



Albany Strollers and Rollers
524 Talbot Avenue
Albany, CA 94706

21 December 2016

City Council
Transportation Commission
Transportation Division
Berkeley, CA 94720

Re: Draft Berkeley Bike Plan

Dear Council members, Commissioner, and Transportation Division staff,

Albany Strollers and Rollers (AS&R) appreciates that Berkeley is updating its Bicycle Plan in order to take the next steps encouraging the interested majority to give biking for transportation a try. As the city with the second highest share of people biking to work in the Bay Area, and one of the top ten bike commuting rates in the country, how Berkeley further accommodates cycling contributes to how the country accommodates cycling.

Albany has the fourth highest biking to work mode share in the Bay Area. Together with Berkeley it forms one of the two areas with the highest biking to work mode shares in the Bay Area, the other being Palo Alto/Mountain View/Menlo Park.

In the rest of this letter AS&R offers input it believes would improve the draft Berkeley Bicycle Plan if incorporated, and result in greater utilization of cycling as a means of transportation in both Albany and Berkeley.

Albany/Berkeley connections

To the second of these, Albany's Active Transportation Plan (ATP) defines separate relaxed and rapid cycling networks (termed "slow" and "fast" in the document). The former appears to be equivalent to the low-stress network proposed in the Berkeley Plan draft. In response in part to prior input from AS&R at the open house, the draft plan includes connections to all but one of the routes proposed in Albany. Thank you. The only missing connection is on Portland. Albany's current striping plan for this route is a cycling lane in the uphill (eastbound) direction and sharrows in the downhill (westbound) direction. AS&R requests Berkeley continue this route east to Colusa.

Even though the Berkeley plan includes all but one of the connections with Albany, it does not include many of the connections to relaxed routes in Albany in the proposed Berkeley low-stress network. AS&R asks that the connections on Talbot, Curtis, Posen, and Sonoma be added to the low-stress network.

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While the route connection at Sonoma is included in the plan, and is connected to a route on Josephine, AS&R requests including a route on Berryman connecting Josephine and Milvia. This connection minimizes climbing as compared to connecting to Milvia on either Hopkins or Rose. Both Hopkins and Rose also have far more motorist traffic, and require waiting at signals at Martin Luther King Avenue as compared to the faster crossing provided by the four-way stop on Berryman.

If Berryman is included as a route, AS&R suggests upgrading its entire length to a bike boulevard. Besides providing the best connection in north Berkeley between Josephine and Milvia, it connects to two schools and a city park with a recreation center beyond those two cross streets.

The Berkeley plan does propose one route to the border with Albany that is not currently in the ATP: Curtis. For its part, AS&R is committed to advocating for Curtis to be included as a relaxed route in the upcoming Albany ATP update. The current ATP designates Peralta as the relaxed route in eastern Albany, but AS&R has since realized its combination of hills and higher motorist volume and speed makes it more suited to inclusion in the rapid network. Because Curtis connects to Westbrae to the south, Marin Elementary School in the middle, and Colusa Circle to the north, AS&R had already decided to advocate for its designation as the relaxed route in eastern Albany in the ATP update. Berkeley's independent decision to designate its portion of Curtis as a cycling route further supports this goal. Thank you.

Bike Boulevard treatment

AS&R encourages Berkeley to take its bike boulevards the next step to fully becoming such facilities as pioneered on Bryant Street in Palo Alto. Specifically, provide for non stop cycling between arterial crossings while preventing through motorist travel. This entails removing stop signs, and optimizing existing and installing new barriers to motorists that allow people biking to pass.

AS&R believes it would be useful to organize this work around the vision that it is faster to bike than drive across town to the west, north, or south for the average person. The more this achieved by improving the bike boulevards for cycling, the more people will naturally choose to cycle. Short of such improvements, the potential of cycling to reduce greenhouse pollution, improve public health, and improve quality of life for neighborhoods will remain unfulfilled because most people will continue to choose to drive everywhere to save time.

One aspect of optimizing the bike boulevards is replacing the diagonal diverters with a mix of semi- or other diverters to achieve the same effect. Even though their installation was a novel advance in the 1970s, they are not a low-stress feature for people cycling. Passing through them safely requires focusing on three areas at different distances in orthogonal directions simultaneously or almost so. The person biking must focus in the near field straight ahead on steering through the barrier safely. At the same time they must focus on the far field straight ahead and hard right or the far field both hard right and left to avoid colliding with a motorist approaching the barrier from those directions, depending upon the direction of the barrier.

The current draft proposed rectangular rapid flashing beacons (RRFBs) on arterials where most bike boulevards cross. Yet in the October 20th Transportation Commission meeting,

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Director Javandel stated that these beacons do not change the right of way. This means that if someone cycling activates a beacon and then gets hit by a motorist as they ride across the arterial, the person cycling is at fault. Consequently AS&R strongly recommends against proposing RRFBs to enable cycling crossing anywhere. The perhaps of RRFBs is to facilitate street crossing by sidewalk users.

Rapid network

The draft plan does not define a rapid network. While the minority of people riding use such a network (counts in Albany suggest 20%), it is likely a higher percentage of miles ridden on bikes are on this network. Consequently AS&R recommends defining this network in the plan.

For the most part, this network can be defined from the routes already proposed in the plan, and so does not require much effort to incorporate into the plan. By and large these are the routes proposed for cycle tracks in the plan. While those will be components of the relaxed network when implemented, even if and when those are built on such streets as San Pablo years to decades from now, faster riders will likely still choose the general traffic lanes because they are safer at those speeds.

There are a few additional routes AS&R recommends if a rapid network is defined. Faster riders in Albany regularly use Sacramento instead of California. In south Berkeley, the combination of Haste transitioning to Dwight at Martin Luther King is the fastest route westbound (there is no need to define fast routes in the uphill eastbound direction because the low-stress network routes accommodate most fast riders well also given the climb).

Finally, the fastest route in Berkeley is the combination of the Eastshore Highway connected West Bolivar via Addison, 2nd, and Hearst. There are only six stops along this 2.7 mile route across town currently, which is far less than any other route beside the Bay Trail and perhaps Grizzly Peak. Unlike the Bay Trail though, this route is designed for higher speeds, and unlike Grizzly Peak, it has almost no relief and is more readily accessed. Consequently AS&R recommends designating it the East Bay Biking Highway, akin to the southern portion of the I-80 Bikeway in El Cerrito and Richmond.

AS&R will advocate for the addition of Albany's portion of the Eastshore Highway to Albany's rapid network during the ATP update. This route will connect via Buchanan to Pierce to the north, which is already designated a rapid route in the ATP.

The utility of designating a rapid network is that there are improvements that can be made that facilitate fast cycling. For instance sharrows can be added along rapid routes to indicate proper road position to fast riders and to indicate to motorists to expect riders to be in that position.

It can also reduce the likelihood of this network being degraded. For instance the last draft of the Gilman interchange reconstruction plan proposed prohibiting people from cycling along Eastshore Highway across Gilman. This would have severed this route at the worst, or required a time-consuming detour at best. At last report, responsible staff reported this feature has been eliminated in response to advocacy. However until a new plan is presented that provides documentation that this aspect has been eliminated, vigilance is still required. If this

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route had already been designated for biking, the responsible agency would not have been so readily able to proposed eliminating this connection.

Bike route signage

There is currently detailed and visible route designation signage on Berkeley's bike boulevards. In contrast, there is no or little such signage on the Ohlone Greenway. Yet from the potential rider's perspective, these are components of the same low-stress network.

Also, there is a tendency for signage color and other design elements to indicate the type of route rather than the network of which the route is a part. This is contrary to people's need to understand how to follow the lowest stress route to their destination.

This need would be better served by making all the signs in a network the same color without regard to the type of route. For instance low-stress network signage would all be purple and rapid network signage would all be green. This would allow people to more smoothly understand how to follow the route along the Greenway around the North Berkeley BART station: just follow the purple signs! Under the existing approach, different segments of this route would have signs with completely different designs, and some segments have no signs at all.

Plan name

The draft plan name is "Berkeley Bicycle Plan." While this name follows traditional practice, it is a misnomer as it could be interpreted by someone unfamiliar with such plans as containing advice on how to build bikes in Berkeley, how Berkeley is going to accommodate bicycle manufacturing or retail, or some other mistaken understanding.

The ultimate goal of the Plan is make biking safer and get more people biking. Consequently AS&R suggests naming the plan the "Berkeley Cycling Plan" or "Berkeley Bicycling Plan" to indicate both the active and human rather than machine focus of the Plan.

Thank you for considering AS&R's input. If you have any questions or feedback, please feel free to reach me at pdjordan@lbl.gov or 510 418-9660.

Respectfully,



Preston Jordan
Co-founder
Albany Strollers and Rollers