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
Timeline – Slow Streets and Essential Places Program

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

External Factors
- March 16, 2020: Shelter-in-Place orders begin
- Spring 2020
- Fall 2020
- 2021
- 2022

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

Restrictions adjust to allow new activities
Schools open, travel patterns begin to resemble pre-pandemic
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, sideshows, community violence, and crowd control
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.
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.

Full Report Available at: https://www.oaklandca.gov/projects/oakland-slow-streets
Regular **maintenance** (five days per week) to keep cones and barricades in place.  
**Corridor-specific outreach** garnered mixed responses.  
Multiple **modifications** to improve and sustain the program:  
- Used **more durable materials** (mounted to the ground)  
- Accommodated **schools re-opening & AC Transit**  
- Additional **treatments at major intersections** (turn restrictions, setting barricades further back)
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).
### Phase 3 – Sustaining Essential Places

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

(*) "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.
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**.
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 Zdebor, and so many others. Thank you!