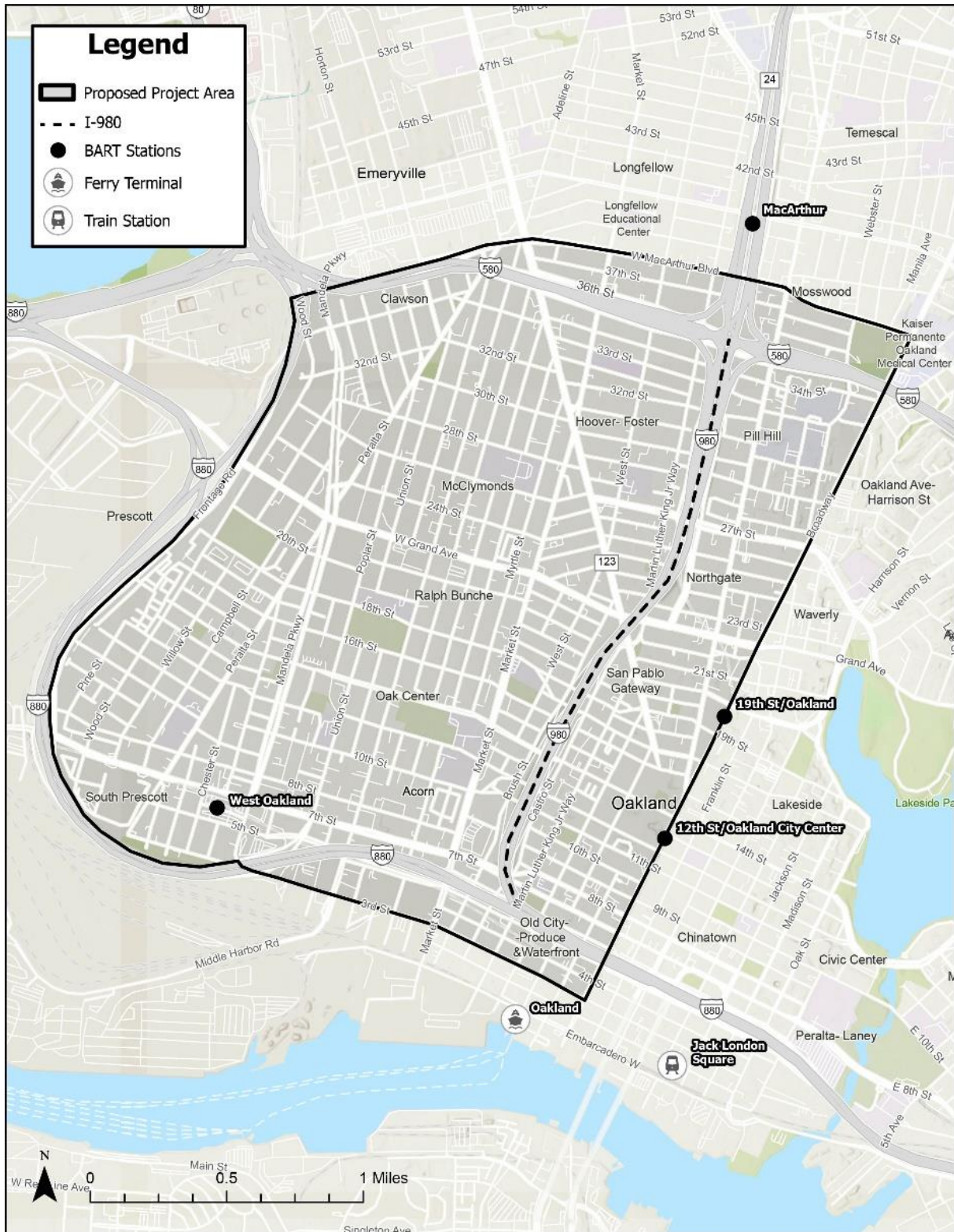


| | |
|--|--|
| Location: | The Interstate 980 corridor between I-580 and I-880. |
| Assessor's Parcel Number | N/A |
| Proposal: | <p>The Vision 980 Study will explore alternatives for reconnecting communities along the I-980 corridor, with an expanded focus on community integration and environmental justice. The Study area is bounded by I-880 to the west, W. MacArthur Boulevard in the north, Broadway to the east, and 3rd Street in the south. The I-980 freeway extends two miles in length to connect I-880 with I-580 and CA 24. It is a 560-foot-wide freeway corridor that divides underserved communities in West Oakland from Downtown Oakland; and is a barrier to travel and economic opportunities between these communities. The Vision 980 Study aims to improve the quality of life for impacted residents through a community-led and equitable visioning process that seeks to reimagine the I-980 freeway corridor to create new opportunities for land uses such as housing, businesses, open space, recreational, and cultural facilities.</p> <p>Phase 1 of the Vision 980 Study will identify a new collective land use and transportation vision for the corridor based upon a robust collaboration with partners, stakeholders, and the public. A community-supported concept/vision will be advanced to Phase 2, which will focus on a feasibility analysis. The study will demonstrate Caltrans' commitment to rebuilding community trust in the State by acknowledging past harms, reintegrating communities, addressing environmental justice, and improving multimodal transportation options.</p> |
| Applicant: | Caltrans Bay Area (District 4) in partnership with the City of Oakland, Alameda CTC, and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. |
| Contact Person/Phone Number: | Becky Frank, Branch Chief, Community Planning Branch, Office of Regional & Community Planning 510-960-0883, becky.frank@dot.ca.gov |
| Owner: | N/A |
| Case File Number: | N/A |
| Planning Permits Required: | N/A |
| General Plan: | N/A |
| Zoning: | N/A |
| Proposed Environmental Determination: | Not a project under the California Environmental Quality Act. |
| Historic Status: | N/A |
| City Council district: | District 3 |
| Status: | N/A |
| Staff Recommendation | Receive an informational report and provide comments. |
| Finality of Decision: | PC to receive the report, make comments, and receive public comments. |
| For further information: | Contact Michelle Matranga at (510) 238-3550 or by email at mmatranga@oaklandca.gov |

MAP OF PROJECT AREA FOR THE VISION 980 STUDY



**CITY OF OAKLAND PLANNING COMMISSION
INFORMATIONAL STAFF REPORT ON CALTRANS VISION 980 STUDY**

SUMMARY

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is conducting the Vision 980 Study (Study) to hear from the community about ways to establish trust and reimagine the Interstate (I-) 980 corridor. The I-980 freeway divides neighborhoods in West Oakland from Downtown Oakland, and is a barrier to travel and economic opportunities. The Vision 980 Study aims to improve the quality of life for impacted residents through a community-led and equitable visioning process that seeks to reimagine the freeway to create new opportunities for land uses such as housing, businesses, open space, recreational, and cultural facilities.

Caltrans acknowledges past injustices related to the planning and construction of I-980, including racially discriminatory decision-making, resulting in major displacement of homes and businesses. The Vision 980 Study seeks to document economic disinvestment, environmental impacts, safety challenges, and other harms to a once-thriving Black neighborhood in West Oakland.

This report provides the Planning Commission with an informational update and opportunity for comments regarding the Vision 980 Study, with information provided by Caltrans District 4 (D4) staff. The Study area is bounded by I-880 to the west, W. MacArthur Boulevard in the north, Broadway to the east, and 3rd Street in the south. The Study is divided into two phases: Phase 1 includes a community-driven visioning process, and Phase 2 includes conceptual design and implementation strategies. Beginning in April 2024 and lasting until the end of 2025, Phase 1 of the Study will identify a new collective land use and transportation vision for the entire I-980 corridor (from I-580 to I-880) based upon a robust collaboration with partners, community organizations, and the public. Phase 2, beginning early 2026 and lasting through late 2027, will build upon Phase 1 work to develop a deeper feasibility analysis, including modelling and forecasting, conceptual alternatives, an equity assessment, and strategies for implementation.

This report was developed by Planning staff in coordination with Oakland Department of Transportation (OakDOT) and Caltrans D4 staff.

BACKGROUND

Historical Context

After two decades of planning, construction of I-980 began in 1968 to connect the recently completed Grove-Shafter Freeway (SR-24) and Cypress Freeway (I-880) with a new eastern approach to a proposed second San Francisco Bay Bridge crossing which was never built. Before construction of the I-980 freeway, West Oakland was a vibrant and active community featuring a prosperous business district along 7th Street. Due to policies that created and maintained segregated housing by limiting housing choices for the African-American community and other people of color, the neighborhood was predominantly home to members of the city's African American community from various socio-economic levels, ranging from lower-income residents to affluent members of the community. By the 1960s, West Oakland had suffered from decades of disinvestment as a direct result of federal redlining policies and suburbanization aided by white flight after World War II. Other major infrastructure projects, such as the construction of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system and the United States Postal Service processing facility (with both initiating construction in 1966) contributed to displacement and disruption of a thriving community that had little political power to stop these developments. Ultimately, the I-980 freeway construction involved taking over

42 acres of property, including the removal of 503 houses, 155 trees, four churches, 22 businesses, and 142 jobs.

In the early 1970s, development of I-980 was paused after the northernmost elevated portion was completed (with ramps beginning at 18th Street), as community members sued the state to demand replacement of the 503 housing units that were demolished. Community leaders, including the Black Panthers and Mayor Lionel Wilson, eventually urged Caltrans and Governor Jerry Brown to complete the highway with a below-grade connection to reduce impacts on the neighborhood while also committing to employing a percentage of racial minorities in the construction of the freeway and City Center redevelopment projects. I-980 was finally completed in 1985, fully encircling the West Oakland neighborhood with freeways, although many of the promised employment benefits did not materialize.

Today, I-980 extends two miles in length to connect I-880 with I-580 and CA 24. It is a 560-foot-wide partially recessed and partially elevated freeway that bisects West Oakland from Downtown Oakland. When the I-980 freeway was completed, it facilitated access for suburban communities to reach central business districts in San Francisco and Oakland, a move that local political and business leaders saw as economically beneficial. However, its construction separated West Oakland from the rest of the city and contributed to ongoing disinvestment, air and noise pollution, a decrease in land and property values, and increasing street safety concerns for pedestrians, cyclists, and transit users. The I-980 freeway cut a wide swath through the West Oakland neighborhood the size of a city block. Out of approximately 30 pre-existing cross streets, only around half of those connections remained after freeway construction, and many were designed with limited pedestrian infrastructure and zero bicycle facilities. The I-980 freeway's excess width, which would have allowed for eventual expansion if needed, created extra-long crossings for pedestrians attempting to reach Downtown, adding to the unpleasant and often unsafe experience. I-980 also has 10 on- and off-ramps in its short length, increasing the complexity of many intersections and discouraging people from crossing without a motor vehicle.

West Oaklanders were promised new housing and other civic improvements, which was not commensurate with their loss; and broader economic benefits for the community have failed to materialize. The construction of I-980 also resulted in significant displacement of African American residents and contributed to ongoing disinvestment, disconnection, and pollution in West Oakland.

Project Goals

Caltrans acknowledges past injustices related to the construction of I-980, including racially discriminatory decision-making. The Vision 980 Study seeks to advance community reconnection, multimodal access, and equity through a collective revisioning of the I-980 corridor that involves communities who have been directly affected. In recent years, Caltrans and the United States Department of Transportation have both developed Reconnecting Communities grant programs to support local jurisdictions in repairing the community harms perpetuated by freeways or other transportation infrastructure. The Vision 980 Study received a Federal Reconnecting Communities Pilot grant of \$680,000 for Phase 2 with the City of Oakland as a co-applicant.

The City of Oakland has adopted policies in the Downtown Oakland Specific Plan (DOSP) to invest in connectivity, public realm, and complete streets improvements; encourage infill development and leverage publicly owned land for housing; and study the long-term feasibility of capping or replacing the I-980 freeway to better connect West Oakland and Downtown, while creating opportunities for new housing, green space, and other uses. Under this policy, revenues from public land along the I-980 corridor would be used to repair inequities caused by the creation of I-980, and support walking, biking, and transit. The City of Oakland is committed to working with Caltrans on a plan that equitably reconnects West Oakland with Downtown Oakland, including repairing harm done to the West Oakland community.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Vision 980 Study is a two-phase study to develop a “reconnecting communities” plan for the I-980 freeway corridor running between West Oakland and Downtown Oakland. The Study is funded, in part, by the Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Program, which is a federal initiative aimed at addressing the negative impacts of transportation infrastructure that has divided communities. The program offers Planning Grants and Capital Construction Grants for work focused on removal or mitigation of barriers such as highways and railroad tracks, prioritizing projects that benefit economically disadvantaged communities.

The Downtown Oakland Specific Plan calls for reimagining the design and function of this corridor to better serve all Oaklanders, suggesting options such as near-term multimodal improvements to overpasses and long-term transformations that could include a new boulevard with potential new land uses like housing, mass transit, and open space. Potential transformation could include connections with the regional Link 21 project, which is studying developing a second transbay crossing for passenger rail, as well as other improvements to the regional transit system.

In collaboration with the City of Oakland and local communities, Caltrans is exploring all ideas for reconnecting neighborhoods divided by the I-980 corridor and delivering more equitable outcomes for the City, the Bay Area region, and the State of California. Caltrans is open to a wide range of options for reimagining the I-980 corridor. The vision could include minor improvements to the existing freeway overcrossings and ramp alignments, the addition of a freeway cap/deck park or other community-serving facility on top of the existing sunken freeway, the removal and redevelopment of some on/off ramps, removal and redevelopment of the I-980 mainline, or other options offered as part of the study’s community engagement. The community vision in Phase 1 may include a combination of short-, medium-, and long-term improvements for the corridor and the feasibility analysis in Phase 2 will identify short-, medium-, and long-term implementation options.

Caltrans is coordinating closely with three partner agencies to develop the Vision 980 Study: the City of Oakland, Alameda County Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC), and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC). Caltrans staff began meeting regularly with these agencies in 2023 and began a “soft launch” for the Study that same year by presenting the planned study to, and answering questions from, nearby Neighborhood Councils and relevant City commissions, including the Bicyclist & Pedestrian Advisory Commission, the Mayor’s Commission on Persons with Disabilities, and the Youth Commission.

In robust collaboration and outreach to partner agencies, community organizations, and the public, Phase 1 of the Study will identify a new community vision for the I-980 corridor, and is funded by a \$500,000 grant from the Federal Highway Administration’s State Planning & Research (SP&R) program. To assist with this work, Caltrans is contracting with WSP, who has engaged with subconsultants RBA Creative, Urban Strategies Council, West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project (WOEIP), West Oakland Health Council (WOHC), and Arup.

Phase 1 of the Vision 980 Study (Spring 2024 through the end of 2025) began formally in April 2024 after onboarding WSP and establishing a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). The Phase 1 TAC includes 10 members from public agencies and 6 members from community benefit organizations (CBOs). The public agency representatives include the City of Oakland’s Race & Equity Department, City of Oakland’s Planning & Building Department, OakDOT, Alameda CTC, MTC, AC Transit, Alameda County Public Health Department, BART/Link 21, Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), and the Port of Oakland. The CBO representatives include the West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project (WOEIP), the West Oakland Health Council (WOHC), Urban Strategies Council, West Oakland Cultural

Action Network, ArtEsteem, and Capacity 4 Equity & Success Program (C4ES). Phase 1 Study tasks include corridor definition, a baseline assessment of existing/future conditions for the corridor, development of an evaluation framework (including equity performance measures), scenario development/visualization/ evaluation, and extensive outreach and public engagement. The final Phase 1 Study Report (due at the end of 2025) will include a recommended corridor concept/vision and identify next steps.

Phase 2 of the Vision 980 Study, anticipated to begin in early 2026 and last through late 2027, will analyze the feasibility of the vision identified in Phase 1, using the evaluation framework established during Phase 1. Phase 2 of the Study will recommend specific corridor concepts, determine future implementation strategies, and provide next steps toward project development/implementation, including cost estimation and identification of potential funding sources. Phase 2 is funded with a Federal Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) grant of \$680,000 and matching state funds of \$170,000.

Phase 2 will also include determination of the legal and legislative needs to implement the community's vision, including the potential for relinquishment, particularly if some or all of the I-980 right-of-way is envisioned for redevelopment. Although the Study will establish a future vision that may include new land uses within the I-980 corridor, the transportation agency does not develop its own excess land; instead, Caltrans would work with the City of Oakland to establish a Specific Plan that aligns with community priorities, similar to the Transbay Redevelopment Project in San Francisco. Following the completion of both Study phases, Caltrans and its partner agencies would begin work on locating funding for near- and long-term elements, developing additional plans (including Project Initiation Documents, environmental documents, and/or specific plans), and establishing project phasing.

Thus far in Phase 1 of the Study, WSP and Caltrans have drafted an Outreach & Engagement Plan, convened the TAC, began preliminary outreach, and held three TAC meetings and three public workshops, both in-person and online. Led by RBA Creative, which has longstanding connections to the West Oakland community, public engagement thus far has also included focus groups with longtime West Oakland residents, popup outreach at pre-existing community events like the Juneteenth celebration, mobile workshops at events like First Fridays, and a virtual public workshop. Two more rounds of engagement are planned for Phase 1, first to gather comments on potential scenarios in mid-2025 and then to share the results of the Study in late 2025.

Early engagement has focused on explaining the potential Study outcomes and alternatives, gathering feedback on previous harms, understanding methods for establishing trust between Caltrans and the public, and listening to community concerns and ideas for the existing freeway corridor. Future outreach will present conceptual visualizations of project alternatives for specific input, and will include Caltrans-hosted open houses and mobile workshops/walking tours near the I-980 corridor. Public engagement is focusing on outreach to current and displaced residents of the I-980 corridor in several neighborhoods of West Oakland and Downtown Oakland. Phase 1 will also include wider outreach and surveying of the entire Oakland community.

During the preliminary "soft launch," Caltrans received constructive feedback from community members, including a desire for increased multimodal transportation options, open space/parks, and affordable housing. Community members wanted to ensure Caltrans recognized previous feedback given on many plans/projects for the area, and many are rightfully concerned about the potential impacts a freeway transformation project could have on rent/housing prices, gentrification, displacement, and existing unhoused residents.

Website link: www.vision980.org, or <https://dot.ca.gov/caltrans-near-me/district-4/d4-projects/vision-980>

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The Vision 980 Study area is bounded by I-880 to the west, W. MacArthur Boulevard in the north, Broadway to the east, and 3rd Street in the south. The Vision 980 Study will evaluate the future of the entire I-980 Corridor, which is currently owned and operated by Caltrans. This evaluation includes robust public engagement with West Oakland and Downtown Oakland communities, as well as broader outreach citywide. The current status of planning is conceptual, and no specific parcels have been identified for land use changes at this time.

GENERAL PLAN ANALYSIS

Land Use and Transportation Element (LUTE) Policy Alignment:

The Vision 980 Study supports the goals and policies in the Land Use and Transportation Element (LUTE) of Oakland's General Plan through alignment with several implementation policies in the West Oakland Specific Plan (2014) and Downtown Oakland Specific Plan (2024), including but not limited to the following:

- West Oakland Specific Plan, Complete Streets-2: *Improve existing connections across or under freeways to activity centers, in particular on Mandela Parkway at I-580 and on West Grand Avenue at I-980, using lighting, public art, way-finding signage, acoustics, and other design features.*
- Downtown Oakland Specific Plan, M-2.7 New Transbay BART Crossing & Station: *Consider locations for a second transbay crossing and new BART Station in downtown. Evaluate locations such as, but not limited to, I-980, Broadway, Franklin, Webster, Clay Street or Washington Street.*
- Downtown Oakland Specific Plan, M-3.11 I-980 Replacement Feasibility Study: *Study the long-term feasibility of replacing I-980 with a multi-way boulevard or "lid" park over the freeway to better connect West Oakland and downtown and increase climate change mitigation and resilience while creating opportunities for new housing, green space, and other uses, using the revenues from public land to repair inequities caused by the creation of I-980, and supporting walking, biking, and transit.*

Race and Equity General Plan Compliance:

In September 2023, the City of Oakland adopted an Environmental Justice Element (EJ Element) as part of Phase 1 of the General Plan Update, which constitutes the baseline against which the Race and Equity Impact Assessment for this project is determined. The EJ Element "serves as the foundation for achieving equity and environmental justice when planning for future growth and development in Oakland." The EJ Element identifies communities that are disproportionately impacted by environmental justice issues and proposes goals, policies, and objectives to reduce the unique or compounded health risks in these communities. It also contains a comprehensive table of actions to achieve those goals and objectives, many of which have already been implemented.

The project is consistent with the goals and policies outlined in the EJ Element including, but not limited to the following:

- EJ-7.2 Accessible Neighborhoods. Encourage active modes of transportation and transit accessibility by supporting neighborhoods that provide access to a range of daily goods, services, and recreational resources within comfortable walking or biking distance. Encourage transit

providers to prioritize, establish and maintain routes to jobs, shopping, schools, parks and healthcare facilities that are convenient to EJ Communities.

- EJ-7.5 Bicycle- and Pedestrian-Friendly Design. Prioritize designs that protect people that are biking and walking, such as improvements that increase visibility of bicyclists and pedestrians, traffic calming, and safer intersection crossings and turns. Improvements should also prioritize universal design so that improvements are usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialization.
- EJ-8.1 Meaningful, Relevant Engagement. Design and implement public engagement processes and events that emphasize participation from low-income communities and communities of color; that are driven by resident priorities, that are easily accessible and understandable and that provide meaningful opportunities for participants to influence outcomes.

ZONING ANALYSIS

The Vision 980 Study is currently in a conceptual stage and no specific land use changes, freeway re-alignments or new transit stations have yet been identified. At this time, it is too early to determine any proposed impact to or from the corridor’s existing zoning. If the community vision developed in Phase 1 includes proposed new land uses, staff recommends the City of Oakland develop a new Specific Plan for this area.

ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION

Because the Vision 980 Study is a planning study, it is not considered a project under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). During Phases 1 and 2 of the Study, Caltrans will document all public engagement and conceptual alternatives to ensure we are prepared for future CEQA/NEPA requirements.

KEY ISSUES AND IMPACTS

Given the harm caused by I-980 freeway development and other major infrastructure projects in West Oakland, Phase 1 of the Study will document and acknowledge these past injustices, including racially discriminatory decision-making related to the planning, construction, and operation of I-980 in a variety of ways. Working with community-based organization (CBO) subconsultants, TAC representatives, and the wider community, Caltrans will undertake steps to commit the agency and its leadership to acknowledging and repairing these community harms throughout the Study and with future project implementation. The project team is building new relationships with community members to understand what a preferred acknowledgment and harm repair process would look like to those most harmed by I-980. Visioning for Phase 1 will also focus on reintegrating the divided communities surrounding the I-980 corridor, addressing environmental justice, and improving multimodal transportation options and access to economic opportunities.

Anticipated challenges include ensuring longtime West Oakland and Downtown residents and community groups feel heard throughout the Study process; establishing a project vision that is supported by most residents of West Oakland and Downtown; ensuring preferred alternatives do not accelerate displacement or other negative impacts on legacy residents or other marginalized groups; maintaining community support throughout a multi-year planning and project development process; and securing funds for project implementation.

If the community's preferred concept includes partial or complete freeway removal, resulting in new land-use opportunities, Phase 1 will outline this vision for potential freeway removal and land redevelopment. Because Caltrans does not develop its own excess land, a staff recommendation would be for the City of Oakland to develop a specific plan for the area in partnership with Caltrans. This would allow the city to take the lead in developing the land in a way that aligns with local needs and goals, such as housing, job creation, and community revitalization.

To ensure the Study meets Caltrans' commitment to equity and does not perpetuate additional harm, all identified conceptual alternatives will be analyzed with a racial equity assessment using guidance from the City of Oakland. Phase 1 includes the development of equity performance measures and an evaluation framework. Caltrans has acknowledged an understanding that there are ongoing concerns about gentrification and displacement, and the Vision 980 project team has expressed commitment to working with the City to develop racial equity and anti-displacement strategies.

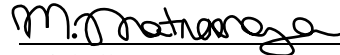
Caltrans has indicated an interest in welcoming all ideas for the transformation of the I-980 corridor and is considering all options for ways this freeway might be reimagined for existing and future users.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission receive an informational report on the Vision 980 Study.

For questions regarding this memo, please contact Michelle Matranga, Planner III, at mmatranga@oakland.ca.gov or (510) 238-3550.

Prepared by:



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Strategic Planning, Bureau of Planning

Reviewed by:



Joanna Winter
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Approved for forwarding to the Planning Commission:



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Bureau of Planning

ATTACHMENTS:

A. Vision 980 Presentation