On Tuesday, August 18th, 2015, the Comprehensive Circulation Study (CCS) project team and key stakeholders engaged in a walking tour of Jack London District. The tour provided stakeholders the opportunity to share observations and develop a common understanding of study area needs. This memorandum documents observations, issues, and opportunities from the walking tour.

WALKING TOUR

Route

The walking tour was led by local Jack London expert Greg Knecht, and organized by community members, business owners, and residents in collaboration with Nelson\Nygaard. The tour started and ended at Bicycle Coffee Shop, and followed the following route (See Figure 1).
Figure 1: Jack London Tour Route

Attendance

Approximately 25 participants convened for the walking tour from 9 a.m. to noon.

From the CCS consultant team: Erin Ferguson (KAI); Carrie Nielson (Fehr & Peers); Bonnie Nelson, Mike Eiseman, Claudia Preciado, and Danielle Dai (Nelson\Nygaard); Bharat Singh & Warren Logan (CD+A); Francis Lo (BayPac)

From the Freeway Access Project (FAP) study team: Alice Lai-Bitker (Alice & Associates); James Pun (HNTB); Kim Pallari and Cindy Adams (HDR)

From Alameda CTC: Kara Vuicich, David Caneer, & Mollie Cohen Rosenthal

Other key stakeholders in attendance: Alicia Parker and Jason Patton (City of Oakland); Dave Campbell (Bike East Bay); Greg Pasquali (Carmel Partners); Gary Knecht (Jack London District); Savlan Hauser, Michael Carilli, and Vivian Kahn (JLID); Amanda Bornstein (Port Workspaces)
OBSERVATIONS, ISSUES, AND OPPORTUNITIES BY LOCATION

Produce District (Stop 2)

- When the produce market is operating in the morning, there is a bustle of activity with delivery vehicles, fork lifts, pedestrians, and bicyclists. At full activity, the full street width is used by delivery vehicles. The sidewalk is also used move and stage produce.
- Low rents allow the Produce District to exist ($0.75 - $1/square foot). FAR of 1.5 also keeps rents affordable for current tenants.
- About six to eight years ago, there was talk of creating a retail produce area in Jack London much like Pike’s Place in Seattle or the Ferry Building in San Francisco. However, this idea never manifested and only wholesale goods are currently sold.
- Most of the street is zoned for commercial loading from midnight to 11 a.m. However, there is a need to determine the extent to which the zone exists, as the zone is not properly marked. Signs are very small to be noticed. Some stakeholders proposed more signs, clearer signage, or new curb paint.
- Motorists typically avoid this area, and most people weave in and out.
- All the bike lanes in the area are Class III. However, many people avoid bicycling in the area.
Freeway Underpass at Franklin and 5th St (Stop 3)

- Fifth Street dead-ends east of Franklin, presenting an obstacle to circulation for all modes.
- Community members on the walking tour expressed a desire for a BART station for the Jack London district.
- Relocating on-ramps along 5th Street would open up connections to connect Jack London and Chinatown. Existing wayfinding at this stop is poor and confusing for automobiles.
- The freeway has a regional purpose and will likely stay for the foreseeable future. There is a need to separate “good” and “bad” traffic, and for regional traffic through to stay off local streets.
- Walking tour participants discussed what metrics are available to gauge whether a freeway ramp should stay or go. Participants look forward to seeing what the Freeway Access Project will propose.
**Broadway Underpass (Stops 4 & 5)**

- As the north-south street connection between Jack London District and other parts of downtown Oakland, Broadway does not provide an inviting walking or biking connection between Oakland neighborhoods. Jack London feels physically divided from downtown and “a world away” as a pedestrian. The Broadway underpass is supposed to be a gateway to Jack London, but it doesn’t feel like one. The underpass is dangerous, dark, and noisy.
- The existing art installed in the underpass by Caltrans has not made the area more aesthetically-pleasing for pedestrians. There is a need for improved maintenance, infrastructure, and aesthetic improvements.
- Fast moving traffic onto the ramps creates an unsafe and undesirable pedestrian experience. Freeway access traffic is an issue, but only at the intersection.
- The existing crosswalk by 6th Street and Broadway is unsafe for pedestrians. Vehicles honk, as if pedestrians do not have the right away. A signal or stop sign is needed to help prioritize pedestrian safety.
- The two lanes that comprise 5th Street are underutilized. There is a desire to shift road space to pedestrian and cyclists to connect to the waterfront.
- Broadway has more pavement than automobiles. Traffic appears to be low on 6th Street.
- Signage for motorists is complex and confusing here. Community stakeholders on the walking tour commented that motorists in the middle lane heading towards Jack London Square are confused and create a traffic nightmare. One stakeholder commented on the desire to create Jack London specific signs.
- One stakeholder suggested eliminating a lane going to I-880 on Broadway, and making vehicles turn right and head towards Washington and 5th Street to access the freeway.
- One stakeholder asked if pedestrians should be on both sides of Broadway underneath the freeway.
- One stakeholder proposed relocating the bus stop in front of Ellington to improve safety.
6th St and Franklin (Stop 6)

- Jack London businesses would like this area to be opened and connected to Chinatown. In general, the more access points connecting the two areas, the better.
- One stakeholder noted potential development opportunities around this area.

Webster and 7th St (Stop 7)

- The intersection has been improved slightly over the years with new painted crossing. However, community members feel pedestrian safety is still a real concern in Chinatown and pedestrian access between Jack London and Chinatown have not been adequately addressed to date.
- Reducing two lanes to one into the Alameda tube may help improve pedestrian safety by reducing the number of vehicle lanes needed on the approach to/from the tubes and by reducing vehicle speeds.
- One stakeholder remarked that two way streets on Webster might be too complicated. Another stakeholder suggested moving the curb over to expand the sidewalk in this area. In general, several people remarked a desire to enhance access and signage to Jack London.
Harrison and 7th St (Stop 8)

- Several stakeholders remarked that residents in the area should be prioritized. There is a senior center in the park that people access primarily by foot. This foot traffic conflicts with automobile traffic at the intersection.
- Alameda traffic and congestion is a major issue. The tube has two lanes going right that directs them to I-980; signage for access to/from Alameda is poor. One stakeholder noted the importance of driving this route multiple times and observing each intersection to truly understand and see confusion from the poor signage.

6th St & Harrison (Stop 9)

- Many motorists make illegal left turns to access parking underneath freeway. One stakeholder suggested extending a barrier to prevent left turns, and prevent traffic from 6th Street from crossing over to turn right on 7th Street.
- Caltrans owns the property under the freeway.
- There is a large homeless population presence under the freeway.
- There are several pending and approved projects that will need transportation investments on Harrison Street.
6th St & Webster (Stop 10 & 11)

- Several stakeholders remarked that this area deserves urban design attention to make the experience under the freeway more pleasant for all modes. Better signage is desired for Jack London and Alameda.
- The underpass by 6th Street and Webster is quieter than others.
- Stakeholders discussed ideas about the “Webster Green” project, a linear park that extends from Embarcadero to 7th Street and connects Chinatown to the waterfront. This is part of the Lake Merritt Station Area Plan and Estuary Policy Plan.
- Stakeholders brainstormed ways to make underpasses more inviting and pleasant for pedestrians, such as increased lighting and columns with artwork.

4th St and Harrison

- No curb ramps exist at this location, and at several locations throughout the study area. ADA compliance and curb cuts need to be addressed moving forward.
- Stakeholders briefly discussed the 2011 Jack London Parking study. From the study, there are 1,555 total on-street spaces, 430 of which are completely unrestricted. One stakeholder noted the desire to have some form of restrictions on these spaces, such as creating 4-hour time limits or an Area M permit parking district.
Community members commented that the underpass on Jackson Street is mostly used by locals.

Several stakeholders noted new development in the area that will affect traffic circulation. Notably, there will be approximately 1,100 new housing units in the Jack London District. Brooklyn Basin has 3,000 units, and there are likely to be traffic impacts affecting this area. Land uses are rapidly changing in the area.

Some stakeholders acknowledge the benefits of a new left turn pocket on Jackson Street. However, traffic is backed up on the lane and there is a desire for a left turn signal. People find themselves on the wrong side of the soft hit bollards, which is very unsafe. Bike East Bay noted that bicycles are not benefiting from this left turn lane, as there is less space for bicyclists on this path. Future improvements for vehicle circulation should consider their impacts on bicycling. In general, bicyclist and pedestrian safety issues, as well as pedestrian access to and from BART, needs to be reviewed.

Some stakeholders suggested replacing angle parking on Jackson Street with parallel parking to create more road space on Jackson Street.

Oakland’s Embarcadero Bridge over Lake Merritt Channel is receiving structural upgrades to increase its earthquake resistance. The project will be completed by December 201. The Embarcadero between Estuary Park and 5th Street will be closed, which will likely redirect more traffic in the area.

Community members expressed concern about safety/personal security issues, with past incidences of rape and mugging on 5th Street. Stakeholders asked, how do we attract people to Jack London knowing these issues? What can be done on 5th Street to improve safety/personal security conditions? Others remarked that security guards at Cost Plus have been effective.
5th and Madison (Stop 14)

- The underpass on Madison Street appears to be the one most frequently used to access the Lake Merritt BART station.
- Lighting is limited/lacking, but the pedestrian volumes show there is an opportunity to make a positive impact here.
- Caltrans owns the property under the freeway; would need to involve them in identifying and implementing freeway underpass improvements.
- Some stakeholders called for strong leadership to push for these traffic and pedestrian safety improvements.

4th and Madison (Stop 15)

- There is no sidewalk on 4th Street heading west.
- Some stakeholders commented that one-way streets do not make sense here for only one block. Some of the traffic on Jackson Street could be moved here if this was a full two-way street, which may relieve some traffic that builds on Jackson Street during rush hour.

Madison and 2nd/3rd Streets (Stop 16 & 17)

- There is no sidewalk on one side of 3rd Street.
- Not all curbs at 2nd Street are cut. In general, curb cuts need to be revisited for all of Jack London district.

Jackson and 2nd Street (Stop 18)

- Curb cuts are absent.
- The train station cannot be seen from this location, which seems odd. Since the train station seems hidden, this makes access to and from the train station confusing.
Amtrak Station (Stop 19)

- Amtrak is served by BNSF, Union Pacific, Capitol Corridor, Coast Starline, and San Joaquin. This is a very active rail corridor with capacity for 40-45 trains every day.
- There are currently approximately eight freight trains, which take a longer time to clear than passenger trains. Freight and oil trains are said to take about 15 minutes to clear, which creates difficult passages to the waterfront. While there are overpasses for pedestrians to use, the overpasses are well known and how to access them is not readily apparent.
- Broadway may not be the appropriate street to direct traffic onto. Stakeholders proposed other streets for directing traffic.

Webster and Embarcadero (Stop 20)

- Modal conflicts are numerous here with trains, autos, buses, pedestrians, bikes, and delivery trucks present. Pedestrian traffic needs to be adequately addressed, especially if the “Webster Green” concept is realized. People illegally cross Webster and Embarcadero all the time, and only one side of this intersection has a crosswalk. Signage in general is needed to improve the intersection.
- The railroad uses two center lanes. A third track exists, but is not in use. However, this track is kept open for future uses. Some stakeholders would like this third track to be removed.
- The Embarcadero pavement after Clay Street is uneven and dangerous.
- One stakeholder commented that bicycle safety could be improved with additional space allocated specifically for bicyclists.
ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM COMMUNITY MEMBERS

- Signage and wayfinding for the area should be carefully crafted and improved upon to ease motorist, bicyclist, and pedestrian confusion.
- The freeway poses a physical and psychological barrier to pedestrians. There are opportunities to enhance the experience under freeways, and improve connectivity between Jack London District and surrounding Oakland neighborhoods.
- Pedestrian amenities and elements, including curb cuts, trash cans, and benches, are lacking. These elements should be revisited.