNAGE	Signage for drivers leaving off-ramp for landmark orientation, for approaching freeway on-ramp. Restrictive pedestrian signage.			
STRIPING	Crosswalks exist at each approach to underpass. 1 crosswalk split by median.			
ACOUSTICS	Day-Night Average Sound Level On Street - 73 dBA At Underpass - 75 dBA			
ACCOSTICS	Avg Leq(h) On Street - 68 dBA At Underpass - 70 dBA			
VISIBILITY	Embankment area is dark during day and night. This contrast reduces the sense of safety & security for pedestrians.			





THE EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY IDENTIFIES PATTERNS IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT THAT INFLUENCE A PEDESTRIAN'S EXPERIENCE.

The lower & deeper the underpass, the area will be in a darker & longer period of daytime shadow

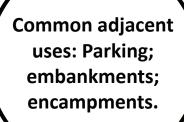




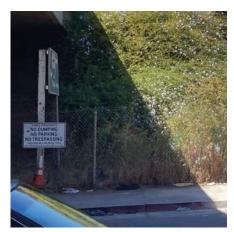
Sidewalks range from narrow, at 3'-0", to ample, at 9'-6".









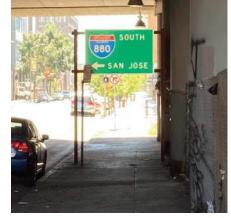


Hostile **Architecture:** Curved, pointed steel top fencing; barbed & razor wire atop fencing





Signage is typically oriented to either pedestrians (restrictions) or vehicles (wayfinding).















MANY UNDERPASSES DO NOT PROVIDE ADEQUATE LIGHTING BY CITY STANDARDS.

ISSUES CAUSES SOLUTIONS

VISIBILITY

LIGHTING

Poor visibility for drivers and pedestrians of one another

Poor visibility upon approaching the underpass during daytime

Poor visibility within underpasses at night

The scale of vehicular-oriented transportation infrastructure, its large columns, embankments, vegetation, parked cars

Eyes adjusted to daylight cannot equally define forms in deep shade that lacks additional illumination

Insufficient quality of lighting

Increase high contrast signage and symbols to allow drivers and pedestrians to anticipate and see one another

Reduce contrast between daylight and underpasses by increasing light in underpass

Improve uniformity and quality of lighting



Typical existing LED luminaires



Example of dark embankment areas



Example of high contrast in daytime conditions



Typical existing nighttime conditions



Example of poor vertical illumination



Example of glare caused by existing luminaires







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Example of poor vertical illumination



Example of glare caused by existing luminaires





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ACOUSTIC MEASUREMENTS ARE ABOVE THE THRESHOLD FOR FOSTERING SUSTAINED, EASY COMMUNICATION.

	ISSUES	CAUSES	SOLUTIONS
ACOUSTICS	Loud sound of freeway traffic contributes to stress	Sound of freeway traffic overhead	
		Sound of vehicles accelerating at on-ramps and decelerating at off-ramps next to underpass	Sound attenuation system along sides of freeway
		Sound of surface traffic beneath underpass reflected and echoing on underpass	Sound absorbing elements below freeway, either on ceiling or vertical elements in relation to sidewalk
		Sound of traffic reverberating at Webster Tube tunnel	Sidewalk

Guidelines for Community Noise, World Health Organization

- "Sentences may be 100% intelligible
- with a raised voice in ambient noise environments up to 55 dBA; and
- with a strained voice in ambient noise environments up to 65 dBA.
- For **vulnerable groups** (e.g., elderly, hearing impaired), lower ambient noise levels are often needed to achieve acceptable levels of speech intelligibility."





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Study Area Noise Measurements

• The study area underpasses noise measurements are 70 dBA - 78 dBA, and **commonly exceed 100dBA** during high noise level vents (e.g. sirens, motorcycles).



Oakland



SPECIFIC ELEMENTS OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT CAN IMPACT A PEDESTRIAN'S SENSE OF PHYSICAL VULNERABILITY.

	ISSUES	CAUSES	SOLUTIONS
		Sound of cars overhead	Install wayfinding tools designed for pedestrians at underpass intersections
		Speed of cars overhead, at ramps and nearby roads	
			Install signage for off-ramps to warn about
PHYSICAL VULNERABILITY	Fast moving cars intimidate pedestrians	Wayfinding signs are oriented toward drivers, while pedestrian signs emphasize restrictions	pedestrians
	Drivers' do not expect pedestrians to be present	Visual language of neighborhoods is lacking near on- and off-ramps	Improve lighting hue and brightness for pedestrian comfort alongside driver and cyclist safety
	Drivers' focus is on on- and off- ramps and		
	navigation Low visibility of other individuals in dim lighting	Certain hues of light decrease visibility in underpasses	Follow pedestrian standards for furnishings, especially fencing
	Isolation due to minimal eyes on underpass and presence of pedestrians	Poor connectivity to adjacent streets and sidewalks	Widen sidewalks, particularly near intersections
			Use adjacent airway space for public space and
	Sense of hostility toward pedestrians	Sharp fencing and barbed wire	events
	Lack of traffic safety	Narrow sidewalks especially at intersections	Add wayfinding signage not only at underpass, but in intersections leading up to it
		People avoid underpasses for all reasons stated here	Improve maintenance of plants and refuse
		Poor maintenance of plants and waste	





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THE TOOLKIT ORGANIZES DESIGN SOLUTIONS IN CATEGORIES GUIDED BY AGENCY JURISDICTION AND PERMITTING PROCESSES.

Improve Safety

Lessen Negative Sensory Impacts

GOALS

Neighborhood Connectivity







LightingSignageFurnishings

Surface Treatments

Public Art

Planting

Architecture+Engineering

Airspace





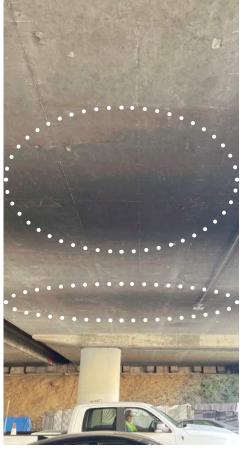
MAINTENANCE, STANDARDS, ENHANCEMENT & ART IMPROVE VISIBILITY.

















- Maintenance: Routinely powerwash underpass ceiling, especially where traffic stalls.
- City of Oakland standards-level street lighting: at intersections adjacent to underpasses and within underpass (e.g., pole-mounted to match adjacent street light standards, uplighting, in-ground, wall lights, ceiling lights)
- Use of low glare illumination sources for improved visual comfort and safety
- Artistic or decorative lighting installations.





SIGNAGE CAN SPEAK TO BOTH PEDESTRIANS AND DRIVERS, AND PROVIDE WAYFINDING FOR ADJACENT NEIGHBORHOODS, DISTRICTS & PLACES.













- Pedestrian-friendly wayfinding signage on posts, using high contrast colors
- Develop pedestrian wayfinding signage that extends from underpass to adjacent intersections and streets
- Gateway/Monument-scaled features in the right-of-way





FURNISHINGS INVITE PEDESTRIANS INTO THE UNDERPASS; HIGH-CONTRAST, COLOR, AND LIGHT BRING DRIVERS' ATTENTION TO PEDESTRIAN SPACES.

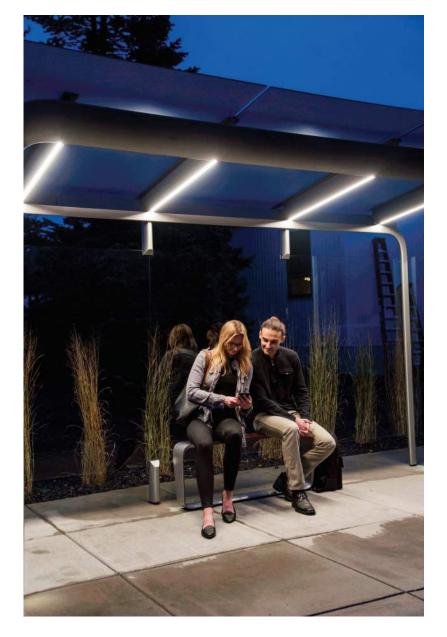












- Maintenance: Routinely clean site furnishing elements.
- High-contrast bollards at crosswalks.
- Remove all barbed and razor wire
- Decorative elements such as privacy slats, custom vinyl screening, or ribbon, to existing fencing
- Relocate fencing behind columns (pair with incorporating columns into a broader graphic identity strategy)
- Incorporate portable toilets and handwashing stations into broader graphic identity







TEMPORARY OR PERMANENT SURFACE TREATMENTS CREATE PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED WAYFINDING AND SPACES.



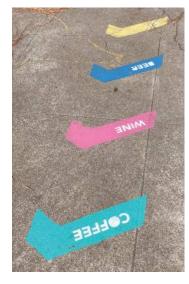














- Mulch, ballast, or other crushed stone over bare soil to reduce noise buildup.
- Application of high reflectance coatings to underside of structure
- Application of sound-absorptive treatments to underpass structure
- Painted high-contrast crosswalk pattern and extend pattern onto underpass sidewalk.
- Painted sidewalk graphics for wayfinding
- Tiled or painted graphic design on underpass walls or columns
- Painted graphic pattern on roadway (distinguished from crosswalk patterns)
- Paint sides of freeways as wayfinding





PUBLIC ART, FOLLOWING THE SPECIAL PUBLIC ARTS COMMISSION PROCESS, BRINGS PLACE-MAKING TO UNDERPASSES.

















- Copyright may be required to transfer to CalTrans
- Mural program, temporary or permanent, on walls and columns
- Install art anchored to ground, or affixed to underpass walls (more permitting)
- Site public art as gateway in medians, embankments, or on the widened sidewalk adjacent to underpass





PLANTINGS AND MOVABLE PLANTERS BRINGS A NEIGHBORHOOD SCALE TO INFRASTRUCTURE AND DEFINES SPACE FOR DIFFERENT USES.













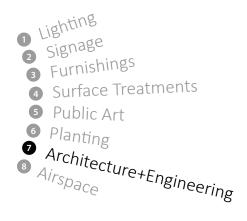


- Maintenance: Maintain vegetation and accumulating waste in planting areas
- Planting in ground or movable raised beds to define different spaces (i.e. sidewalk, airspace, roadway, encampments)
- Neighborhood- and pedestrian- scale planting design at embankment





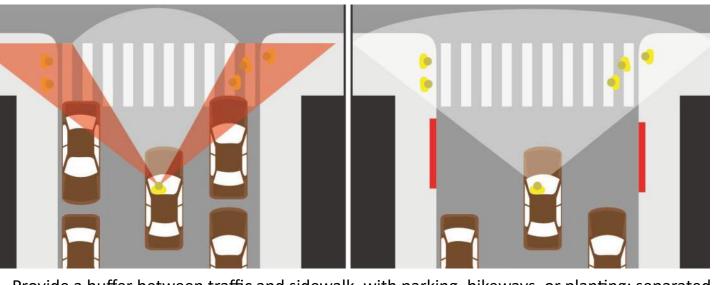
UNDERPASS WALLS AND EMBANKMENTS CAN INTEGRATE MATERIALS AND FORMS TO CREATE PEDESTRIAN-ORIENTED SPACE.













- Provide a buffer between traffic and sidewalk, with parking, bikeways, or planting; separated Class IV bike facilities
- Provide multi-modal safety standards (e.g., parking daylighting, widen sidewalks, speed bumps, bump-outs, flashing bollards, accessible pedestrian crosswalk signals)
- Integral colored concrete or pavers in roadway or sidewalk
- Use decorative exposed aggregate, stone, concrete scoring or formliner, or pavers for surfacing of embankment slopes and walls.
- Re-shape embankments to neighborhood-scale forms such as smaller, terraced, retaining walls.
- Decorative, all-weather metal cladding (steel, corten) panels (such as cladding used on sides of buildings, parking garages, utility infrastructure screening) on sides of freeway
- Modify or remove non-structural underpass walls to widen pedestrian space
- Incorporation of sound attenuation elements that are decorative or sculptural
- Modify pedestrian and traffic circulation patterns
- Shield pedestrian spaces from vehicular traffic using continuous solid barriers
- Divide the road and sidewalk with a fully enclosing wall





INCLUDE AIRSPACE AND LAND THAT RUN PARALLEL TO THE FREEWAY IN UNDERPASS IMPROVEMENT SOLUTIONS.







- Extend lighting strategies parallel to freeway into airspaces
- Extend mural program into columns and walls in airspace
- Move fencing substantially inward into airspace, away from columns and the sidewalk, to broaden pedestrian and publicly accessible space
- Move fencing parallel to freeway behind trees planted along the freeway, to bring the landscape into the pedestrian's streetscape
- Maintenance: Neighboring airspace must be kept on routine maintenance for waste and vegetation





DISCUSSION PROMPTS FOR PEDESTRIAN SAFETY IN OAKLAND'S UNDERPASSES

- 1. Which underpasses are the most uninviting, concerning, or unsafe?
- 2. What are typical improvements for underpasses, and what else would you like to see?
- 3. What types of partnerships are needed to accomplish and maintain improvements?





5/27 Focus Group Meeting Notes

1. Which underpasses are the most uninviting, concerning, or unsafe?

- **Ener** - Resident near study area underpasses. Underpass safety and improving connections for Chinatown Residents in -both- directions, to waterfront, to businesses in Chinatown, to BART station. Improves life for both neighborhoods. Main point: Design interventions (9 categories) are only effective if they support and serve -function-.

2. What are typical improvements for underpasses, and what else would you like to see?

Which are good underpasses? The few: Rockridge BART station, parking and freeway is relatively high, important because it is multi-functional - parking on weekdays and free parking on weekends for surrounding businesses. Has to serve another use to attract people. Kids' favorite: San Pablo Ave Under 580 @ Emeryville border - the light filter across the woman's face - isn't successful as a underpass because teh underpass across the street isn't used by anyone. If it doesn't have an attraction to stay and admire it's not as successful.

3. What types of partnerships are needed to accomplish and maintain improvements?

- **Greg** - Set an appropriate goal: is anyone ever really going to choose to be under an underpass? There may be exceptional circumstances to linger - you'd have to spend a lot of resources into one underpasses to make that a great place, and upkeep/maintain it in that way - when all you have to do is take a few more steps to get out of the noise. You're better off helping people in a humane way get through. Art can do that. The presentation mentioned activities, furniture - why is anyone going to choose to sit there? I would always prefer to sit on one under the sun.

Lightcloud at Madison St. Underpass: It's demise has come after five years of process. People need to cross these, crosses them all the time (incl study area ones). Terrifying experience of the need to get through. Underpass is not the destination but it's a huge barrier to something not far away. Sense of dread. It's about mitigation: noise, visual experience (darkness), sense of safety. This was designed to be interactive just in providing light as safety - focus the resources on 1 underpass, on one side of the street - getting the people to one will increase driver's awareness. CalTrans process became intractable after 5 years. Not cost feasible. Madison Street: Connects to BART, Broadway: connection - most important to connecting to downtown.



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- **Greg** continued: Reconnecting JL to Downtown is so important. Typical improvements - Lighting, lighting, lighting, lighting. Interesting and artistic. And art. Humanizes and creates safety.

Partnerships: CalTrans has no desire. Structured for building & cleaning freeways. Lack of support/interest. A partner that has leverage over CalTrans is needed. City doesn't have enough leverage. State level change to put pressure on CT.

- **Ener**: 100% Agree. Almost no underpasses where I would prefer to linger. Very few exceptions Harvey Dog Park in Rockridge. Rockridge BART kids skateboard there. Best use for most underpasses: clean and well lit/maintained parking lot. Safety requires supporting an existing/successful business district/community. Then the art & other treatments can come in after that has been set.
- **Savlan** Reiterate the failure of these spaces, bisecting this massive psychological/physical barrier. Damaging to the enjoyment of Oakland's waterfront. Glorious spaces just a few steps beyond. Must function as a passageway, safety, legibly, clarity of destination on other side.

Also a problem caused by freeway-adjacent land uses. Ex. Broadway - Police Station, County buildings all contribute to the uninviting / harrowing nature of this area. The surface streets are unsafe particularly due to cars traveling to/from Alameda. The passage is inhumane. Regurning to CalTrans reluctance to improve street level.

Exit interview for Greg: This was funded, supported by adj neighborhoods. No real barriers. What killed it, let's fix that - needed for replicable solutions.

Priority: Broadway, especially, over Madison. B-way most important of all, spine of DT. Madison, Webster (Chinatown connector).





5/27 Focus Group Meeting Notes

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-Sara - Office at tunnel in study area. The problem isn't at the underpass only. Problem is 200' longer at Broadway. Versus Rockridge BART -good uses directly adjacent. CT jurisdiction is harder, outside of CT jurisdiction could be easier.

Waterfront connection - Some do better than others. Madison not as good; Broadway - great, Oak/Webster - not bad. What does it actually connect to? This matters. Prioritizing BART stations. Broadway breaks my heart.

CalTrans does different things in different neighborhoods. Lights on the Bay Bridge, in some underpasses in better neighborhoods. Frame this in terms of equity, fairness, racial justice. This geography has been slighted, we need to right a wrong. DOT data supports this. Given the history of highways. Different tactic to put pressure.

One or two things that I like about underpasses - brutalist, slice of light, there are qualities to each one to make more of. Hard to put up anything as big as freeway. Celebrate what they are, own them for what the are. Creepy Seattle freeway troll, memorable even if not lingering. Fix everything up to the inch TO the CalTrans space.

MacArthur BART 40th St - Blue lights - Walter Hood but they don't light up anymore.

- Ener - Macarthur BART would be better if lighting worked, still not terrible because it has a multi-modal entry. Lighting, art could make the space better - picking, choosing, prioritizing which can be saved is important.

Righting historical wrong: Remove 980 Group - Risks being a boondoggle that eats up resources that detracts from other needed projects. Big federal funding - incremental approach, to improve what we have. Alternative to one big move.

- Sara - NOLA Planner that says freeway removal could be a disservice for people who work far from home.





5/27 Focus Group Meeting Notes

1. Which underpasses are the most uninviting, concerning, or unsafe?

-Chris - MacArthur is example of CT improvements. Adjacent uses: chicken and egg. Freeway wears down neighboring streets for less walk in/traffic. Ripple effect outward.

2. What are typical improvements for underpasses, and what else would you like to Discuss lighting project in detail later.

3. What types of partnerships are needed to accomplish and

maintain improvements?

see?

MacArthur was an easement which made the work more possible-take out of CT hands.

-Greg - Intentional about early/preliminary review of art concept, other examples (University Ave in W Berkeley), mapped out 'no fly zones'. CT continually adjusted/changed requirements: 3' from column vs column footer. Standards always changed, constraints from freeway/maintenance people. Must be removable with basic tools. Set of expectations: CT yields to no one. Safety/lack of interest in responsibility.

Copyright: Flexible artist group, had to be approved by Congress, figured it would work for CalTrans. Unfair. Artist must give up all rights. Perpetuity & obligations, all rights forever, if we ever tell you to take it down, must be within a matter of hours.

CalTrans Legal: Unwilling to waver. Artists were paid to make concepts. CT wanted rights from all rights from concepts - go back and revise contracts from 5 years ago.

O&M: All maintenance is at prevailing wage.

Tried to have artwork treated as lighting, not art. CalTrans called them out on that. Seems to be a pathway, potentially. The fact that it was ART created other requirements.

Do it from a public safety view for success.





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- **Audrey** We'll follow up further. Calling it a lighting project. Underpasses as pass through. Pedestrian orientations: bulb outs, trip hazards, lighting at entries.
- **Phoenix -** Resistance & complexity of change that people can exist with these damn freeways. Emphasize dopamine, seratonin in these underpasses. Little feels good while walking and traveling. Calls always on complexity of change. Not enough emphasis on public health existing in the urban environment. We have to move past this to get to a point where we travel through underpasses and we think of health and enjoyment of life.
- **Dave** Deals with CT a lot. CT asks for patience, interest in changing with leadership at top and bottom. Underpasses: University Ave in Berkeley, at MacArthur BART good examples. Get people out of cars, onto buses especially Alamedans. Remove freeways (980), 880 doesn't need to be as wide OAAP is downsizing freeway, but not enough. If OakDOT can replace 980 with housing and open/park space, that could give opportunity to downsize 880.

Audrey - Next Steps.

- -Summarize
- -Send out
- -Integrate comments into Toolkit, especially barriers & what are steps process ways to addressing that
- -Toolkit Timeline This is the First iteration. Publish by end of the summer.
- -Around then, we will provide additional feedback.





Questions & Comments:

Audrey Harris at aharris2@oaklandca.gov

Project Website:

https://www.oaklandca.gov/projects/walk-this-way



