On Wednesday, September 30, 2015, the Comprehensive Circulation Study (CCS) project team and key stakeholders engaged in a walking tour of Chinatown. The tour was organized in large part by community members, and 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 started at Pacific Renaissance Plaza and ended at Chinese Garden Park, and followed the following route (See Figure 1).
Attendance

Approximately 25 participants convened for the walking tour from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

From the CCS consultant team: Amanda Leahy and Amy Lopez (KAI); Mike Eiseman, Danielle Dai, and Julie Huan (Nelson\Nygaard); Bharat Singh and Zack Dinh (CD+A); Francis Lo and Michael Sze (BayPac), Rebecca Krawiec and Ani Thompkins (Convey)

From the Freeway Access Project (FAP) study team: Alice Lai-Bitker (Alice & Associates); Chadi Chazbek (HNTB)

Other key stakeholders in attendance: Mollie Cohen Rosenthal (Alameda CTC), Arlene Lum, Carl Chan, Jennie Ong (Chinatown Chamber of Commerce), Rachel Jacobsen (Bike East Bay); Gary Knecht (Jack London District); Francis Lan (Shoong Family Chinese Cultural Center), Mike Lok (Asian Health Services); Rick da Sliva (LOH Realty)
OBSERVATIONS, ISSUES, AND OPPORTUNITIES BY LOCATION

Pacific Renaissance Plaza (Stop 1)

- Chinatown’s one-way streets were originally designed to aid through traffic between Oakland, the freeways, and Alameda. Circulation needs to improve for all users.
- There is a lot of activity in the Plaza throughout the day. Students from surrounding schools come to the library and residents come to shop and dine.
- There are 578 parking spaces in the garage. Parking and personal safety are issues.
- The Pacific Renaissance Association pays for janitorial services and graffiti removal in the Plaza as well as security guards, improving the safety and enjoyment of patrons.
- The design of the sidewalk, curbs and street next to the plaza does not relate to the plaza entrances, and there are no bulb-outs/curb pull outs that visually indicate drop-off locations.

9th Street / Franklin (Stop 2)

- Asian Health Services (AHS) became interested in pedestrian safety after an AHS member’s father was killed by a vehicle in the crosswalk in the mid-2000’s. The goal of the resulting “Revive Chinatown” study, funded by a Caltrans grant, was to improve pedestrian safety and make Chinatown attractive to visitors.
- The pedestrian “scramble” has been very successful; studies indicate a 50% reduction in pedestrian collisions, and a general improvement in pedestrian safety. The design of the scramble also demarcates Chinatown and reinforces its identity. Sidewalks extend into roadway with a sidewalk bulb out, pictured below, reducing conflict between cars and pedestrians and creating a safe place to stand while waiting for the light. The Chinatown community has advocated applying this treatment to other intersections throughout the area.

- One drawback to the project is that as sidewalks were widened, encroachment into the sidewalk by businesses has increased.

10th Street / Webster (Stop 3)

- 10th and Webster is a T-intersection: 10th dead-ends at Webster and all traffic turns left onto Webster.
- This intersection is considered one of the worst in Chinatown for pedestrians; due to alternating green lights on 10th Street and Webster Street there is a constant flow of auto traffic.
- There is no crosswalk on the south-west side of the intersection, and a metal barrier has been put in place to prevent pedestrian crossing. There used to be a crosswalk on the southwest side of this intersection but it was moved to the northwest due to one-way traffic turning left from 10th to Webster. Particularly when the treatment was new, many pedestrians crossed at this location without a crosswalk.
- Several stakeholders commented that since the intersection is centered between the library, a school, and a playground, it’s an ideal place for a pedestrian scramble. Stopping traffic and letting people cross at any point in the intersection would encourage circulation in this area, which is also lively with restaurant activity. Vehicles exiting the parking garage would need to be considered.
- Several stakeholders made suggestions for how the intersections could be improved. These include:
  - Converting Harrison to two-way;
  - Pedestrianizing one block of 10th Street by closing it to auto traffic;
  - Creating parklets for stores to alleviate encroachment onto the sidewalks;
  - Zoning parking spaces for commercial loading only in the mornings, making them available to the public for on-street parking in the afternoon.
Changing the red zone in front of 999 Webster Street to a passenger loading zone would allow residents to be dropped off and picked up safely without risk of a parking ticket. This red zone could be removed if the perpendicular block of 10th Street was pedestrianized.

Israel Street / Webster (Stop 4)

Rachel Jacobsen of Bike East Bay noted that Bike East Bay welcomes suggestions on how to add or improve connections for bicyclists. Bike East Bay’s current understanding is as follows:

- There are currently bike lanes on Oak and Madison Streets and on Webster and Franklin Streets, but most lanes stop when they get to Chinatown. Cyclists can’t access Chinatown to shop and eat, or cross safely to Jack London Square.
- There is a need for an East/West route, but 8th and 9th Streets aren’t suitable due to traffic volume and speed, and 10th Street is discontinuous. If 10th Street was converted to two-way and pedestrianized for one block, bikes could possibly be accommodated. Another consideration for 10th Street is to convert some curbside parking to bike parking and widen the sidewalks to enhance pedestrian connection.
- The main priorities of Bike East Bay are a continual bicycle route from Mandela Parkway to Lake Merritt and sufficiently wide, protected bike lanes the length of Broadway.
- Bike East Bay offers free bike education classes to the public, including instruction in Cantonese.

Carl Chan of Chinatown Chamber noted that many residents in Chinatown used to use bicycles, but safety hazards from both autos, pedestrians, and other bicycles (even intentional crime against senior citizens from other cyclists) have made it unappealing. He noted that until safe routes can be established, biking in Chinatown will be discouraged.
12th Street / Harrison (Stop 5)

- This neighborhood, near the California Hotel senior living center, used to be mostly senior citizens. This has been changing recently as charter schools and youth services are added and more families move into the area. Young kids carrying backpacks, parents carrying small children or pushing strollers, and older people with walkers and wheelchairs compete for space.
- Harrison Street is a main transit corridor with heavy bus traffic. AC Transit is planning a dedicated lane here for its heavily-used Route 1, reserving a BRT lane for buses only.
- Stakeholders noted that there may be conflicts between design of the BRT lane and the pick-up/drop-off activity associated with Lincoln Square and nearby schools.
- Stakeholders noted that when Harrison Street goes from being 2-way to 1-way at 11th Street it creates a squeeze; drivers are forced to turn right, and cars often turn the wrong way down 10th Street. Traffic heading to the freeway on 11th Street is often bumper-to-bumper, causing further delays.

Lincoln Park & Recreation Center
Established in 1869, this community center is used seven days per week by an estimated 3,000 visitors, both kids and seniors, and has the only public restroom facility in Chinatown.

In the past few years the number of kids using the center has jumped from 600 to 2,000 as charter schools and after-school programs have opened in the area. Vehicular traffic is heavy in the mornings, bus traffic in the afternoons.

During the day, classes rotate through the playground from 8:00am until 6:00pm, limiting senior activities, which also occur 7 days per week throughout the day at the Center.

East-bound traffic from Alameda to Eastlake District clashes with school drop-off, creating a bottleneck from 7:30am until 9:30am. Buses arrive every 30 seconds during peak hours. The center is sandwiched between freeway off-ramps and two BART stations and is a major transfer point for many kids.

Measuring traffic in the area will require planning organizations to visit during peak hours for the schools and Lincoln Park. Visiting during summer will not reflect the actual traffic in the area throughout most of the year.

11th Street / Jackson (Stop 7)

Stakeholder noted that at the adjacent bus stop, bus drivers are not always able to see vehicles turning right onto the freeway on-ramp, creating potential a safety hazard for buses, vehicles, and pedestrians.
Many new businesses are opening at Alice and 10th Streets, beyond Old Chinatown.

There are two new stop signs at 9th Street and Alice, where two years ago a senior was killed in the crosswalk by a driver. Since then this intersection has improved. Nearby on Madison Street two pedestrians have been killed within the last two years reinforcing the community’s concerns about pedestrian safety throughout the area.

Stakeholders noted several potential improvements to the 9th Street/Alice intersection:

- Proximity to the freeway makes additional stop signs an important project. With heavy traffic from the Posey tube on to 7th and Harrison Streets, Alice Street could be enhanced as a pedestrian and bicycle connection between Lincoln and Chinese Garden parks.
- The intersection at Alice and 7th could be signalized, and made safer with bulb-outs and high visibility crosswalks.
- Alice Street from 6th Street to 10th Street could be a shared street.

Shoong Family Chinese Cultural Center has been operating for 65 years, offering immersive Chinese language courses at a low cost in the evenings. During the day the space is occupied by a charter school. More than 1,000 students come here from all over the Bay Area.
• With parents dropping off and picking up kids from the language school at 5:00pm and 7:00pm, pedestrians jam the intersections and double-parked cars block one lane. Because this is one-way, parents are forced to come from Webster Street.

• Across the street, the Asian Resource Center has an outreach center that services an average of 200 clients per day, many of them disabled, and has a staff of 85-90 part-time and full-time employees. Heavy traffic makes safety an issue for those entering and leaving the building where the clinic is housed.

• Stakeholders noted the following potential changes to this intersection:
  o Implement a pedestrian scramble.
  o It was further noted that 9th Street does not seem to carry extensive through traffic between Broadway and Jackson; the street could be reconfigured to provide diagonal parking and drop-off/pick-up zones for children/seniors along with a road diet and possible two-way reconfiguration.
  o It was suggested that 9th Street also could be an opportunity for a buffered bike lane or other more family-friendly east-west bicycle facility in Chinatown, connecting it with the downtown bicycle network.
  o The Northwest corner of 9th Street at Jackson is equipped with a painted bulb-out this and other examples in Chinatown can be opportunity sites for “enhanced bulb-outs” containing landscaping, seating, bicycle parking etc.

8th Street / Webster (Stop 11)

• Following the death of an Asian Health Services Board member’s father in a collision at 8th and Webster, scrambles were installed, sidewalks extended, and streetlights added in four intersections.

• It was noted that as one-way traffic is funneled onto Webster, vehicles back up into the intersection, endangering pedestrians in the scramble. The Tube entrance, the I-880 onramp a couple of blocks down, and 4,000 residents crowd the intersections.

• In addition, drivers unfamiliar with the area get confused when Harrison goes from two-way to one-way and sometimes go the wrong way. The 8th Street and Franklin intersection has more capacity than at Webster Street so it would make sense to shift some of the traffic over.

• Stakeholders form Asian Health Services noted that Webster Street is crowded, which would present a challenge to the installation of a bike lane. They advised that bike lanes should be considered on Broadway or Jackson Streets.
Stakeholders from Asian Health Services noted that there are serious environmental issues in this intersection. An air-monitoring studio partnering with the EPA sent community volunteers out into the streets with personal black carbon monitors, and found levels way above the normal baseline.

Other stakeholders noted concerns regarding loading and unloading activity, sidewalk encroachment, and business closures.

**6th Street / Webster (Stop 12)**

- Considered the “Gateway to Jack London” for many pedestrians, this intersection is dirty and unattractive. Trash, dumped furniture, and homeless encampments surround it.
- A mixed-use retail/residential building on 6th Street is opening 330 new units. The building is currently vacant.
- The Salvation Army site may become a development for residences and additional parking, but this is pending the city finding suitable land for a swap with Salvation Army for the land it currently occupies.
- 7th Street is one-way here, and down Webster at 6th Street, is left-turn only.
- One stakeholder noted that if 6th Street was two-way, traffic could go through to Harrison and Franklin Streets.

**Webster Tube Entrance**

- A previous proposal to address problems at the Webster Tube entrance developed through the Broadway-Jackson project would have required property takings through imminent domain, which was unacceptable to a number of Chinatown stakeholders.
- Several stakeholders recommended that signage be more evenly divided at this underpass, directing traffic both left to Alameda and straight to Jack London Square. Because 6th Street is essentially one lane at this point, it is also suggested that the three lanes become a single lane a block before this intersection, and that the island be removed.
- It was noted that drivers often make a dangerous illegal left turn coming out of the tunnel.
- Stakeholders noted that one option previously considered was to reverse the flow of traffic going through the Webster and Posey Tubes. Traffic would be exiting, rather than exiting, the tube here. Such a change could be paired with reconnecting 6th Street go through, alleviating the current traffic.
Chinese Garden Park (Stop 13)

- The childcare facility here serves up to 80 students. Sonya, the principal, has many concerns. Her concerns include:
  - Heavy traffic is a serious problem during rush hour, with commuters coming out of the tunnel and heading toward the freeway on-ramps. From 8:00am – 9:30am and from 2:00pm – 6:00pm pedestrians can’t cross the street.
  - At the signal, pedestrians wait a long time for the signal to change. The walk light lasts only 5 seconds, not leaving enough time for grandparents or small children to cross safely.
  - Drivers coming from 7th Street are unable to cross Tube traffic to the right lane to pick up or drop off children.
  - She notes that if tube traffic was moved to 6th Street, traffic could avoid the curve onto 7th and bypass the daycare.
  - Students here use the back garden to play; unfortunately on the other side of the fence is a large homeless encampment that causes multiple problems for the daycare. She notes that people living in the homeless encampment sometimes behave in ways that negatively affects the childcare facility and its users.
  - She notes that if 6th Street was made to go through, the homeless encampment would move or be moved.