BERKELEY CITY COUNCILMEMBER
TERRY TAPLIN
DISTRICT 2

CONSENT CALENDAR
October 26, 2021

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Terry Taplin

Subject: Budget Referral: Reckless Driving and Sideshow Deterrence Improvements

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council refers to the FY2023 budget process the funding of sideshow deterrence infrastructure, traffic circles or botts' dots, at the following intersections:

- Seventh Street and Addison Street
- Eighth Street and Channing Way
- Bonar Street and Allston Way
- Bonar Street and Bancroft Way
- Additional intersections to be determined by the Transportation Division of the Public Works Department

The Transportation Division shall determine which intersections best qualify for bott's dots and which qualify for traffic circles.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

Sideshows, events where drivers take over street intersections to perform dangerous driving stunts, have been a common occurrence in the East Bay for decades. While these events often occur in large groups of vehicles with crowds of people gathering at intersections to observe, smaller groups of vehicles doing stunts in residential streets at night are just as common. These events present a safety threat to the drivers, active observers, and passersby when they are happening, with such reckless driving leading often to injuries among pedestrians and the drivers, as well as fights breaking out among the observing crowds.[1] Sideshows and smaller stunt driving events are constantly on the move between different intersections, and cities, on the evenings they occur, making deterrence by police officers difficult.

Due to the difficulties local police departments have experienced in enforcing traffic laws and shutting down sideshows, some cities have begun pursuing engineering solutions to deter sideshows before they can even begin. The City of Oakland, where sideshows are routine, has been at the forefront of experimenting with engineering solutions such as the use of "Bott's dots", which are circular tiles that raise pavement levels and specific points in the road. Botts's dots, commonly used on highways to mark lanes,

[1] https://www.kqed.org/education/531891/oakland-sideshows-should-they-be-legal

create a strong bump when driven over by vehicles and are now being explored in many cities as a possible deterrent for drivers seeking to drive recklessly in the middle of street intersections.[2] In the summer of 2021, the City of Oakland began installing botts' dots at intersections that are popular sideshow destinations in an effort to discourage unsafe sideshow driving activities.[3]

Close up of bott's dot.

Bott's dots installed at an intersection to deter sideshows.

[2] https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/sideshow-prevention-efforts

[3] https://www.kron4.com/news/bay-area/oakland-installs-botts-dots-to-help-deter-illegal-sideshows/

As the City of Berkeley studies an end to police involvement in traffic policing with its Reimagining Public Safety Task Force and the development of a Berkeley Department of Transportation, it is important that the City pursue as many engineering and infrastructural solutions as possible for the City's traffic and transportation issues. The use of traffic circles and Bott's dots are an opportunity to reduce sideshows and reckless driving without adding increased strains to our police budget by preventing these events from happening rather than by trying to enforce our traffic laws after they've already been broken. While there are a number of existing locations known for sideshow and stunt driving, the transient nature of these activities require further analysis to identify additional locations for the strategic placement of these deterrence measures.

FISCAL IMPACTS

Staff time for analysis of hotspot intersections and the implementation of improvements, an estimated $50,000 per traffic circle[4], and costs related to Bott's dots materials.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

No environmental sustainability impact.

CONTACT

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[4] https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Public_Works/Level_3_-_Transportation/Berkeley-Bicycle-Plan-2017_AppendixE_Project%20Recs%20Priorities(1).pdf