

ALBANY CALIFORNIA



CITY OF ALBANY
1000 SAN PABLO AVENUE
ALBANY, CA 94706
www.AlbanyCA.org

MEMORANDUM

Agenda Date: 1 May 2023

To: Albany City Council Members
From: Council Member Jordan

Re: Contraflow parking bill drafting



RECOMMENDATIONS

Direct the City Attorney's Office to work with Assemblymember Wicks' staff to draft a bill legalizing contraflow motorist parking toward the semidiverters on Adams Street and Kains Avenue.

BACKGROUND

Please see the [most recent staff report regarding the Adams Street and Kains Avenue bikeways](#) for background from planning through Council authorization to advertise the project for construction bid. Subsequently, the Council authorized the contract for construction on 6 June 2022 and the project was built in January and February of this year.

Most blocks of each street were one-way against the direction of the nearest traffic lanes on San Pablo Avenue. This precluded overflow traffic from San Pablo from readily utilizing these local streets. This also precluded two-way travel by people biking though. Consequently, the Adams and Kains bikeway project returned these blocks to two-way travel. To continue to preclude overflow motorist traffic, the project installed semi diverters at the previous exit from each one-way block. A semi diverter is a barrier that extends across the lane(s) of a street in one direction, thus preventing travel in that direction. In the case of the semi diverters installed on Adams and Kains, the semi diverters are designed and signed to prohibit motorist travel in this direction but allow travel by people biking.

In parallel with this project the Alameda County Transportation Commission has been pursuing a project to improve active transportation and public transit along the San Pablo Avenue corridor.

Planning commenced in 2017. The planning resulted in proposed motorist-separated cycling lanes along the street south of Heinz Avenue in Berkeley and improvements of cycling routes parallel to San Pablo Avenue to the north. In Albany, those routes are Kains Avenue east of San Pablo Avenue and Jackson, Washington, and Adams to the west. The Commission's project proposes to construct various enhancements to these routes.

As stated in the staff report above, the Council approved the project design on 16 September 2019. The [staff report for that item](#) relays the recommendations from the Traffic and Safety (now Transportation) Commission regarding the project. In addition to recommending approval of the project, the Commission recommended drafting legislation to legalize contraflow vehicle parking on the project blocks. The Commission anticipated motorists would prefer to continue to park in the direction they could access the blocks, including on the left side of the street, rather than the inconvenience of making a three-point turn to park on that side. However, this would not accord with State law requiring motorists to park vehicles within 18 inches of the right curb on two-way streets.

Staff rather recommended pursuing such change only if requiring motorists to turn around their vehicles to park on the side of the street with the semi diverter turned out to be problematic after the project was implemented. The [minutes for the meeting](#) do not indicate the Council deliberated the Commission's recommendation to pursue legislation to legalize contraflow vehicle parking on the project's blocks or that the Council provided such direction in its action on the item.

DISCUSSION

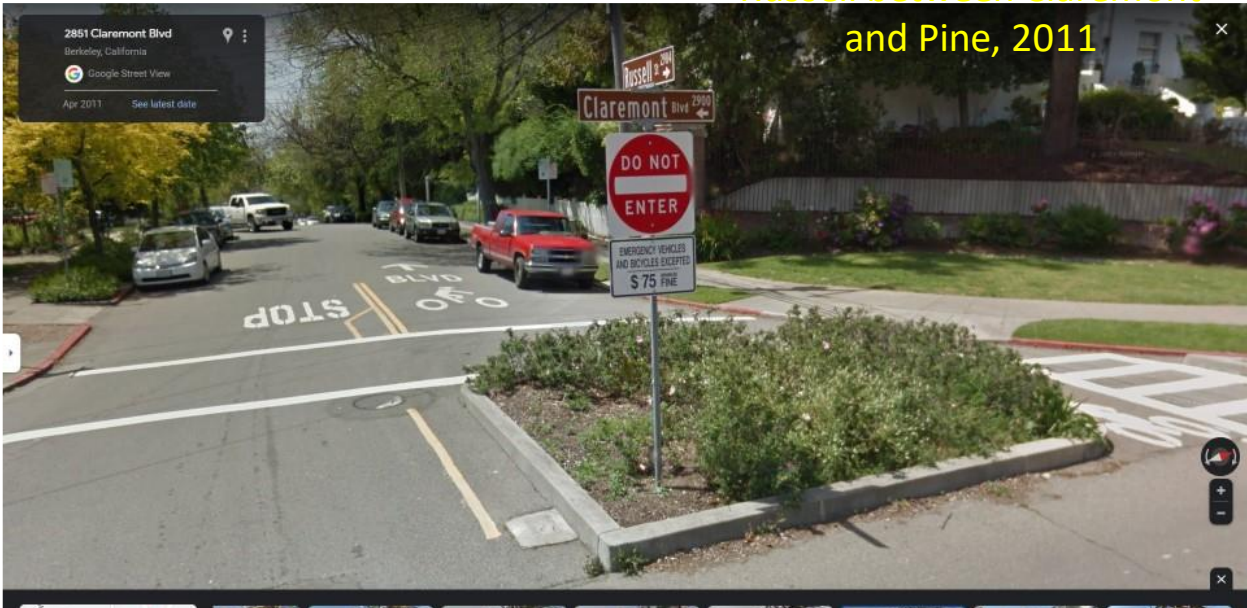
Since conversion of the previously one-way blocks of Adams and Kains to two ways with semi diverters, almost all motorists have continued to park in the previous one-way direction. This choice by motorists is understandable, as anticipated by the Traffic and Safety Commission. In contrast, the approach of enforcing State law requiring right side parking and then seeking legislation rescinding this if determined problematic risks the difficulty and potential conflict of communicating and enforcing two culture changes in relatively quick succession among motorists parking on these blocks.

In its 16 September 2019 report, staff stated, "With the ability of cyclists to take the full lane in the two-way traffic design and lower speeds and volumes on these streets, parking in the contraflow direction is not expected to create a major safety issue." This hypothesis can be tested using data collected from natural experiments that have occurred in Berkeley.

Berkeley has several blocks on which motorists also park on the left side toward a semi diverter. Shown below are Google Streetviews into three of these blocks. Each shows vehicles parked on the left side of the street toward the semi diverter. Two of these blocks are on bicycle boulevards, as indicated by the street symbols visible. All provide for passage of people biking through the semi diverter, as in Albany.

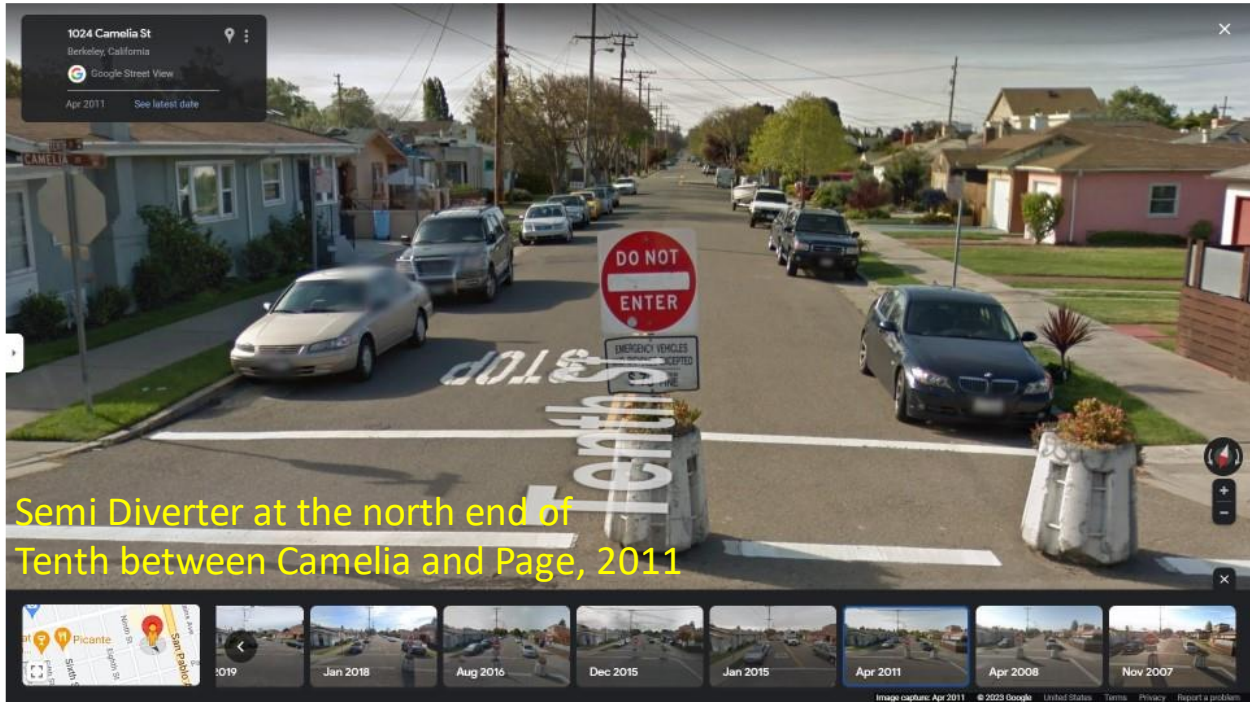
California's traffic collision database (Statewide Integrated Traffic Reporting System; [SWITRS](#)) extends back to 2011. Consequently, 2011 through 2019 was taken as the study period, 2019 being the last full year before transitory changes to traffic due to the pandemic.

Semi Diverter at the east end of
Russell between Claremont
and Pine, 2011

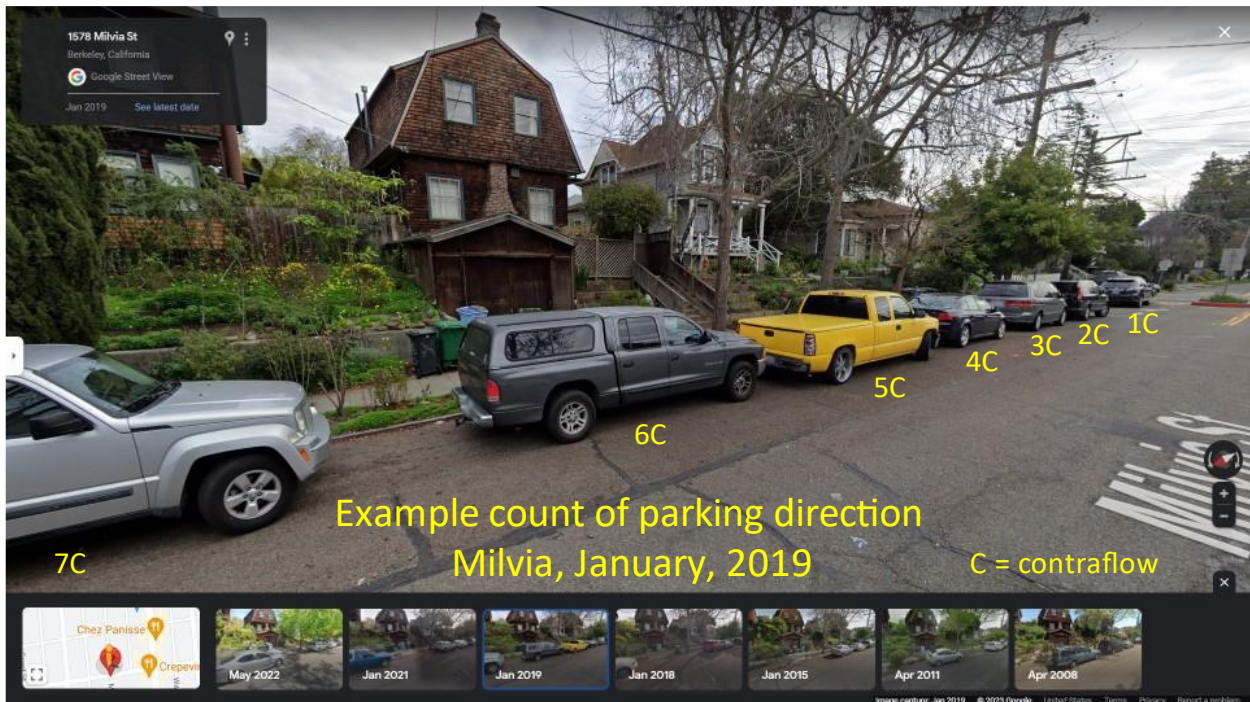


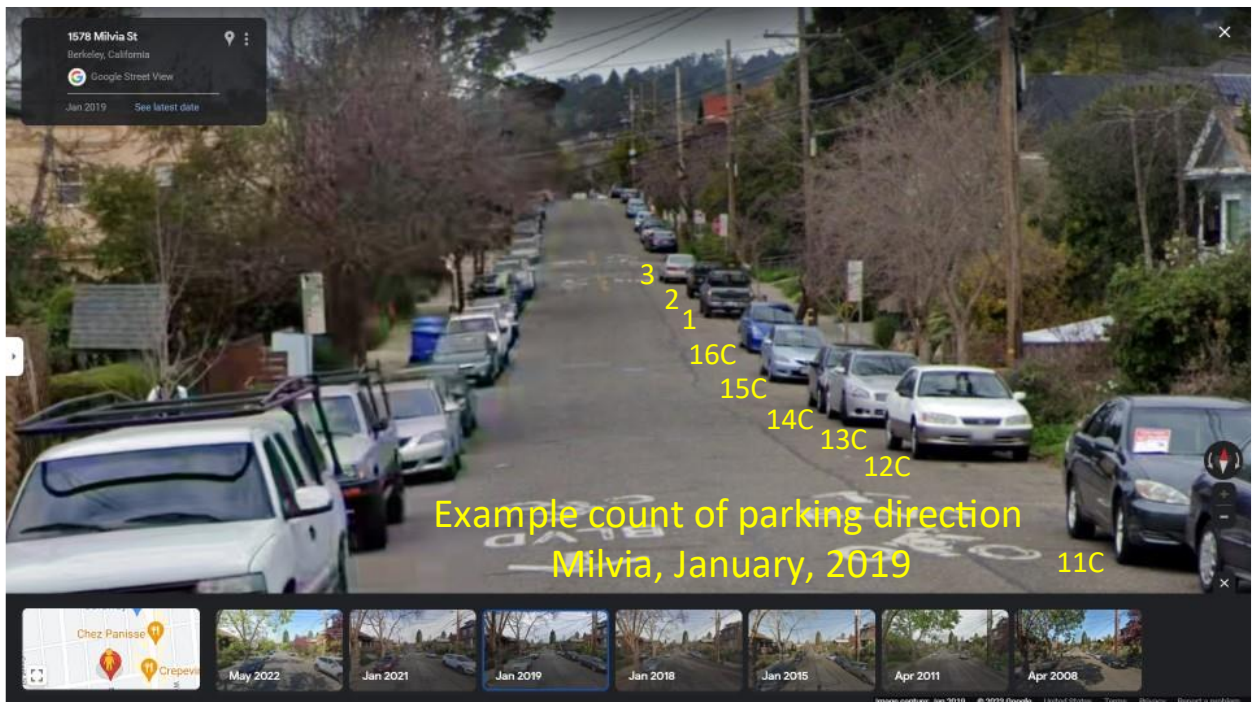
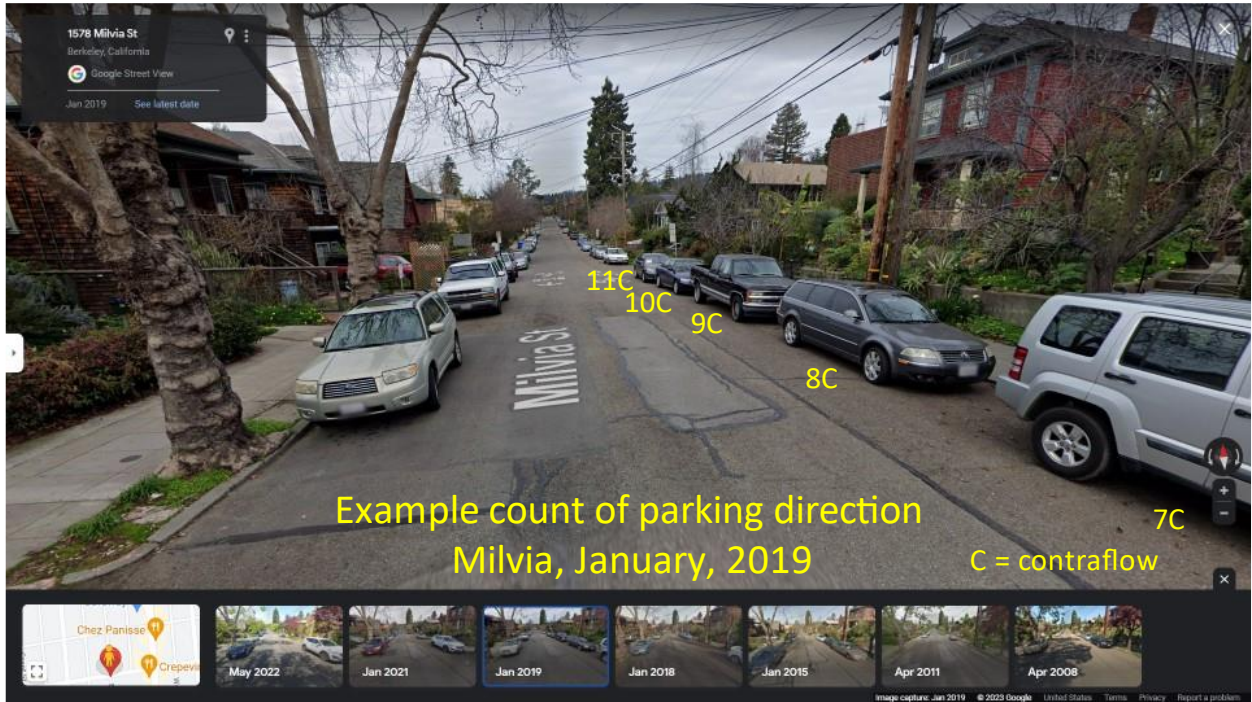
Semi Diverter at the south end of
Milvia between Cedar and Vine, 2011





The parking direction of vehicles on the semi diverted side of each of the three blocks was counted from historic Streetview imagery. Shown below is an example count for one block from two images collected in the same Streetview imaging pass.

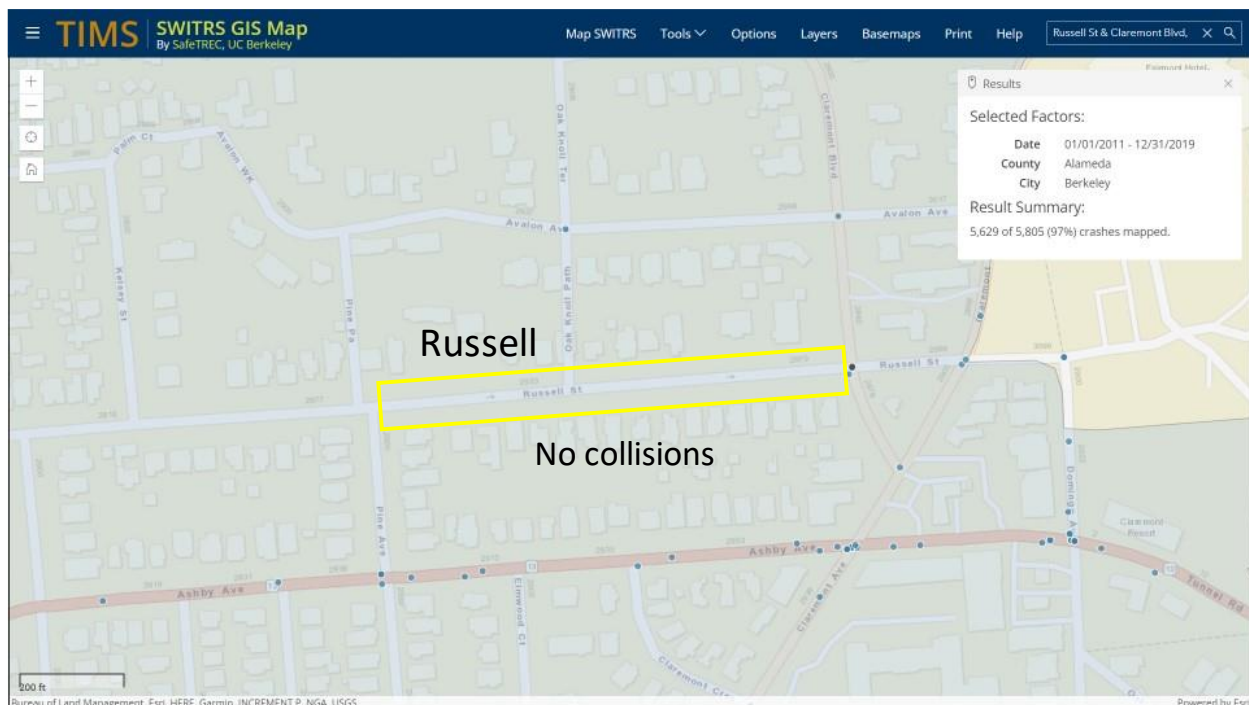


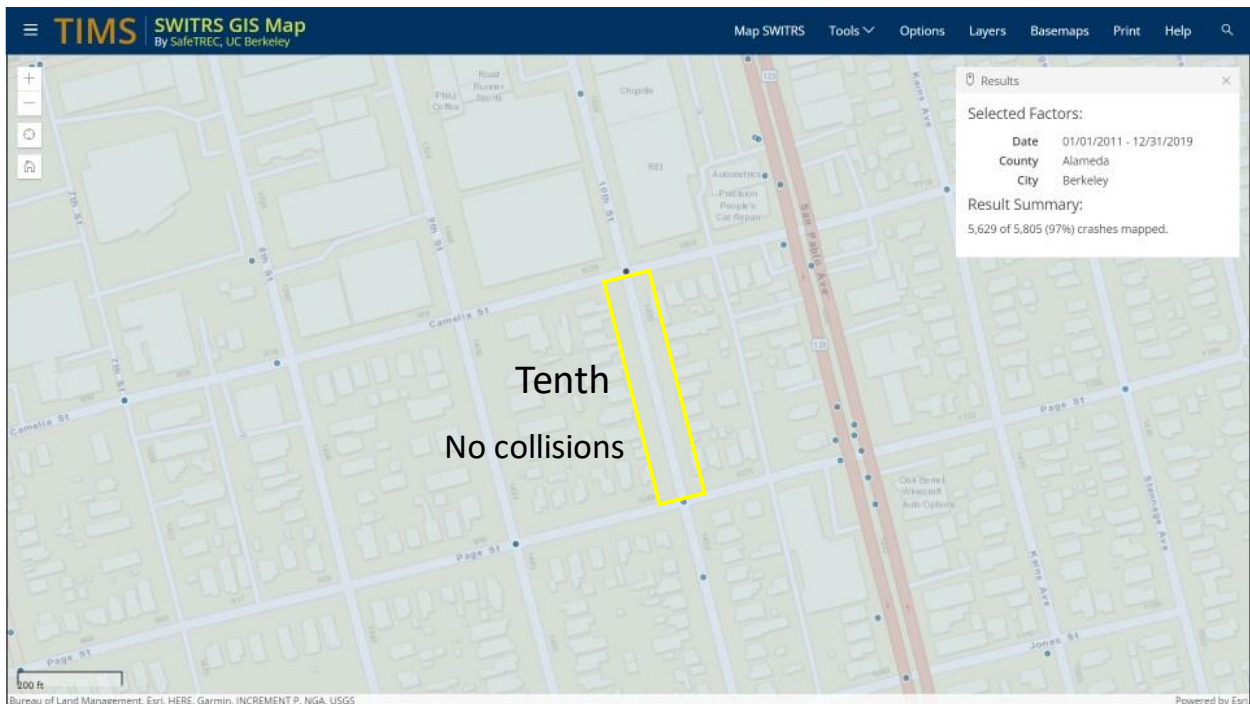


The table below provides the data collected from the Streetview imagery. More than nine in ten motorists parked their vehicle contraflow on the side of the block with the semi diverter.

Block	Month	Contraflow	Flow	% Contraflow
Milvia	Apr 2011	13	1	93%
	Jan 2015	16	1	94%
	Jan 2018	13	3	81%
	Jan 2019	16	3	84%
Russell	Apr 2011	10	1	91%
	Oct 2014	13	0	100%
	Mar 2015	16	0	100%
	Aug 2016	15	2	88%
	Jan 2018	16	1	94%
	Feb 2019	19	1	95%
Tenth	Apr 2011	6	2	75%
	Jan 2015	11	0	100%
	Jan 2018	9	1	90%
	Jan 2019	11	0	100%
Total	2011-19	184	16	92%

Injury collision data from SWITRS for these blocks for the 2011 through 2019 study period was mapped via the online [geographic information system component of UC Berkeley’s Transportation Injury Mapping System \(TIMS\)](#). Results shown below.





There no injury collisions during the nine-year study period on each of the three blocks, indicating injury collisions occur at a frequency of no more than one per 27 years on such blocks and no more than one per 18 years on such blocks that are also bike boulevards.

The lack of injury collisions indicates the prohibition of contraflow parking on blocks of local streets with semi diverters, including those that are cycling routes, is not necessary for safety. This

recommends seeking State legislation to allow for such parking on such blocks. There is precedent in State law for allowing such parking. AB 2067 of 2010 legalized contraflow vehicle parking on 34 blocks in Long Beach. In that case the blocks were dead ends with no cul de sacs off an arterial street.

On this precedent, I engaged Assemblymember Wicks's staff regarding carrying a bill to legalize contraflow parking on the blocks of Adams and Kains with semi diverters. We met (virtually) on April 7th. The meeting included Stella Gryler, Field Representative, Zak Castrillo-Krings, Legislative Director, Cameron Gadson, Legislative Assistant from our Assemblymember's office. On my invitation, Sam Greenberg, Legislative Assistant for Berkeley Council Rigel Robinson, also attended as the study performed that supports pursuing the legislation regarding blocks in Berkeley.

In the meeting, Mr. Castrillo-Krings expressed interest in the office pursuing such legislation but noted it had not been discussed with the Assemblymember. He requested that Albany authorize its City Attorney to work with the office drafting the legislation.

SUSTAINABILITY CONSIDERATIONS

The recommended action supports the Adams Street and Kains Avenues bike routes. These provide a safer alternative for those that would otherwise bike on San Pablo Avenue and likely have a larger effect in facilitating people biking who would otherwise not due to the sole availability along the corridor of high stress routes. As such, these routes reduce greenhouse and local air pollution and improve personal and public health.

Further, the Adams and Kains cycling routes will serve residents of the large number of new homes on San Pablo Avenue anticipated, both the more than 200 already approved on the west side north of Clay Street and those likely to result from Albany's adoption of the San Pablo Avenue Specific Plan. Without these routes, more residents will choose to drive, increasing congestion with attendant decrease in quality of life and increase in greenhouse and local air pollution.

SOCIAL EQUITY AND INCLUSIVITY CONSIDERATIONS

These new homes anticipated along San Pablo Avenue will include many that are affordable, such as the 27 for households with very low incomes in the previously mentioned approved development. By facilitating cycling, the Adams and Kains cycling routes provide for the lowest cost means of transportation. They also reduce the number of trips taken by driving, which in turn can reduce the number of cars and trucks owned by residents in the neighborhood. This would decrease parking occupancy with the result more parking would be available for those that need to drive.

CITY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

The recommended action supports Strategic Plan Goal 3, Promote Streets That Support Safety & Transportation Mobility Options and Goal 1, Advance Climate Action & Adaptation.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The recommended action would incur the cost of increased effort by the City Attorney's office. This cost has not been estimated but would be considerably less than the City Manager's \$50,000 spending authority without Council approval for comparison.