On Wednesday, September 23, 2015, from 3 to 5 p.m., the Comprehensive Circulation Study (CCS) project team hosted a meeting of merchants in Oakland Chinatown at Peony Restaurant. Initial stakeholder meetings with the Chinatown community revealed the need and importance of hearing about transportation issues directly from merchants. This meeting provided an opportunity for business and property owners to raise critical issues and concerns about transportation in their community.

There were 33 attendees from the Chinatown community, of which 40% primarily spoke Cantonese. Michael Sze conducted simultaneous translations for the meeting. Rachel Flynn, Wladimir Wlassowsky, Michael Ford, and Alicia Parker were present from the City of Oakland. Alice Lai-Bitker, Francis Lo, Michael Eiseman, Danielle Dai, Julie Huang, Rebecca Krawiec, and Ani Thompkins were present from the CCS technical team and associated ongoing Oakland projects.

The meeting started with welcome remarks and an introduction to the project from Michael Eiseman from Nelson\Nygaard and Carl Chan from the Chinatown Chamber of Commerce. After a short introduction to the project, there was a large group listening session, where attendees introduced themselves and noted a few main concerns. After the group listening session, attendees were given three votes to note their major transportation issue and indicate priorities. The meeting adjourned at 5 p.m. Participants were also given comment cards for additional opportunity to voice their concerns.

This memorandum summarizes the priorities and main issues voiced at the merchant meeting. Additionally, a detailed capture of the listening session is provided.
PRIORITIES IDENTIFIED AND RANKED

In the prioritization exercise, participants were given three votes to note their top transportation issues. Cleanliness, encroachment, and public safety were the top three concerns.

- **Cleanliness** - 17 votes
- **Encroachment** - 15 votes
- **Public safety** - 15 votes
- **Loading and unloading zones** - 9 votes
- **Curb space / parking** - 9 votes
- **Pedestrian safety / scrambles** - 9 votes
- **Traffic congestion / circulation** - 5 votes

MAIN ISSUES

The listening session emphasized a series of transportation issues in the Chinatown community. The following provides a high-level capture of issues.

- **Traffic flow and congestion**
  - The impact of commute traffic to and from Alameda on Chinatown
  - The need to safely accommodate the influx of school-age children attending charter schools from outside community
  - Interest in one-way to two-way street conversions

- **Parking**
  - Access for senior citizens
  - Illegal use of ADA parking
  - Illegal use of loading and unloading zones
  - Insufficient loading and unloading zones
  - Availability of parking for customers and patrons
  - Double-parking
  - Casino buses taking up loading zones and emissions from idling
- **Pedestrian Conditions**
  - Encroachment on the sidewalk by businesses uses. Key concerns include:
    - Clear space to walk
    - Sidewalk safety, including vehicle-pedestrian crashes and muggings (particularly for seniors)
    - Selling products from trucks in loading zones
  - Pedestrian safety at street crossings. Interests include:
    - Clearer signage
    - Added stop signs, scrambles
  - Perception of poor public safety conditions on Chinatown streets

- **Cleanliness of streets and public spaces. Key concerns include:**
  - Graffiti
  - Dirty streets
  - Public urination
  - Garbage not being collected / piling up

**DETAILED CAPTURE OF LISTENING SESSION**

- **Speaker: Mrs. Mui of Cantonese Academy**
  - Parking around Renaissance Park is poor
  - Concerned about traffic

- **Speaker: Ed Grasso, Community volunteer**
  - Wants improvements for seniors and merchants
  - Limit parking in yellow zones to 30 minutes - people are parking in them all day
  - Police handicap parking - people are parking in blue zones and running for the casino bus

- **Speaker: Miss Won**
  - Nowhere to drop rest-home residents near Franklin Street entrance
  - Create a white zone for passenger pick-up and drop-off
  - Make Foothill a two-way street

- **Speaker: Howard Lee of Metropolitan Bank, has worked in Chinatown for 25 years**
  - One-way streets with people parking on both sides blocks traffic
  - People are abusing handicap spots
  - Find a way to have two-way traffic to smooth flow
  - Crossing the street as a pedestrian is dangerous
  - Evening rush-hour traffic - if it’s 5 or 6pm, forget about getting to Alameda

- **Speaker: Robert, a senior living in Oakland for 10 years**
New stop signs at 8th and 9th Streets / Alice Street have improved safety for seniors - last year two seniors were killed crossing the street in that area

Double-parking wouldn't be a problem if merchants didn't occupy the yellow zones all day and work from [their vehicles]

- Speaker: Lisa Chang, resident of Chung San Building
  - Senior Center Plaza - illegal encroachment blocking sidewalks on 8th and 9th Streets

- Speaker: Nora Vigil of Pacific Renaissance Center
  - Transpacific Center - Bus stop on 11th Street a safety hazard - new stop will create a curb and take up a lane, the bus will take up another lane, and cars leaving the garage will now have to watch for oncoming traffic and cross four lanes to turn left on Franklin Street - new bus stop will take up almost the whole block and the top of it is right outside the entrance / exit to the garage

- Speaker: Rick DaSilva, Loh Realty
  - Agrees with the issues being addressed but especially the red zone around building (388 9th Street); agrees with making a white zone
  - Casino buses also a problem, diesel engines idling all day
  - Biggest problem is hazardous intersection at 10th Street and Webster Street
  - Scrambles are a big help in alleviating foot traffic
  - When light is green on Webster there's never a break in traffic which is conducive to jaywalking in between cultural center and ___ - recipe for a disaster

- Speaker: Spencer Chu, involved with the Wong Family Association
  - Involved with family association; there are many senior members
  - People misusing yellow curb and parking all day inconveniences seniors getting in and out of cars
  - Merchants taking over sidewalk and parking their trucks in the yellow zone and using them as storage areas
  - Get OPD or parking enforcement in to clean up the problems

- Speaker: Gene Wong, member of the Wong Family Association
  - Agrees with issues brought up
  - Graffiti everywhere
  - Streets are filthy
  - Certain merchants, especially those selling fish or chicken, have a funky smell
  - Maybe [these reasons are] why no one comes to Chinatown except Chinese

- Speaker: Calvin Wong, member of the Wong Family Association for 30-40 years
  - City funding to build parking garages

- Speaker: Mr. Wong, representative of the Bing Gung Tong Association
  - Doesn't live in Chinatown but is a frequent visitor
  - Improve signal at Webster and I-80 (around 10th or 11th Streets) to alleviate regular commute hours traffic jam
Perception of safety - people are unwilling to come to Chinatown, especially at night - he usually parks at San Leandro Parking on 4th or 5th Street because the parking hours are longer, there are no meters, and it feels much safer there than in Chinatown

- Speaker: Alex of Oakland / Chinatown Chinese Association
  - Oakland / Chinatown Chinese Association made up of 9 different associations with mostly senior members
  - When seniors come to Chinatown for an event or daily activity there is nowhere for them to park, or they double park and get a ticket
  - Merchants block the sidewalk and leave only a narrow path for pedestrians so seniors can’t walk down the sidewalk
  - Technical question: parked at post office and received a ticket for taking up two spaces even though he was in between two cars because his front tire was on the white line
    - Response: Officer was making a personal judgement call but technically yes, your car has to be parked inside the white T-lines
  - In addition to traffic safety wishes some city organizations would provide white zones for senior members’ convenience

- Speaker: Roslyn from Metropolitan Bank
  - Been complaining about these issues for years without result
  - Impossible to walk because of merchants occupying sidewalk, taking up parking places by putting boxes in them, and occupying both sides of the sidewalk making it impossible for wheelchairs or baby carriages to pass through - saw someone trip over boxes and fall to the sidewalk, resulted in injury and bleeding
  - People parked can’t open car doors on the sidewalk side
  - Hopes something will be done
    - Response: Rachel Flynn
      - Just cited vendor on 10th Street
      - New zoning officer Sam Meyers assigned to area will be enforcing laws
      - Send Rachel street addresses for violators (Roslyn: "It’s the whole street!")
      - Merchants will receive a warning prior to being fined

- Speaker: Roslyn
  - Merchant blocking two lanes on Webster Street before tunnel
  - Why isn’t garbage being collected? Garbage is piling up at Webster and 8th Streets
    - Response: Rachel Flynn
      - If we go and cite them all who are they going to complain to? The Council?
    - Response: Carl Chan
      - When warnings have been given - the Council is beginning to see the issue as very serious - Seniors walking on the street to avoid traffic - they can complain but they’ll all work together to answer the problem
    - Response: Rachel Flynn
      - Confirms Council will work with them
- Speaker: San Francisco State student with homework assignment to attend a civic meeting
  - How is government engaging the public?
    - **Response: Rachel Flynn**
      - Specific plan created for Chinatown
      - Want to revert to two-way traffic; originally designed to be two-way but was changed to one-way in the 1960's
      - Grant offered to work with a firm to address issues - working with Nelson\Nygaard analyzing the existing conditions

- Speaker: Danny of Hok Lung Market
  - Parking very important for Chinatown area

- Speaker: Owner of Yat Sun Market
  - People arrive very early in front of his market and park there all day - customers can't park or they double park and get a ticket, and they don't come back
  - Set up parking that's metered loading only so customers have somewhere to park

- Speaker: Rosa Lee, lives on 12th and Franklin Streets
  - People urinating on the street is a public health concern
  - Install public restrooms to alleviate problem

- Speaker: No name given, restaurant owner
  - Clean up the streets

- Speaker: Keffy, restaurant owner at 326 8th Street
  - Move white zone for merchant offloading - they don't have anywhere to offload so they get tickets

- Speaker: No name given, merchant at 819 Webster Street
  - Oakland is becoming a tourist destination but we need to clean the street and have a 30-minute loading zone

- Speaker: (Name not given), member of Chamber of Commerce and property owner
  - Traffic and parking - no suggestions to offer but definitely a problem

- Speaker: Gilbert, Director of playground
  - Number of school-age kids in area increased from 500 to 2,000 with new charter schools being opened in area impacts before- and after-school traffic on Harrison and Webster Streets
  - Important to assess who is creating the traffic: day-to-day visitors, commuters, or community members in order to address the needs of the community - not just needs but impacts
  - How do we manage pedestrians and traffic coming for charter school kids coming into the area
• Speaker: (Name not given)
  o Chamber of Commerce concerned
  o Inform property owners and businesses to keep it clean - if it's dirty, people don’t want to come to shop or eat - people have choices - keep it clean and tell that to merchants and owners even if there's an enforcement fee

• Speaker: Michael Ford
  o Thank you - Chinatown is very good about telling them how to improve
  o Downtown Oakland parking study is looking at both garages and on-street parking to understand what they have, how it’s used, and how to improve it
  o Likes suggestion about handicap placard parking and making spaces that are loading zones in the morning but available later in the morning for passengers
  o New curb management planning will be completed in early 2016

• Speaker: (Name not given)
  o Lot of good info - like to hear more about bike lanes and the legal use of bike lanes

• Speaker: Carl Chan
  o Each parking spot earns $6,000 per year but [a high percentage] are handicap placard parking, losing x revenue per year
  o Not using the garage that’s available
  o Misuse of yellow or white loading zones
  o Encroachment
  o Cleaning issue
  o AC Transit situation - Chinatown Chamber of Commerce opposed the new bus stop and fought hard against
  o Bike lane too dangerous for cyclists in Chinatown between existing traffic and pedestrians - cautions not to upset cyclists but afraid they might be killed

• Additional comments
  o Create a scramble at 10th and Webster Streets to curb jaywalkers
  o Public safety, window smashing
  o Commute hours on Webster Street - improve traffic flow - suggests making Webster 1-way the opposite way and extend the two-way traffic on Harrison Street from 10th Street to 7th Street, creating an alternate route to Alameda so this traffic bypasses Chinatown - make Franklin Street two-way

• Speaker: Rachel Flynn
  o Two-way streets can improve traffic by 25-50%
  o It’s cheaper to park on the street than in a garage so cars circle the blocks, adding to the congestion - increased meter fees to encourage use of garages

• Speaker: Michael Ford
  o Short-term parking should be available on streets and longer-term parking in garages - encourage by balancing price points
• Speaker: Rachel Flynn
  o Considered a business improvement initiative? Cleaning, trash pick-up, ambassadors

• Carl Chan: Doesn’t think it would pass based on polling

• Additional comments after close of meeting
  o Loading/unloading for grocery markets - They have different needs: typically earlier in the morning is to provide parking for delivery to the market, then mid-morning to provide parking for restaurant customers who buy in bulk, parking for retail customers later in the day (he recommended a 1 hour meter limit). He noted the delivery needs for markets that sell live produce (mainly fish and other seafood) are different as the delivery may happen later in the day.
  o Bike Lane - Similar to what Carl said, the attendee thinks that additional parking capacity (in the form of garages) needs to be provided before taking up any roadway space for bike lane.

• Additional comments from feedback cards:
  o “Chinatown has improved. This kind of meeting needs to be continued. The signal light on Webster Street from 11th Street to tunnel needs improvement. 7th Street at Alice Street: I recommend to install signal light. Still need improve Chinatown safety. If Chinatown is safe during the night need to propagandize – let more people know.”
  o “Dead trees and open tree grates along Franklin / 11th St. Open grates are potential hazards. People could break their leg if they fall in the grate. Public urination / defecation is a huge problem at 11th St (between Broadway & Franklin) bus stop.”
  o “I hope this meeting today really will improve all the traffic in Chinatown. Please make our Chinatown clean. Thank you. Most of the time, we don’t get any result for a long time. Please be quick.”
  o “Bilingual service is a plus and it made the meeting run smoothly.”
  o “Improve curb painting. We cannot let some people ‘take over parking area all day, and’ (cannot) let merchants (illegally) encroach/obstruct on the sidewalk, which do not leave safe, walkable space for pedestrian that (occurred) ‘mostly on 8th Street.’ (First comment)
  o Nancy Cheung: “In my opinion, my priorities are firstly sidewalk space, secondly cleanliness and thirdly public safety.”