

To: Alameda County Transportation Commission
Re: OAAP Project and Social Justice
Date: 11/9/20

Dear Commissioners:

I am writing in support of the OAAP project and urge the commission to proceed. Over 30 years ago, Oakland, Alameda, and transit leaders recognized the need to address the congestion and pollution caused by motor vehicles entering and exiting Alameda through the Webster/Posey tubes into Oakland Chinatown. We are now closer than we have been in years to a solution and relief for Chinatown residents, workers, and visitors.

As a 23 year Alameda resident, I am opposed to the City's threat to withhold their approval unless ACTC reallocates funds from the OAAP project to pay for environmental and Project Study reports for the Bike/Ped bridge. This condition pits the immediate needs of a long impacted community against a completely separate future project. I believe the Bike/Ped bridge is a worthy idea and plans to further its development should be funded – just not from the OAAP.

Alameda city leaders are in the forefront of addressing climate change and the need to increase access for pedestrians and bicycles, but please consider the needs of Oakland Chinatown who have had to endure the 30+ years Alameda traffic which has threatened their health and lives through the added congestion and pollution. I was struck by the contrast between the responses to the recent Alameda General Plan survey about Alameda's livability and the conditions in Oakland Chinatown, just on the other side of the tube – it is a testament to what happens after 150 years of social injustice and inequities.

This is a social justice issue. If the conditions that Chinatown residents have had to face for the past 30 years existed for just 6 months in Alameda, Alamedans would have mounted a recall election.

The many elderly Asians and new immigrant families with young children who now live in Chinatown risk their lives when they attempt to cross at 7th street. There is a reason why the Chinese Garden Park is extremely under-utilized, and that reason is traffic from Alameda.

Oakland Chinatown has the highest number of automobile-pedestrian collisions in the City of Oakland. In fact, the first scramble system in Alameda County was initiated in Chinatown in 2002 after an especially tragic death to an older gentleman who hit by an impatient driver. He was the main caretaker to his ill wife. Just months after his death, she also passed away.

From the time that the first Chinese settled in Oakland in the 1850's they have faced wave after wave of overt discrimination – they were burned and driven out of the first two areas they had moved into – before finally finding their current location centered at 8th and Webster around 1880. The community once extended from the waterfront to 10th street along Webster and southeast to Fallon.

The decision to build the Nimitz Freeway path on 6th street from Castro, destroyed 2,000 low-rent housing units along 6th street and Castro in the 1950s. My father-in-law's childhood home was among those lost to the freeway's chosen path.

In the 1970s, the decision to locate the BART headquarters at 9th and Madison took out another 50 family homes and Laney College campus and Oakland Museum formed a barrier to any expansion eastward. Chinatown residents did not have a voice in any of the decisions to destroy 90% of their housing stock and chop up their community.

Over the past 11 years, I have seen Chinatown again under siege – from the damage done by vandals and thieves under the cover of peaceful Oscar Grant and Occupy Oakland protests which also forced Chinatown to shut down during protests, to the anti-Asian hysteria generated by President Trump, and now the pandemic. What was once a vibrant neighborhood now has boarded up storefronts and much fewer customers.

Chinatown needs a break and we can give it safer streets and cleaner air in just a few years. Let us not hold this project up any further. Thirty years is enough.

Best Regards,



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