Dear Parks and Recreation Commissioners and Traffic and Safety Commissioners-

Albany Strollers and Rollers (ASR) has considered the opportunity to reconfigure the pedestrian and bicyclist paths through the Ohlone Greenway created by the imminent seismic retrofit of the BART's aerial trackway foundations and columns. Fifteen members of our approximately 100-strong group actively participated in the discussion and research leading to general consensus on the following. In summary, we recommend:

1) keeping the bicyclist path in the current location,
2) expanding the width of the current bicyclist path to fourteen feet with two-foot wide, decomposed granite shoulders on either side, and stripe this increased width to accommodate both bicyclists and pedestrians,
3) installing bike lanes on Masonic Avenue where possible in accord with the city's traffic calming goals for this street,
4) installing bulbouts and signage at the street crossings,
5) replacing the current pedestrian path with a decomposed granite, or equivalent surface, and
6) providing access at Garfield.

Further detail and supporting information on these recommendations is included below.

1) We recommend keeping the bicyclist path in its current location in Albany for reasons of financial pragmatism. We explored a secondary goal of relocating the path to the west side of the Greenway. This was motivated by safety concerns associated with the relatively low visibility of users on the path by drivers on and residents along Masonic, even with the recent addition of lighting. We considered a few possibilities for so relocating the path, but found them all to be financially unfeasible. Chief among the financial constraints is the extensive gravel base remaining from the railroad in the position of the current path. Constructing such a base elsewhere, removing the base from its current position, and landscaping the resulting void would be prohibitively expensive.

2) Currently, separate pedestrian and bicyclist paths exist through the Greenway, ostensibly to separate these user groups. In practice, this does not occur with pedestrians using both paths. The utilization of the bicyclist path by pedestrians detracts from this facility's utility for both user groups. Our primary goal is to significantly improve this situation.

Studies have shown that separate paths are ineffective at separating cyclists and pedestrians. On this basis, as well as in the interest of creating a flexible, and therefore more efficient, use of precious urban space, we support widening the existing bicyclist path and striping it with a bicyclist lane in each direction and a pedestrian lane. Based on observation of other paths with this configuration, we believe this will provide each user group a significantly improved facility where they are able to have the experience they desire without overly interfering with others.

We have learned that El Cerrito is planning to widen its bicyclist path to fourteen feet with two foot wide decomposed granite shoulders and stripe it for pedestrian and bicyclist usage. We recommend Albany's bicyclist path be reconfigured in the same manner, and we encourage Albany to discuss path reconfiguration with El Cerrito with the goal of providing a uniformly configured facility through both cities.

Toward this same goal of a uniform facility, we encourage Albany to discuss path reconfiguration with Berkeley. There appears to be sufficient easement width through Berkeley to Gilman for installing a wider, multi-use path with the same cross section as that in Albany and El Cerrito. Berkeley should also be encouraged to install lighting under the trackway similar to Albany and El Cerrito.

3) While the Greenway bicyclist path is useful and utilized by many cyclists, there is a need for facilities along this route that accommodate higher speed, typically "commuter" cyclists. A number of ASR bicyclists already ride Masonic in preference to the Greenway for this reason. Even if the bicyclist path is widened and striped, mixing these cyclists with pedestrians is problematic as they travel at near car driver speeds rather than pedestrian or runner speeds. Therefore we propose installing bike lanes on Masonic to accommodate this group.

The current street is too narrow to safely accommodate bike lanes, however. We propose eliminating the parking on the east side of the street to the greatest extent possible to make such space available. This may seem radical, but our impression is that the on-street parking along most of Masonic is quite under subscribed, presumably due to having residences only on the west side. As the city owns the land these parking spaces reside upon, their under utilization represents a considerable inefficiency in the use of valuable city property and urban space.

To test our impression, we surveyed the number of cars parked on both sides of Masonic during school drop off and pick up as well as overnight. We summed the number of parked cars for both sides of the street block by block and divided this by the number of parking spaces on the west side of the street only to simulate the parking occupancy without spaces on the east side of the street. The results are shown in the figure below, which is schematic map horizontally along the bottom and a block by block parking occupancy chart above (a better resolution version with the data is attached).