



# Highway 13 Corridor Improvements Tunnel Road Walkthrough and Discussion October 9, 2012

Public Works Department  
Transportation Division

## **Tunnel Road Walkthrough – 4:00PM to 6:00PM**

Group met at John Muir Elementary School and walked the project corridor from Claremont to the City Limits. At each location, a brief background of objectives, potential solutions, and past comments from email or previous site visit was provided. These items are summarized under each Project Location below.



## **Project Discussion – 7:00PM to 9:00PM**

The discussion was organized to go location by location in priority order. City staff provided a general background of each improvement, summarized objectives, potential solutions, and previous comments received. Discussion on each location was formatted to provide each attendee to provide their comments. City staff summarized comments on easel pads and posted them as the conversations occurred. The following summarizes the introduction from staff, previous comments received prior to the official walkthrough, and a summary of comments received from the public.



## **LOCATION A – ASHBY AVENUE/CLAREMONT AVENUE**

### **Staff Introduction**

The intersection of Ashby Avenue/Claremont Avenue is heavily used and is considered the highest priority location as part of this project. The intersection typically operates at or near capacity during the peak periods. Roadway widening is not feasible due to the presence of built out land uses on all corners of the intersection. One of the main safety concerns perceived at this intersection is the permissive eastbound and westbound left turns, which are required to yield to oncoming through vehicles while also yielding to pedestrians who may be crossing at the same time as the oncoming through traffic. One potential solution to this safety concern would be to convert the eastbound and westbound shared left/through lane to exclusive left turn lanes and modify the traffic signal phasing to provide a dedicated left turn phase to eliminate the permissive left turn phases.

### **Walkthrough Comments/Input**

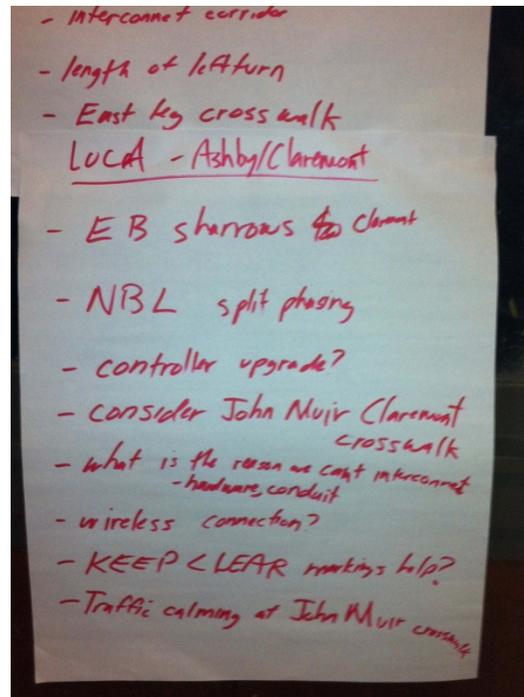
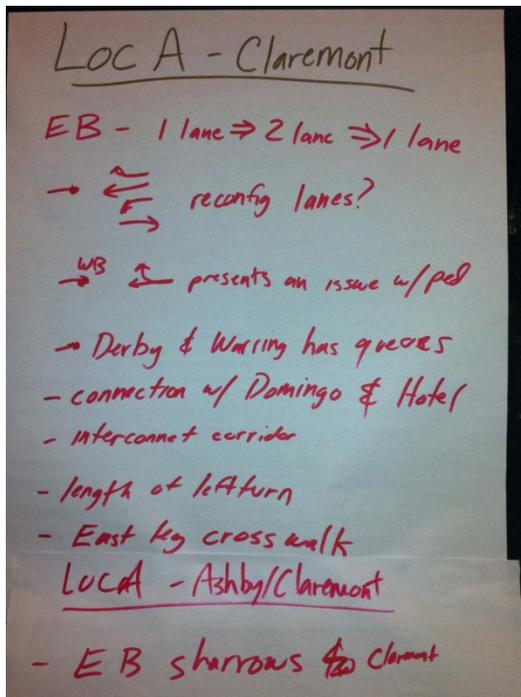
- If the shared left/through lanes were converted to left turn only planes, the eastbound direction would go from 1 lane → 2 lanes → 1 lane. Can we reduce to one lane to streamline traffic flow?
  - *City Response:* Reducing the through movements to one shared through/right would be difficult since single-lane approaches are susceptible to delay from pedestrian / right-turn conflicts
  - *City Response:* There are two southbound lanes feeding into eastbound Ashby, so these would have to change if the eastbound was reduced to one lane eastbound between Claremont and Domingo
- If westbound departure was reduced to one lane, eastbound approach could become a through/right, through, and left turn lane.
- Advanced warning signs would be needed to let motorists know of lane changes up ahead.
- How will a left-turn lane or pocket on the westbound approach work with regards to geometry and storage capacity given the proximity of Domingo?



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- John Muir Elementary School students frequently jaywalk on the east side of the intersection. Can we install a new crosswalk at this location?
  - *City Response:* Would need to be operated concurrent with northbound Claremont phase to avoid safety issues related to conflict with the double left-turns from southbound Claremont.
- The project should make sure that bike sharrows are installed on eastbound Ashby between Claremont and Domingo
  - *City Response:* Measures will be taken, but complicated by PM parking restrictions on south curb of Ashby. Need to determine best place to locate the sharrows.
- Based on all of these potential reconfigurations, does the controller need to be upgraded
  - *City Response:* Some minor modifications may be needed, but the city will review the details once a recommended reconfiguration is identified.
- A left-turn lane or pocket on the westbound approach could affect the safety conditions for the midblock crosswalk at John Muir Elementary School by introducing a pulse of vehicles down southbound Claremont.
- Has or will the City consider interconnecting all the traffic signals in this corridor?
  - *City Response:* There is a project on the lower tiers that would include interconnecting all the traffic signal on the corridor, and it was estimated to cost about \$750k.
- Can you interconnect the signals wirelessly?
  - *City Response:* The technology exists, but most jurisdictions do not use wireless interconnect
- Can we implement concurrent northbound / southbound phasing for Claremont?
  - *City Response:* Split phasing was introduced to reduce collision frequency. Concurrent phasing would require striping changes to southbound approach.
- Can we more effectively use the signal (timing, phasing, controller upgrade) to optimize operations?
  - *City Response:* The signal timing and phasing will be reviewed to optimize traffic operations for all options
- Cars are blocking intersection... Can we do a "box" treatment?
  - *City Response:* Box may not be wholly effective... City could consider targeted enforcement with assistance from Police Department.
- Can we use rumble strips as a means of traffic calming?
  - *City Response:* Typical "rumble strips" would present a safety issue with bicyclists, as well as a noise issue. City will look into other treatments to assist motorists from veering into the bike lanes.





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## LOCATION B – TUNNEL ROAD/THE UPLANDS/ALVARADO ROAD

### Staff Introduction

The intersection of Tunnel Road/The Uplands/Alvarado Road is currently unsignalized, and there is no marked crossing for pedestrians and bicyclists. The objectives for this intersection are as follows:

- Provide a safe pedestrian and bicycle crossing without increasing the amount of cut-through traffic on The Uplands and to not prohibit any turning movements that currently occur.
- Reduce the radius of the southwest curb return to slow down vehicles making the eastbound right turn at high speeds, but do not preclude the ability for vehicles to make the westbound u-turn movement.

The potential solutions to the first objective would be to install a traffic signal, a High Visibility Pedestrian Activated Beacon (HAWK Treatment), or a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB). The solution to the second objective would be to reconstruct the southwest sidewalk to require vehicles to slow down before turning right onto The Uplands.

During the walkthrough, residents to the south of the intersection mentioned that the traffic speeds on The Uplands presented a safety concern. Traffic calming or other improvements should be considered to improve the safety of the street. Anyway to reduce the amount of cut-through traffic would likely reduce speeds and make The Uplands safer. Another comment was that there are bicyclists that use The Uplands as opposed to the Tunnel corridor due to the perception that it is safer for bicyclists rather than riding in the shoulder of Tunnel Road between Claremont Avenue and The Uplands.

### Walkthrough Comments/Input

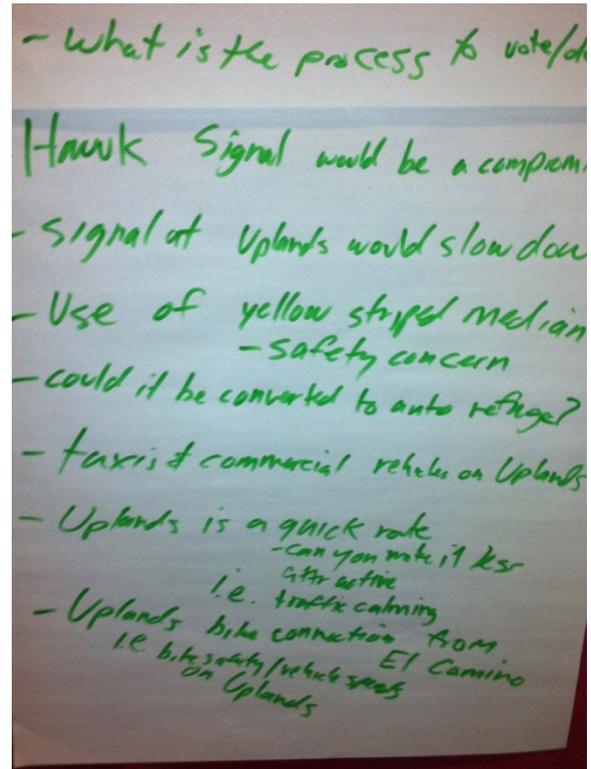
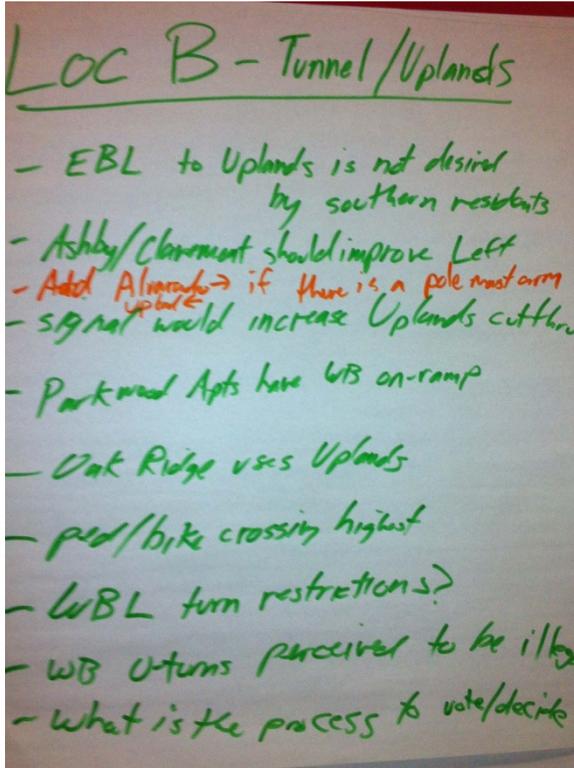
- Westbound left turn movement brings undesirable traffic to The Uplands... Can we look at time restrictions like what exists at Domingo?
- Residents along The Uplands are OK with a HAWK beacon, but are not in favor of a full traffic signal, which could add traffic to The Uplands
- May be a speeding issue instead of a traffic volume issue; commercial traffic and taxis from the Claremont Hotel may be speeding down The Uplands
- A traffic signal would be a desirable means of calming / slowing down traffic on the eastbound direction of Tunnel
- The Uplands is critical access to BART and western Berkeley for residents east of Tunnel and on Oak Ridge Road. Prohibiting traffic should be out of the question, but calming traffic, making The Uplands less attractive, could be an alternative
- Regardless of whether or not a signal is chosen, a ped/bike connection should take priority
- Any traffic improvements that would make the westbound left turn at Ashby/Claremont easier, safer, or more efficient would likely help reduce the desire for cut through traffic using The Uplands.
- Westbound U-turn is perceived to be illegal by eastbound motorists.
- Can we retain the striped median on Tunnel for residents making a northbound left turn movement from The Uplands as a refuge or two-way left turn lane / merge lane
  - *City Response:* Would need some consideration of design / treatment for the pedestrian crossing
- Intersection layout is very confusing. Can we improve street name signage?
  - *City Response:* Both HAWK beacon and signal could be designed with masts to allow for installation of large-typeface street name signs
- A traffic signal would likely reduce the speed of traffic on Tunnel Road around this intersection
- What is the process to determine what improvement will be installed here? A vote?
  - *City Response:* If a clear agreement is not reached, there may warrant a vote. The City will work with everyone's needs in mind before developing a recommendation.
- What is the purpose/function for the yellow hatched median? It's used as an auto and ped refuge at various times.
  - *City Response:* The yellow paint signifies it is a "median", not intended to be used as a legal place for auto or pedestrian refuge. This area will be evaluated based on what traffic control elements are recommended.
- The Uplands as a cut through is a quick route. Can you make it less attractive, i.e. traffic calming?
- The Uplands is also a bike connection from El Camino



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- There is a conflict between U-turn and right turns from Upland to Tunnel Rd. Any way to clarify for motorists would be helpful
- Consider removing parking to accommodate additional lanes if necessary



## LOCATION D – DOMINGO AVENUE AND RUSSELL STREET SHARROWS

### Staff Introduction

The segment of Domingo Avenue and Russell Street bound by Tunnel Road to the south and Claremont Avenue to the west is currently unmarked two lane road serving various retail uses. The project consists of adding “sharrows” to show motorists and bicyclists of the shared nature of the Class III bike route.

### Walkthrough Comments/Input

- There is a line of sight issue at the corner where Russell turns onto Domingo. There should be a crosswalk
  - *City Response:* There aren't curb ramps, so a crosswalk would not be appropriate at that location. City will look at this issue during the design process.
- Need to confirm city limits (Berkeley vs. Oakland) to determine extent of what the city can do on its own
- Traffic exiting from Claremont Hotel is big issue
- Need to install bike signage



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## LOCATION E – TUNNEL ROAD BETWEEN CLAREMONT AVENUE AND THE CITY LIMITS

### Staff Introduction

This improvement includes implementing bike improvements in both directions of Tunnel Road. During the recent Caltrans repaving project, the City and Caltrans were able to improve the striping in the westbound direction between the city limits and Bridge Road to install a buffered Class II bike facility (“bike lane”). The City and Caltrans also agreed on placing “sharrows” in several locations in both the westbound and eastbound direction. Caltrans is scheduled to complete the striping in this area by early November.

As part of this effort, the City has started evaluating the potential reconfiguration of striping and parking to accommodate bike lanes. A summary of the City’s approach and potential solutions are as follows:

### Westbound

- City Limit to Bridge Road – Enhance the recently restriped buffered bike lane to have green striping in the conflicts areas such as through the bus stops and intersections. Caltrans has asked the City to research pavement markings that would not present a safety issue when wet due to the grades of the roadway in this corridor.
- Bridge Road to Alvarado Road – Enhance the merge from a striped bike lane to “sharrows” with increased pavement markings “BIKE MERGE AHEAD”, advance signage, and placing green pavement under the “sharrows” for added conspicuity.
- Alvarado Road to Claremont Avenue – Place green pavement under the “sharrows” for added conspicuity.

### Eastbound

- Claremont Avenue to Claremont Hotel Driveway – Place green pavement under the “sharrows” for added conspicuity.
- Claremont Driveway to The Uplands – Install bike lanes pending the results of parking occupancy surveys and outreach to property owners on Tunnel Road to determine if parking removal is possible
- The Uplands to City limits – Install bike lanes pending the results of parking occupancy surveys and outreach to property owners on Tunnel Road to determine if parking removal is possible. Also includes coordinating the bike lane striping with the City of Oakland project to install a bike lane transition from the proposed to the existing up near the Tunnel Road/Hiller Drive intersection.

### Walkthrough Comments/Input

- Cars are drifting into the shoulder. There is a need better protection for bicyclists
- Consider special treatments such as Botts’ dots or rumble strips. Treatment can be designed to be biker-friendly if needed.
- In eastbound direction, there is difficulty moving into bike lane at Hiller due to conflicts with cars trying to enter the curbside lane
  - City of Oakland issue that will be addressed with special treatment
- In westbound direction, there is difficulty merging from the newly-striped bike lane into the sharrow section near Bridge
  - *City Response:* Signage has yet to be installed, so situation may improve... Can also consider pavement markings (“BIKE MERGE AHEAD”, etc.).
- There appears to be some conflict in posted speed limits along westbound Tunnel. At top near Hiller, speed limit is 35 mph, but in Berkeley, speed limit is 25 mph
- If we go with a HAWK beacon or signal at The Uplands, there needs to be a treatment to slow traffic down and alert motorists to the downstream signal
- Many bicyclists avoid the stretch of Tunnel between Domingo and Uplands due to safety concerns. Many bicyclists use The Uplands and El Camino as an alternative. City should consider improvements to this bike corridor as in addition to any improvements on Tunnel.
- There is occasional use of on-street parking by residents for occasions
  - *City Response:* On-street parking on some segments may technically be illegal anyways, however, as some parked cars encroach on sidewalk



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## LOCATION F – TUNNEL ROAD BETWEEN CLAREMONT AVENUE AND THE CITY LIMITS

### Staff Introduction

This improvement includes removing or relocating obstructions on the north sidewalk of Tunnel Road. There are signs and other obstructions that could be relocated or removed to make the sidewalk easier to traverse.

### Walkthrough Comments/Input

- Should keep the street trees. They slow down traffic, and provide cover from weather.
- Trees also provide some form of traffic calming so this corridor doesn't look like a highway
- Need better trimming / maintenance of hedges, bushes, etc. that encroach on the sidewalk
- Repair brick or tree uplift if necessary
- Trim overhanging trees

## LOCATION H – TUNNEL ROAD/DOMINGO AVENUE

### Staff Introduction

The improvements at the Tunnel Road/Domingo Avenue intersection include safety improvements for pedestrians and bicyclists. The objectives of the improvements at this intersection include improving line of sight between motorists and pedestrians, and signage improvements alerting motorists of the presence of pedestrians and bicycles. The potential solutions include increasing the sidewalk area on the north east and southeast corners so pedestrians waiting to cross Tunnel Road can be seen by motorists on Tunnel Road. Another potential solution would be to install signs warning motorists of upcoming pedestrians who could potentially be crossing the roadway.

During the walkthrough, it was mentioned that the southbound left turn, which is a permissive movement, conflicts with the east leg crosswalk. Due to the location of the crosswalk, vehicles don't always see a pedestrian in the crosswalk.

### Walkthrough Comments/Input

- Any vehicles waiting to make a westbound left turn push speeding traffic into the curbside lane, where they conflict with bike. This can also be a perceived safety issue for the vehicles making the westbound left turn.
- Bus stops in both directions can affect traffic flow, limit the capacity of the second or auxiliary lanes. UPS trucks will illegally park in bus stops
- Should clearly define which lanes are for which modes and which traffic movements to improve safety. Many of the problems now are related to the ambiguity and lack of clearly-defined road spaces
- Can we coordinate Domingo signal with Claremont Hotel signal? How about a wireless interconnect? Need better coordination between Berkeley and Oakland staff
- Westbound right turning vehicle often roll through the stop bar, causing safety conflicts with pedestrians.
- Any geometric improvements at Ashby/Claremont should be considered when evaluating changes at Tunnel/Domingo since the intersections are closely spaced and queues from Ashby/Claremont often spill back through Tunnel/Domingo.
- Many bikes cross Tunnel to access the bike route using Domingo, El Camino, and The Uplands.