



Transforming Traffic Problems in the Laurel District

Evaluations and Applications

By Cristal Rocha

For the Laurel District Association

Mills College Public Policy Program

May 1, 2018

DISCLAIMER

This study has been prepared for the Laurel District Association, Oakland, California. The student author conducted this study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Public Policy (MPP) at Mills College. The judgments and conclusions are solely those of the author, and are not necessarily endorsed by the Mills College Public Policy Program, the sponsoring client organization, or any other organization or agency.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From economic vitality to personal and public health, safety, comfort, walkability, and overall quality of life, a community's roadways can have a significant impact on an individual's choices and behaviors. Profoundly affecting various aspects of everyday life, transportation systems including streets, thorough fair roadways, freeways, and highways should be designed to provide a safe environment, with mobile access for all users including motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists alike.

Though roadways should be created to foster an enjoyable environment that increases quality of life for all, inadequate infrastructures and outdated street designs make the Laurel neighborhood in Oakland, California, a challenging place for users to enjoy. With high volumes of pass-through traffic and car accidents, the MacArthur corridor that runs through the Laurel District from High Street to 35th Avenue is an area that poses multiple dangers for a variety of users on the roads.

In attempt to identify trends in the Laurel, an initial traffic and safety study was conducted using traffic data collected in 2013, 2015, and 2017. In addition to identifying current trends in the Laurel, a community survey was also conducted to get a better understanding how local residents feel about the current conditions that exist while also testing the amount of support there would be for lane reconfiguration options. The input and feedback gathered from local residents and business owners was then used to evaluate a set of viable short-term and long-term solutions that the Laurel District Association (LDA) can push and advocate for.

While survey responses did not indicate overwhelming support for lane reconfiguration projects, a road diet was proposed as a long-term solution for the Laurel. To understand what kinds of impacts the implementation of a road diet can have on a given area, this report also looks at a local road diet example in Oakland, the Telegraph Avenue Road Diet. Using the Telegraph Avenue as a sort of best practice, I was able to draw out special considerations and lessons learned to help inform the decision to recommend a road diet in the Laurel as a viable long-term solution.

However, in order to address safety and traffic conditions in the short-term, the LDA should continue working with the Oakland Department of Transportation to implement several traffic calming methods including: high visibility crosswalks that require re-stripping, leading pedestrian intervals or signal timing modifications, and left-turn restrictions at the intersection of MacArthur and Brown.