

Oakland's Slow Streets and Essential Places Program

Oakland Department of Transportation, Safe Streets Division

<https://www.oaklandca.gov/projects/oakland-slow-streets>

January 20, 2022



City of
Oakland

Department of
Transportation

Timeline – Slow Streets and Essential Places Program



External Factors

March 16, 2020
Shelter-in-Place orders begin

Spring 2020

Restrictions adjust to allow new activities

Fall 2020

Schools open, travel patterns begin to resemble pre-pandemic

2021

2022

Slow Streets

**Phase 1:
Initial Roll-out**

April to July 2020:
Installed Slow Streets Corridors
May to July 2020:
Installed Essential Places Locations

**Phase 2:
Evaluation &
Modifications**

Evaluated the Program and initiated changes to maintain it for the ongoing pandemic

Phase 3: Sustainable Strategies

1. Expand Essential Places
2. Neighborhood Bike Routes → Slow Streets
3. Pop-Up Slow Streets

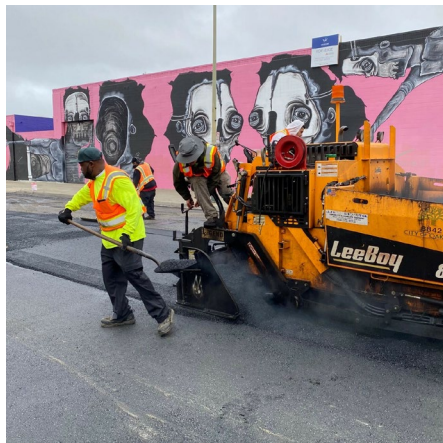
Almost 2 Years Later - From Temporary COVID-19 Emergency Response to Sustainable Institutionalization in OakDOT



OakDOT's mission is to envision, plan, build, operate and maintain a transportation system for the City of Oakland—in partnership with local transit providers and other agencies—and to assure **safe, equitable, and sustainable access and mobility** for residents, businesses and visitors.

Priority efforts from before and during the pandemic:

- **Safe Oakland Streets Initiative:** Responding to traffic violence with inter-departmental, equity-focused strategies
- **Five Year Paving Plan:** Fixing Oakland's streets, delivering cost-effective safety improvements to many streets, achieving the goals of Measure KK
- **Pedestrian Plan & Bicycle Plan:** Promoting safety and access to encourage and support walking and biking
- **Rapid Response Program:** Investigating and responding to severe and fatal pedestrian and bicyclist crashes with quick-build safety improvements
- **Grant-funded Capital Projects:** Bringing outside resources to Oakland for major street upgrades
- **Emergency Preparedness & Response** to wildfires, power shut-offs, sidschows, community violence, and crowd control



Phase 1 – Initial Roll-Out (April to July 2020)



Slow Streets Corridor on Wisconsin St and 35th Ave

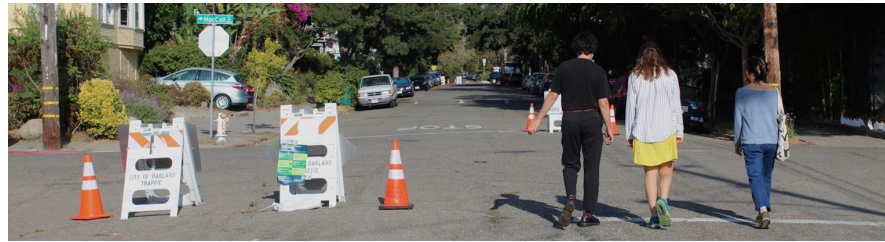


Essential Places Location at San Pablo Ave and Myrtle St

Slow Streets Corridors: 21 miles of **soft street closures to repurpose local streets for socially distant walking, biking, and other physical activities, alleviating sidewalk crowding and helping residents shelter-in-place.**

Essential Places Locations: **temporary pedestrian safety improvements** at 15 locations to support access to essential services including **grocery stores, food distribution sites, and COVID-19 test sites on high-crash corridors and in socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods.**

Phase 1 – Evaluation Findings (April to September 2020)



- Oakland Slow Streets created **space for physical activity without impeding necessary street functions.**
- Oakland Slow Streets received a lot of **positive support.**
- **Support and use of Oakland Slow Streets varied** by demographic and geographic group with the highest levels from higher income, White, and North Oakland residents. Essential workers and Deep East Oakland residents expressed that the program was not meeting their needs and conflicted with public health messaging.
- Oakland Slow Streets **communications did not reach enough Oaklanders.**
- For many Oaklanders, **traffic safety was a more important transportation issue** than creating space for physical activity, especially in socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhoods with less telecommuting.
- **Cones and barricades were not sustainable materials**, requiring extensive maintenance and generating significant replacement costs.

Phase 2 – Challenges (Fall 2020 through 2021)



~2 years of a **“temporary” program** where temporary materials = high maintenance

Declining use through time, even on popular corridors, as **California reopened, schools resumed, residents began driving more** again, and the virus was better understood

Waning support and growing complaints, especially from neighbors on nearby streets:

- “I supported during shelter-in-place but now…”
- Slow Streets criticized as “privatization”
- Diverted traffic unfairly affecting others
- Safety concerns at major cross-streets
- Drivers unable to use key traffic signals

Competition with other demands as OakDOT staff work to deliver safety improvements and respond to resident concerns

Phase 3 – Sustainable Strategies (beginning 2022)

Redirect staff efforts by **removing all temporary Slow Streets and Essential Places materials and shifting to longer-term improvements.** The removal of temporary materials, including the temporary street closures, will start in late January 2022.

1. **Expand Essential Places:** Prioritize essential services for quick build and permanent pedestrian safety projects.
2. **Neighborhood Bike Routes → Slow Streets:** Build a network that serves pedestrians, bicyclists, and micro-mobility users, and advance these streets as community space.
3. **Pop-up Slow Streets:** Support resident-initiated use of streets as neighborhood space for community-building.



Phase 3 – Expanding Essential Places

- Install **pedestrian safety improvements at essential services**, especially those serving our most vulnerable residents
- May include safety islands, hardened centerlines, bulb-outs...
- **Prioritize using High Injury Network and equity** factors like income and race
- Continue to use **temporary materials for rapid installation**
- Continue **systematically upgrading these locations to permanent** treatments (like concrete safety islands).



14th St and Market St



Adeline St and 18th St



Bancroft Ave and Avenal Ave

Phase 3 – Sustaining Essential Places



Location	Essential Service	Temporary Improvement (*)	Permanent Status
14th St at Filbert St	food distribution	Cone Lane Closure	Pending West Oakland Transit Access project
14th St at Myrtle St	food distribution	Cone Lane Closure	TBD
14th St/Market St	food distribution	"Go Slow" Signage	Concrete bulbouts installed
18th St west of Adeline St	food distribution	Cone Lane Closure	Hardened centerlines installed
18th St/Adeline St	food distribution	Automatic Walk Phase	Hardened centerlines installed
73rd Ave/Garfield Ave	food distribution, grocery store	Automatic Walk Phase	High-visibility crosswalk installed
Bancroft Ave at Avenal Ave	grocery store	Cone Safety Island	Upgraded to concrete safety island
Bancroft Ave/73rd Ave	food distribution, grocery store	Automatic Walk Phase	Pending 73rd Ave project
Bancroft Ave/Church St	food distribution, grocery store	Automatic Walk Phase	HSIP upgrades pending construction
Fruitvale Ave at E 15th St	testing site, grocery stores	Cone Lane Closure	Permanent road diet installed
Fruitvale Ave at E 16th St	health clinic	Cone Lane Closure	Permanent road diet installed
Fruitvale Ave at E 17th St	grocery store	Cone Lane Closure	Permanent road diet installed plus RRFB
Fruitvale Ave at E 18th St	food distribution	Automatic Walk Phase	Permanent road diet installed
Fruitvale Ave at E 19th St	community services	"Go Slow" Signage	Permanent road diet installed plus RRFB
San Pablo Ave at Myrtle St	grocery store	Cone Lane Closure & Bulbout	Pending ACTC San Pablo Ave project
(*) "Go Slow" Signage was installed as a temporary improvement at all locations.			

Phase 3 – Neighborhood Bike Routes → Slow Streets

Proposal: Build a Slow Streets Network that serves pedestrians, bicyclists, and micro-mobility users, and advances these streets as community space.

- Partner with the BPAC Infrastructure Committee to update the Neighborhood Bike Route Implementation Guide to be a “**Slow Streets Implementation Guide**”.
- Proactively **address nearby residents’ concerns** for diverted traffic and safety at major cross-streets through planning, outreach, and context-sensitive design.
- **Implement permanent Slow Streets** through the City’s Capital Improvement Program and the Five Year Paving Plan.
- **Near-term opportunities** include 8th St West Oakland, paving projects, and the East Oakland Neighborhood Bike Routes ATP grant.
- **Design elements** include new signage and markings (to be developed), speed humps, traffic circles, improvements at major street crossings, and context-sensitive diverters at key locations.



City of Oakland, Department of Transportation (OakDOT)
Safe Streets Division, Bicycle & Pedestrian Program | June 2021

Phase 3 – Pop-Up Slow Streets

- **Support neighbor-initiated use of streets as community space** by advancing opportunities for Pop-up Slow Streets.
- OakDOT is participating in a **multi-department effort to improve special events permits** in support of neighborhood block parties.
- "Pop-Up Slow Streets" is a way for residents to use their streets as community space by **experimenting with temporary street closures**.



Phase 3 – Policy Issues for Further Discussion

Building a **Slow Streets Network** is in tension with resident-initiated Pop-Up Slow Streets that are unlikely to result in a connected network.

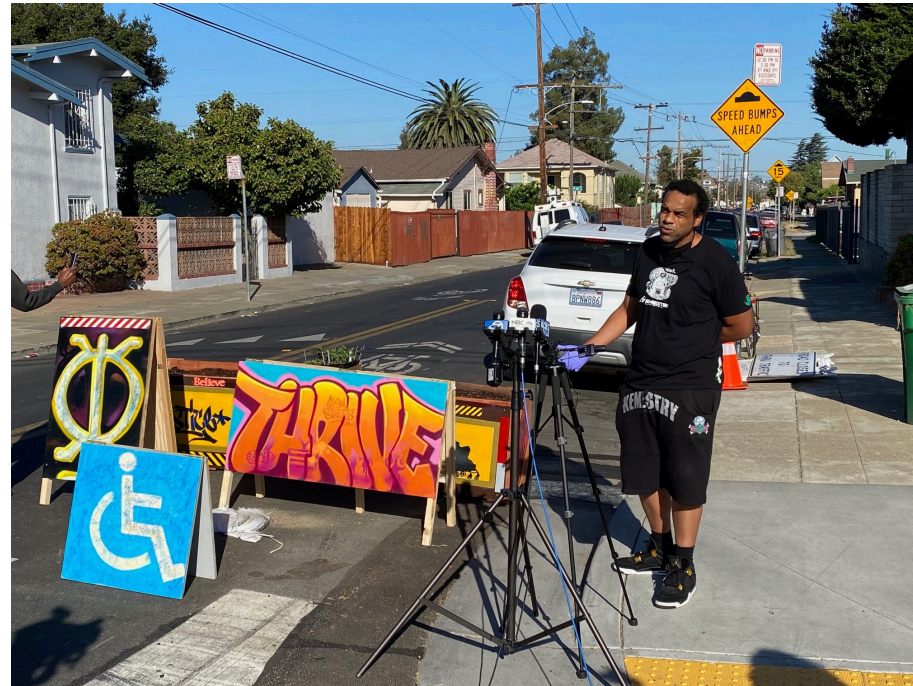
- *Proposal: Develop a naming convention to clarify this distinction.*

Many existing and proposed Neighborhood Bike Routes are on **“collector” streets** that are intended to be through streets for drivers.

- *Proposal: Seek opportunities to reclassify these streets as local streets.*

Per State law pedestrians do not have **right-of-way** in the street except at crosswalks.

- *Proposal: Use Oakland’s authority for traffic calming and temporary street closures to support pedestrian activity.*





Thank you

We couldn't have done it without your support!

City of Oakland staff including OakDOT Safe Streets Division, Nicole Ferrara, and Warren Logan

Local organization members and volunteers from Bike East Bay, Cycles of Change, East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation, East Oakland Collective, Just Cities, Oakland Bicyclist and Pedestrian Advisory Commission, Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce, Outdoor Afro, Reginald "RB" Burnette Jr., TransForm, UC Berkeley's Department of City and Regional Planning, and Walk Oakland Bike Oakland

Over 2,000 survey respondents and 311 commenters

Metropolitan Transportation Commission staff including Nicola Szibbo, Toshi Shepard-Ohta, Vicente Romero de Avila Serrano, **PlaceWorks staff** including Michael Nilsson, **Toole Design staff** including Kerry Aszklar Jessica Zdeb, and

so many others. Thank you!

