

CONSENT CALENDAR

April 27, 2021

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Terry Taplin (Author) and Mayor Jesse Arreguín (Co-Sponsor)

Subject: Budget Referral: Urgent Remediation of Unsafe Ninth Street Traffic Conditions

RECOMMENDATION

That the City Council refers to the budget process the funding of traffic calming, traffic diversion, and bike network improvements on Ninth Street between Gilman and Ashby Avenue including but not limited to:

1. Three traffic diverters, one within each collector/arterial segment that currently lacks a diverter:
 - a. Gilman to Cedar
 - b. University to Dwight
 - c. Dwight to Heinz
2. Six permanent traffic circles, including
 - a. Ninth and Page
 - b. Ninth and Virginia
 - c. Ninth and Channing
 - d. Ninth and Parker
 - e. Ninth and Grayson
 - f. Ninth and Heinz
3. Two ADA-compliant, bicycle-friendly speed tables per block
4. Re-engineer the diverter at 9th and Delaware to prevent cut through traffic on 9th, particularly from casual carpool during morning rush hour
5. Initiate a community engagement process to elicit neighborhood feedback and prepare a pilot program for quick-build protected bike lanes along Ninth Street between Bancroft Way and Heinz Avenue
6. Green bike waiting spaces on Ninth Street at University Avenue, both northbound and southbound with loop detectors for bikes at the waiting boxes.
7. Three STOP signs on the north, east and west ends of the intersection at Ninth and Murray Street

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

On March 16th of this year, Jackie Erbe, a Berkeley resident and mobility justice activist with Walk Bike Berkeley, was struck by a motorist and severely injured while biking with her 8-year old child at Ninth and Channing. Jackie sustained major injuries including a fractured vertebrae and broken femur but her child was not physically harmed . Following two successful surgeries, she is expected to make a long, but full, recovery.¹

Unfortunately, such tragic collisions are too common in Berkeley. Every year, on average two people die and 21 people sustain severe injuries on Berkeley streets due to traffic violence.² Moreover, though about 10% of all trips in Berkeley are made by bike, 39% of severe and fatal collisions are suffered by bicyclists. Jackie was injured on a Berkeley Bicycle Boulevard that is also a “Healthy Streets” segment where bicycle travel is intended to be safer and prioritized over automobile traffic, demonstrating that urgent action is needed to make even the City’s most bicycle-friendly streets safe.

Berkeley’s Healthy Streets network, established last year amidst a sudden growth in the desire for walkable and bikeable residential streets during the COVID-19 lockdown, is a collection of approximately two miles total of residential streets that are “recommended for local traffic only, to accommodate people who are already moving off of narrow sidewalks and using traffic lanes to walk, bike, or jog while maintaining a safe six foot distance from one another.”³ Current Berkeley’s Healthy Streets segments are:

- 9th Street from Hearst to Dwight
- Russell Street from Adeline to Mabel
- Addison Street from Sacramento to Grant

The specific streets that encompass the Healthy Streets network are a carve out of Berkeley’s “Bicycle Boulevards”, which were envisioned by the City’s Bicycle Plan as “a continuous and connected system of ‘Low Stress’ bikeways that provide safe and comfortable travel for all users and link to all key destinations in Berkeley.”⁴ Both the Healthy Streets and Bicycle Boulevard network, while important visions for a Berkeley that is safe and traversable by bike, lack much more than signage and sparse traffic calming and diverters. The fact that Jackie Erbe’s injuries occurred at Ninth and Channing, the intersection of two Bicycle Boulevards, shows how far the City is from delivering safe streets for cyclists and pedestrians. The slowwalking of the City’s progress on the Bicycle Boulevards and Healthy Streets has directly led to collisions like

¹ <https://www.berkeleyside.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Collision-Statement-Walk-Bike-Berkeley.pdf>

² https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Public_Works/Level_3_-_Transportation/Berkeley_Vision_Zero_Action_Plan_Approved_03102020.pdf

³ https://www.cityofberkeley.info/City_Manager/Press_Releases/2020/2020-06-10_Healthy_Streets_will_support_outdoor_recreation_during_COVID-19.aspx

⁴ https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Public_Works/Level_3_-_Transportation/Berkeley-Bicycle-Plan-2017_Ch5_ProposedBikewayNetwork.pdf

Jackie Erbe's and they will only continue if the City does not take immediate action to prioritize these streets for traffic calming and street safety infrastructure.

On top of the framework for the Bicycle Boulevard network, the City's Bicycle Plan has specific recommendations for traffic calming and diversion that must be acted upon on a short-term timeline in order to meet Berkeley's Vision Zero goals and prevent further tragedies from hitting our community. The Bicycle Plan's recommendations, which were developed with Berkeley's safety, health, and environmental goals in mind, are dominated by traffic circles, medians, diverters, and pedestrian hybrid beacons. Traffic circles and diverters are especially important for reducing "vehicle speed at intersections by requiring motorists to move cautiously through conflict points" and for reducing vehicle volume on certain streets by only allowing bicycles and emergency vehicles to pass through certain intersections, respectively.⁵ Broken down into priorities, Ninth Street improvements are among the list of "Tier 1" projects.⁶ Despite the extensive recommendations of the Bicycle Plan, safety conditions for cyclists are inadequate throughout Berkeley, least of all Ninth Street.

More than just the site of Jackie Erbe's injuries, Ninth Street is particularly important for prioritized safety improvements for a number of reasons. Ninth Street falls within a "Historically Underserved Area" and is therefore identified by Vision Zero, the Pedestrian Plan, and the Bicycle Plan as a target for the correction of historic disinvestment.⁷ At the state level, Ninth Street also falls within a "Disadvantaged Community" under SB 535.⁸ Cyclist and pedestrian collisions occur all over Berkeley, but West Berkeley in particular is an area notable for its historic lack of services and infrastructural improvements. West Berkeley's disinvestment is inextricable from its history as the home to Berkeley's residents of color for more than a century. Berkeley certainly isn't alone in its background in denying critical infrastructural and safety improvements to its communities of color. In fact, people of color are disproportionately impacted by unsafe traffic conditions all over the country. "From 2010-2019, Black people were struck and killed by drivers at a 82 percent higher rate than White, non-Hispanic Americans. For American Indian and Alaska Native people, that disparity climbs to 221 percent."⁹

⁵[https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Public_Works/Level_3_-_Transportation/Berkeley-Bicycle-Plan-2017_AppendixF_Facility%20Design%20Toolbox\(1\).pdf](https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Public_Works/Level_3_-_Transportation/Berkeley-Bicycle-Plan-2017_AppendixF_Facility%20Design%20Toolbox(1).pdf)

⁶[https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Public_Works/Level_3_-_Transportation/Berkeley-Bicycle-Plan-2017_AppendixE_Project%20Recs%20Priorities\(1\).pdf](https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Public_Works/Level_3_-_Transportation/Berkeley-Bicycle-Plan-2017_AppendixE_Project%20Recs%20Priorities(1).pdf)

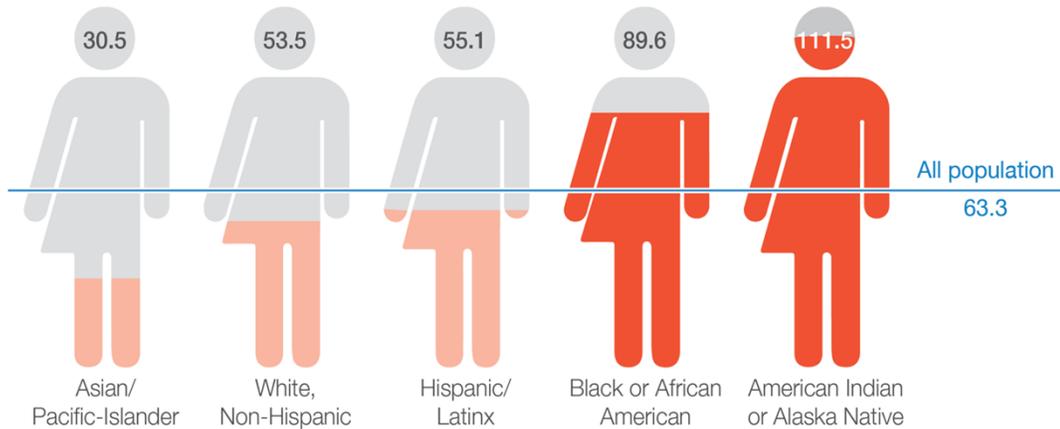
⁷https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Public_Works/Level_3_-_Transportation/Berkeley%202020%20Pedestrian%20Plan_Draft_2020-10.pdf

⁸ <https://oehha.ca.gov/calenviroscreen/sb535>

⁹ <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/>

The burden is not shared equally

Relative pedestrian danger by race and ethnicity
(2010-2019)



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Bringing these improvements to Ninth Street will mark a big step towards improving safety for cyclists and pedestrians as well as the correction of historic injustice in the West Berkeley area.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

A considered alternative is to refer these traffic safety improvements to the Transportation Commission to explore the funding of these improvements with allocations from Transportation Network Company (TNC) tax revenue.

FISCAL IMPACTS

Staff time and costs associated with the traffic calming measures:

1. An estimated \$150,000 for 3 traffic diverters¹¹
2. An estimated \$300,000 for 6 traffic circles¹²
3. An estimated \$660,000 for 44 speed tables¹³
4. Staff time associated with re-engineering the diverter at 9th and Delaware
5. Staff time associated with community engagement process
6. An estimated \$7,000-\$80,000 for green bike waiting spaces at Ninth and University¹⁴

¹⁰ <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/>

¹¹ [https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Public_Works/Level_3_-_Transportation/Berkeley-Bicycle-Plan-2017_AppendixE_Project%20Recs%20Priorities\(1\).pdf](https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Public_Works/Level_3_-_Transportation/Berkeley-Bicycle-Plan-2017_AppendixE_Project%20Recs%20Priorities(1).pdf)

¹² [https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Public_Works/Level_3_-_Transportation/Berkeley-Bicycle-Plan-2017_AppendixE_Project%20Recs%20Priorities\(1\).pdf](https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Public_Works/Level_3_-_Transportation/Berkeley-Bicycle-Plan-2017_AppendixE_Project%20Recs%20Priorities(1).pdf)

¹³ https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Public_Works/Transportation/Traffic_Calming_in_Berkeley.aspx

¹⁴ [https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Public_Works/Level_3_-_Transportation/Berkeley-Bicycle-Plan-2017_AppendixF_Facility%20Design%20Toolbox\(1\).pdf](https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Public_Works/Level_3_-_Transportation/Berkeley-Bicycle-Plan-2017_AppendixF_Facility%20Design%20Toolbox(1).pdf)

7. An estimated \$1,800 for 3 STOP signs at Ninth and Murray¹⁵

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Establishing a network of safe streets for pedestrians and bicycles, promoting bicycle literacy, and distributing bicycles to those in need incentivize nonautomobile travel, reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The City estimates that transportation-related emissions accounts for approximately 60% of our community's total annual greenhouse gas emissions.¹⁶ By encouraging alternatives to car transportation by making pedestrian and cyclist infrastructure safer and more accessible, these improvements stand to lower the emissions from our community's dominant source of carbon emissions.

CONTACT

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¹⁵https://www.cityofberkeley.info/uploadedFiles/Public_Works/Level_3_-_Transportation/Berkeley%202020%20Pedestrian%20Plan_Draft_2020-10.pdf

¹⁶https://www.cityofberkeley.info/Clerk/City_Council/2018/12_Dec/Documents/2018-12-06_WS_Item_01_Climate_Action_Plan_Update_pdf.aspx