



Richmond BPAC



peopleforbikes



CALIFORNIA BICYCLE COALITION



TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND



SIERRA CLUB SAN FRANCISCO BAY



NAPA COUNTY BICYCLE COALITION



TRANSBAY COALITION



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El Cerrito/Richmond Annex WALK & ROLL



BikeWalk CV



SAN LEANDRO 2050

the watershed project

OuterSpatial



sei BUILDING LEADERS FOR A RESILIENT WORLD



ACTION FOR A HEALTHY PLANET



FFBC

May 1, 2024

Re: Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Public Pathway Pilot Project

Dear San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development Commission Members:

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to reject the Metropolitan Transportation Commission and Caltrans staff's BCDC permit amendment request to close the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge Trail all day every Monday through Thursday, for conversion to a car breakdown shoulder. Please join us in supporting permanent, 24/7 access for all between the East Bay and the North Bay by keeping this pathway open.

The opening of this multi-use trail in November 2019 was a joyous occasion, marking the culmination of decades of advocacy, and completing a critical 6-mile link in the Bay Trail between Contra Costa and Marin counties. Since then more than 377,000 biking, walking, and rolling trips have been made on the pathway for exercise, recreation, commuting, socializing, and more.

Report data on the four year pathway pilot project, shared by the Bay Area Toll Authority to the Contra Contra Transportation Authority at their December 2023 meeting, showed that as of Fall 2022 there was no increase in westbound car congestion compared to prior conditions in 2019. The report stated that the duration of the morning commute congestion was on average 30 minutes shorter in 2022 than 2019, with car traffic at 90% of pre-pandemic levels.

With regard to traffic safety the draft report showed that the number of crashes decreased slightly after the pathway was installed compared to before. Incident response times increased by 1.3 minutes on average, while the duration of incident impacts on bridge traffic went down by 2.5 minutes on average.

The draft report also showed that the pathway did not negatively affect air quality, which is primarily impacted by vehicle miles traveled, not by traffic congestion. Road dust, tire wear, and brake wear make up 83% of PM2.5 emissions from vehicles, compared to running exhaust which makes up 17%.

We recognize the hardships imposed on individuals from bridge congestion, many of whom are forced to drive great distances to access employment in the North Bay due to a lack of workforce housing options and robust public transit. Some mitigations to the congestion issues are already in the works at the main pinch-points including the toll plaza, the Richmond Parkway interchange, and the 580/101 interchange.

We also recognize hardships imposed on those who rely on public transit, but are currently only provided with a single bus line across the bridge with headways between buses of up to an hour, and no service after 10pm. And we recognize hardships on those who rely on bicycles, ebikes, and other devices who will have no crossing option at all if the pathway is closed.

Equitable and sustainable solutions to the bridge congestion issues involve addressing land use and housing affordability imbalances so as to not force people into arduously long commutes in the first place, and to significantly increase public transit service on the corridor to move more people without harmful increases in vehicle miles traveled. Closing the pathway for a breakdown shoulder as currently proposed, or for a third westbound car lane, will not contribute toward progress on these underlying causes.

Keeping the pathway open is in alignment with numerous adopted plans and policies on the regional and state level including the San Francisco Bay Trail Plan, the Plan Bay Area regional transportation plan and sustainable communities strategy, the Plan Bay Area 2050 transportation strategy, BCDC's Bay Plan Transportation Policy No. 4, the Caltrans Complete Streets Directors Policy DP-37, and Executive Order N-19-19 signed by Governor Newsom.

We appreciate and share BCDC's goals of increased equity, climate resilience, and access to the Bay shoreline, and we look forward to continuing to work together on real solutions to these issues.

Sincerely,

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