

Chapter 3 Stakeholder Interviews and Summary of Needs





CHAPTER 3. STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS AND SUMMARY OF NEEDS

An extensive stakeholder interview process was conducted to reach out to various Emeryville policy makers and community leaders to garner opinions, interests, and needs with regard to transportation. This information was used to generate common themes and develop a needs summary that assisted the team in developing recommendations for Emeryville's Sustainable Transportation Plan.

Stakeholder Interviews

An important step in developing this plan was to solicit input from a variety of stakeholders in Emeryville and utilize that information to understand and prioritize community needs. In coordination with City staff, Nelson\Nygaard contacted more than 30 people representing a diversity of perspectives. A series of face-to-face and telephone interviews were held to gather input on key issues and the transportation challenges and opportunities facing Emeryville.

Stakeholders were asked for their personal and constituents' perspectives regarding the goals of the Plan, current transportation conditions in Emeryville, priority issues and potential opportunities for improvement. Stakeholders were asked to focus on certain topics and they were given the opportunity to talk about a selection of other topics. Appendix B lists the stakeholders contacted and their affiliations, followed by a list of questions asked of each stakeholder.

All stakeholders agreed that transportation is a primary issue for Emeryville to address, especially as its population and economy continue to

grow. Several common themes and priorities emerged from the interviews, and many issues appear to be commonly understood among stakeholders. However, the relative importance and priority of these issues varies between stakeholders, especially with limited funding for transportation improvements.

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Common Themes

• A Walkable Emeryville

Improvements to pedestrian safety, connectivity, and comfort are a high priority for nearly all stakeholders. This is considered an important issue throughout Emeryville—in residential areas, in employment areas, and even at regional retail destinations. Two locations frequently noted

were the intersection of Powell Street with Christie Avenue and the freeway exchange and overpass further west on Powell. The lack of sidewalk connectivity in various locations was frequently raised, including a section of Shellmound Street near the Bay Street Center. The limited number of streets crossing the railroad tracks was also frequently noted as limiting pedestrian access. Stakeholders also commented that many intersections are poorly designed and unsafe for pedestrians, with long crossing distances and wide turning radii that encourage high speed turns by vehicles.

• Targeted Improvements to Public Transit

Overall, stakeholders familiar with available transit services expressed appreciation and support for them. However, specific unmet needs

were frequently noted, as described below. These included increased service in select areas and later evening and more weekend service. Stakeholders also mentioned that transit providers should invest more to market and provide information about available services, especially at transit hubs, as well as attempt to better coordinate services, such as timed arrivals between routes and service providers at key transfer points. Support was also expressed by some stakeholders for employer subsidies of transit passes, suggesting that there may be a market in Emeryville for the AC Transit EasyPass program (see Chapter 4) and opportunities to increase transit mode share for employees.

The Emery Go-Round is widely supported and appreciated. There is a desire for extending service hours later in the evenings and on weekends and providing service to residential areas, particularly the Triangle. As potential funding sources, some stakeholders suggested charging a nominal fare, while other suggested establishment of a residential property tax, similar to the PBID that currently funds the service.

AC Transit. Overall, stakeholders feel that AC Transit has limited service in Emeryville, with many stakeholders considering the Emery Go-Round a superior service for meeting local transit needs. Two desires were raised by a significant number of stakeholders: (1) provide better access in Emeryville to Transbay service, such as a stop off the freeway at Powell, and (2) introduce service on Adeline between the Triangle area and central Berkeley, which some stakeholders believe will have significant demand if the San Pablo Avenue and south Adeline Street redevelop as planned into a higher-density, more affordable, mixed-use corridor.

Emeryville Streetcar. There appears to be significant interest in a study to determine the feasibility of establishing a streetcar to connect Emeryville to MacArthur BART Station. Stakeholders noted a variety of important questions about investment in a streetcar – travel need (origins, destinations and travel times), cost, ridership potential, impact on traffic conditions along the rail corridor, and potential funding sources. Some stakeholders who doubt that a streetcar would be

feasible still supported funding a study at a level of detail sufficient to provide more information needed for a decision to be made.

Transit Hubs. Even though some transit hubs already are active, many stakeholders noted a need for improvements to access, inter-modal connectivity and visibility at these hubs. The hubs should also be integrated with their surrounding land uses, and contribute to the identity of the City. These focal points include MacArthur BART (in Oakland), the Emeryville Amtrak Station, which is adjacent to the site for the planned Transit Center, and the intersection of San Pablo Avenue and 40th Street.

- **Support Bicycling, But At What Level of Investment?**

Most stakeholders are supportive of improved conditions for bicycles. However, given the current relatively low percentage of trips taken by bicycle, some stakeholders believe that too much investment is being made in bicycling, at the expense of other modes including walking and driving. Some stakeholders noted that older adults are less likely to ride a bicycle, and would prefer investments to improve conditions for pedestrians and travel by automobile. Other stakeholders, however, noted that a complete, connected and safe bicycle network is vital to encouraging people to ride bicycles more often. There has been a significant level of support for the installation of bicycle racks on the front of Emery Go-Round Buses, though usage data is not available.

Ultimately, there is not complete consensus regarding the appropriate level of investment in bicycling as a mode of transportation. Recent high-profile plans and projects appear to have energized stakeholders from both ends of the spectrum.

- **Cautious Support for Higher Densities**

Infill development at moderately high densities appears desirable to most stakeholders, but they also noted a need to address vehicle traffic that might be generated by new development. Stakeholders expressed support for new development to help fund investments in infrastructure and transportation services, though some doubted the ability to accommodate travel demand by any mode other than the automobile, especially to regional destinations beyond City limits.

While stakeholders definitely support investment in sustainable modes of transportation, the continued need to accommodate automobiles, both on city streets and with sufficient parking, was a perspective voiced by a significant number of stakeholders

- **Continued Support for Automobiles –
A Balanced Transportation System**

While stakeholders definitely support investment in sustainable modes of transportation, the continued need to accommodate automobiles, both on city streets and with sufficient parking, was a perspective voiced by a significant number of stakeholders. Their perspective is that this mode of transportation will remain dominant, highly desirable and necessary in Emeryville. Others, however, noted that there is an inherent conflict between continued accommodation of automobiles at current levels, and attempts to shift travel to other modes, firmly believing that travel mode must shift significantly to achieve the social, economic and environmental goals of the City. There was also a point made by several stakeholders that much of the traffic may merely be passing through, not stopping anywhere in Emeryville.

This is clearly a high priority issue to address with stakeholders and the greater Emeryville community, seeking balance between two different perspectives on how Emeryville should invest in transportation:

1. A desire by a significant number of stakeholders for continued support for auto access to regional retail, which currently provides a strong economic foundation for Emeryville, while still also seeking improved access to retail by other modes
2. A desire by others to explore strategies that maintain the economic growth and stability in Emeryville, while more aggressively encouraging a shift away from automobiles as a primary mode of travel

Stakeholders also identified a need to better understand the origin, destination and purpose of trips on Emeryville's street network, including what proportion are merely passing through without an origin or destination in Emeryville.

- **Polarized Perspectives on Parking Policies**

Support for parking policy concepts varied among stakeholders. Support was indicated from some stakeholders for a residential permit program or other strategy to protect some on-street parking in residential neighborhoods for residents. There is also some support for metered on-street parking in areas where there is a shortage of short-term parking for employees or retail customers. Some stake-

holders stated that parking revenue should pay only for construction and maintenance of parking facilities, whereas others would like to see some of it go towards local improvements to safety and security for pedestrians, bicycle racks, etc. Perceived safety is an important concern for many people who drive, especially walking along streets at night; they thus feel a need to park close to their place of work.

Additional feedback was received from stakeholders on two types of parking policies that have been proposed for either local or citywide implementation:

- *Unbundling of Parking* – Unbundling is separating the lease or purchase of parking from the lease or purchase of habitable space. There is mixed support for the unbundling of parking, with stakeholders expressing a concern that it will lead to a shortage of residential parking, and difficulty selling units which may not have any parking available.
- *Charging for Parking* – Some stakeholders support charging for parking, including using the revenue to support sustainable modes of transportation. Their perspective is based on the concept that subsidized parking undervalues the cost to drive, making sustainable modes unfairly less cost competitive. Furthermore, local commercial districts have limited ability to increase parking supply, and thus increasing the number of trips made by other modes maintains or increases their customer base while still providing parking spaces for those who are able and willing to pay a fee in exchange for more easily finding a parking space.

- **Increased Role in Regional Planning**

Stakeholders noted that despite its small size and population, Emeryville is a major destination for employment and regional retail, with easy access to freeways as well as BART via the Emery Go-Round. Stakeholders would therefore like Emeryville to have a stronger voice in regional transportation planning, to support access to and from the City, as well as address traffic traveling through the City.

- **Use a carrot, not just a stick.**

Several stakeholders suggested that shifts to sustainable modes of transportation should be achieved by providing incentives that are more convenient, safe, and affordable, rather than simply implementing policies intending to force people to change their behavior.

- **Phased Approach. Pilot Projects.**
Conduct more detailed studies.

Most stakeholders expressed caution in moving forward aggressively with new services and programs without first testing their acceptance. A prudent strategy might be to begin with pilot projects and evaluate them before making a longer term commitment. They also expressed support for more detailed analysis of major infrastructure investments to determine their feasibility, especially plans for a streetcar. Some stakeholders noted that interim projects, however, may not be a good test of the feasibility of a more complete project, such as bus rapid transit being implemented with the intent that it will demonstrate a subsequent investment in a streetcar or light rail system. Some improvements, such as any system with a dedicated transit lane, cannot successfully be done in increments. Stakeholders further noted that it will be important in all efforts to include the expertise and experience of people who have worked in, lived in, and have a long-term investment in Emeryville.

Short-Term Priorities for Improving Sustainable Transportation

Stakeholders were asked to identify their top three priorities for improving sustainable transportation services in Emeryville in the next three years. They gave a wide variety of responses, focusing on all modes – transit, walking, bicycling and automobiles. Their responses are summarized below, but it should also be noted that some issues mentioned in the previous section but not listed below were still considered by many stakeholders to be important issues.

Public Transit

Continued support and expansion of the Emery Go-Round, and targeted enhancements to AC Transit service, were top priorities expressed by a majority of stakeholders. Specific suggestions for ongoing support and enhancement of the Emery Go-Round are summarized in Figure 3-1.

Figure 3-1 Stakeholder Suggestions to Enhance Transit Service in Emeryville

Service-Related Improvements
Emery Go-Round <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide service to residential areas not served; increase service to residential areas currently served • Expand service hours – later evening service is desirable • Increase service frequency during off-peak AC Transit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve Emeryville access to Transbay service to San Francisco
Other Enhancements
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide bus shelters, signage, lighting and other key amenities • Explore the possibility of charging a nominal fee on the Emery Go-Round • Keep MacArthur BART as transfer point for Emery Go-Round (not West Oakland) • Explore ways for buses to avoid being stuck in traffic (e.g. signal prioritization) • Conduct a feasibility study of enhanced transit access to MacArthur BART, including perhaps a streetcar

Pedestrian Improvements

Stakeholders also expressed strong support for planning efforts to improve walking conditions throughout Emeryville. They placed emphasis on certain locations considered particularly problematic, including Powell Street at Christie Avenue, and improved access across the railroad tracks and freeway (at Powell Street and elsewhere), as well as continued efforts to improve pedestrian conditions throughout the City.

Other Improvements to Sustainable Transportation

Stakeholders also expressed strong support for additional efforts to support sustainable transportation, even though the type or level of support they considered appropriate might vary.



Stakeholders expressed strong support for improved walking conditions and connectivity throughout the city.



Proposed Development Projects

- Ensure that the major developments make firm commitments to implement transportation demand management strategies, to reduce vehicle trips and parking demand, with monitoring and enforcement of adopted programs.

Automobile – Balance Between Modes

- Conduct a study of citywide traffic patterns, especially to determine what proportion of traffic is passing through without an origin or destination within Emeryville.
- Increase availability of parking through both supply and demand management. Explore opportunities to charge for on-street parking to increase turn-over and availability of short-term parking.
- Continue to accommodate the automobile, even as efforts continue to support sustainable modes.

Funding Sustainable Transportation

- Identify and pursue new funding opportunities. Ensure funds are sufficient and spent effectively and efficiently.
- Discuss appropriate use of funds from the Transportation Impact Fee when the next fee study is conducted – should it be limited to automobiles or investment in other modes to mitigate impacts from vehicle traffic?
- Consider implementing a property tax for residential development similar to that of the PBID for commercial property

Support Coordination with Other Planning Efforts

The Sustainable Transportation Plan should be developed in coordination with the update to the General Plan and other localized plans such as the North Hollis Parking Plan, to ensure consistency.

Plans should all have a clear, achievable strategy for implementation. It will also be important to increase coordination between local and regional governments, transit and other agencies.

Longer-Term Priorities for Improving Sustainable Transportation

The major themes stakeholders identified for longer-term priorities include:

- An increased role in regional planning for the City, given its importance as a retail and employment destination. Increased connectivity to regional rail, at the Amtrak Station and MacArthur BART Station, is a longer term priority.
- A streetcar for the City is considered by some stakeholders to be a promising possibility, though others suggested caution, due to concerns about whether there would be sufficient ridership to justify capital and operating costs, and the shifting of resources from other transit improvements.
- Comprehensive design strategies should be pursued to ensure all modes are accommodated, especially in areas with higher potential for conflicts between modes. Examples include the intersection of Powell Street and Christie Street and freeway interchanges.



Essential Elements to Support Plan

Stakeholders were asked to identify the necessary elements to support the City's Sustainable Transportation Plan. The major themes that emerged are:

Practical Plan with Clear First Steps. We heard from several stakeholders that the Sustainable Transportation Plan needs a clear vision to create a foundation for both short and longer term projects. It should not be “watered down” and while it may not get 100% support, it should “aim high” and be visionary. The Plan should use straightforward language and be easily understood by a cross section of stakeholders. It should include implementable first steps to establish and maintain a momentum for moving forward and getting things done.

- **Increased Mobility.** There was nearly unanimous support from stakeholders that the Plan must increase mobility for pedestrian and bicycle travel as well as public transit. The priority for bikes and pedestrians is on safety and connectivity. Many stakeholders commented that there needs to be an increased investment in public transit, especially the Emery Go-Round. At the same time several stakeholders noted that auto access and parking must also be acknowledged as an important mode, especially to accommodate commercial and retail markets.
- **Continued Support for New Development.** While not all, a majority of stakeholders commented that Emeryville should continue to support new development. An important element in moving forward with new development is to ensure that opportunities are pursued to fund transportation improvements such as developer agreements, conditions of approval, and transportation impact fees that are essential revenue sources to pay for transportation investments.

Summary of Needs

This section summarizes the major issues that have surfaced during the initial process of community and stakeholder outreach. These needs essentially fall into seven categories, described below and summarized in Figure 3-2.

Address High-priority Pedestrian Safety and Connectivity Issues

A need to improve the pedestrian environment was expressed as a priority issue almost universally by stakeholders and supported strongly by consultant observation. There are fundamental connectivity and safety issues to address, with many street segments lacking complete sidewalks, having sidewalks in significant disrepair, and not fully accessible to all individuals. Walking or waiting for transit or a ride at night is considered unsafe by many due to lack of appropriate lighting and other safety considerations. Pedestrian safety and access could be improved at many intersections, especially where major vehicle arterials meet.

Addressing these issues could improve pedestrian access to transit, supporting a reduction in driving, as well as improving the overall walkability and sense of community for the City of Emeryville.

Public Transit Services

The Emery Go-Round is a highly successful transit service for the City, providing an attractive, convenient alternative to driving. Ridership is mostly work-commute oriented, serving employment destinations in the city. Stakeholders expressed strong support for expanded service to more residential areas. Extended service hours were also expressed as a priority need, both in evenings and on weekends, to enable more trips to be made via transit instead of driving. New funding sources will need to be identified to support expanded service.

Increased connectivity to regional destinations, via Amtrak and AC Transit Transbay service, is also a high priority. General access to Amtrak buses could require state legislation. There is also strong interest in conducting a more detailed feasibility study for a streetcar or other major investments in public transit in Emeryville, especially to connect to MacArthur BART Station in Oakland although there are some reservations about investment in a streetcar system.

To optimize transit service in terms of the number of streets covered, frequency and hours, it might be advisable for AC Transit and the Emery Go-Round to analyze their combined coverage and adjust routes to provide more efficient service.

Bicycling

There is a need to find consensus regarding the level of investment in bicycling, compared to other modes of transportation, even though stakeholders expressed strong support for continued improvements to the bicycle network. Connectivity to key destinations within Emeryville and the regional bicycle network are especially important, as are smaller targeted improvements. Connectivity across the freeway on Powell Street is an especially high priority. This segment connects the peninsula and Bay Trail to the rest of the City.



Consensus on levels of investment in bicycle facilities has yet to be found.

Automobiles

While stakeholders firmly support sustainable transportation strategies for Emeryville, many also believe automobiles must continue to be supported as a highly desirable mode of transportation for many individuals and types of trips. Continued support for regional retail, which is currently an economic foundation for Emeryville and considered to be most easily accessed by automobile was often noted. Other stakeholders are equally firm in their conviction that shifting support from automobiles towards other modes will be the fundamental approach necessary to achieve the economic, social, and environmental goals of the community.

Stakeholders often indicated provision of sufficient automobile parking as an important need, with certain commercial areas, as well as the North Hollis area of Emeryville considered high priority to ensure sufficient availability of short- and long-term parking for local businesses, employees, and residents. It was noted that the amount of parking supplied has impacts on the ability to support sustainable modes of transportation, due to the decrease in land use densities and local access for pedestrians and other non-auto modes that is typically associated with high parking requirements.

Balance between Modes

Overall, stakeholders agree that balance among all modes must be found. The challenge is determining where that balance lies, based on dedicated right-of-way, economic costs and associated benefits, and the social, environmental, and other impacts of these decisions.

Development Density and Design

Many stakeholders agreed that an increase in density through redevelopment is a desirable and effective strategy to support sustainable transportation in Emeryville. Some stakeholders expressed concerns about the potential vehicle trips generated by new development, especially if it occurs at higher densities that have an associated increase in vehicle trips.



Identify strategies to increase role of city in regional transportation planning

Emeryville is a small city – just over one square mile in size. It is, however, a major destination in the Bay Area for regional retail and a robust employment center as well. Stakeholders agreed that local planning needs to be complemented with an increased role in regional planning – both transportation and land use, to enable more people to travel to Emeryville on transit for work and other trips. Figure 3-2 outlines the transportation priorities in Emeryville and examples.

Figure 3-2 Transportation Priorities in Emeryville

Pedestrian Safety and Connectivity

- Powell Street and Christie Avenue Intersection
- Powell Street at I-80 Freeway Interchange
- Shellmound Street (south of Powell) – lack sidewalk and connectivity to desired bus stop location
- Leverage new development to increase investment in local pedestrian amenities

Public Transit Services

- Address potential conflicts between buses and bicycles along Horton Street near planned Transit Center (adjacent to Amtrak Station)
- Keep MacArthur BART as a transfer point from Emery Go-Round
- Explore enhanced access to MacArthur BART along 40th Street
- Explore coordination of routes between Emery Go-Round and AC Transit

Emery Go-Round/Emeryville Transportation Management Association

- Expand service area to residential areas, including Triangle neighborhood
- Expand service hours to later evenings and increase service frequency during off-peak time periods

AC Transit

- Estimate existing and future demand for AC Transit Transbay Service between Emeryville and San Francisco, and feasibility of implementation. Options proposed include: (1) create a stop at Powell Street and (2) alter the routing of the Transbay Line F to synchronize in-bound and out-bound stops
- Address demand for transit connection between Emeryville and downtown/central Berkeley, perhaps through increased marketing of existing F-route service or increased service hours and/or frequencies

Amtrak

- Explore opportunity for local passengers to travel between Emeryville and San Francisco

Bicycling

- Powell Street - improve crossings of I-80 freeway and railroad tracks
- Provide additional crossings north and south of Powell Street
- Enhance Horton Street as a north/south bicycle boulevard
- Provide increased short-term bicycle parking near retail – both local and regional
- Provide secure long-term bicycle parking in existing residential and employment-based development; require this in all new development
- Close gaps in bicycle network

Automobiles

- Circulation – explore opportunities to address existing circulation issues without compromising safety and access by other modes; ensure new development does not result in increased congestion, but is still supported by programs to increase citywide access by other modes
- Parking – ensure sufficient parking availability to support existing and new development; ensure any parking charges are fair and supportive of economic stability and growth, including both regional retail and local businesses
- Maintain carshare and expand outreach efforts to Emeryville market
- Explore opportunities to provide shared and unbundled parking, in addition to programs such as carshare, that maintain auto access without increased demand for parking supply

Balance Between Modes

- Planning and design for new infrastructure and development should include goals of improved access and safety for all modes and evaluation of sustainable strategies to determine best balance between modes

Density

- Continued infill and redevelopment should be at sufficient intensities to support high level of transit access and enhancements to the pedestrian realm, but not too high to (a) avoid undesirable growth in vehicle trips and (b) develop a human-scaled urban environment

Identify strategies to increase role of City in regional transportation planning

- Collaboration with neighboring cities (Berkeley, Oakland)
- Collaboration with transit agencies—BART, AC Transit, Amtrak
- Collaboration with all of Bay Area to increase ability of regional transit network and local access improvements to support greater percentage of regional trips, especially journey to work and other trips during peak time periods