

QUICK-BUILD BIKEWAY NETWORKS FOR SAFER STREETS

Delivering Safer Streets in Weeks or Months, Instead of Years

How to Meet Public Demand for Safe Bikeway Networks—Affordably, Quickly, and Inclusively



Photo credit: Alta Planning + Design

CASE STUDY

Adeline Street in Berkeley got protected bike lanes 20 years ahead of schedule, when Bike East Bay worked closely with the city to incorporate planned lanes into the repaving schedule, saving time and money by simply adding bike infrastructure to an existing project, one funded through a local infrastructure bond measure. The City of Berkeley garnered extensive public input on the Adeline Corridor, making this a great example of quick-build speeding up existing bike infrastructure planning, bringing bike lanes to Berkeley in 2019 instead of 2039.

WHY QUICK-BUILD? WHY NOW?

Biking is up in many communities in California, including those that started with low rates of bicycling, as people seek out healthy and safe transportation and recreation. Californians are discovering they can be healthier and happier simply by getting out on two wheels.

Meanwhile, agency budgets are down. Plans to spend millions on infrastructure may no longer be realistic. More than ever, the public demands that transportation projects are equitable and responsive to the needs of neglected communities.

Quick-build is a method of building bike and pedestrian safety improvements—protected bike lanes, pedestrian crossings, slow streets, parklets, and more—now, within your budget. In challenging times, quick-build projects are crucial to building trust in the government’s ability to deliver public benefit. And quick-build infrastructure can engage the public better than ever, and be more inclusive and equitable than traditional infrastructure.

“We as transportation experts need to be thinking strategically about whether or not we need to spend three years talking about doing something important, or three weeks to just try something.”

— Warren Logan

*Transportation Policy Director of
Mobility and Interagency Relations at
Oakland Mayor’s Office*

WHAT IS QUICK-BUILD?

The Basics

- Quick-build projects use materials that can be installed quickly and at low cost. Build projects from posts, planters, and stripes of paint, not new pavement or curb alignments.
- **Quick-build projects are installed on a trial basis.** Temporary installations allow for adjusting or removing elements in response to public feedback. Successful projects may become permanent, exactly as installed, or upgraded with more durable materials.
- **Quick-build should incorporate rigorous community engagement.** A project on the ground can serve much more effectively than a PowerPoint or rendering for trying something out and allowing community residents to respond. Gather feedback and input, and change designs accordingly.

Materials

From paint, traffic cones, and A-boards to concrete curb barriers, planters, and temporary raised crosswalks, a wide variety of materials work well for creating quick-build projects. The full Quick-Build Toolkit provides thorough, detailed descriptions of materials that can make for an effective and inexpensive project to meet your community's needs.



Photo credits, top to bottom: Alta Planning + Design; Real Hartford; Alta Planning + Design; Street Plans Collaborative



CASE STUDY

In August of 2020, the City of San Luis Obispo converted one of the three motor vehicle lanes of downtown Higuera Street into a buffered bike lane, as part of Open SLO, the city's pilot program to expand the use of public spaces (with parklets and bike/ped spaces) during the COVID-19 pandemic. The project was installed with paint, took less than a week to install, and cost a mere \$15K instead of the more than \$150K it would have taken to put in a traditional bike lane by sealing and restriping the whole street as the city would normally do.

Photo credit: Bike SLO County

WHO?

Your Quick-Build Project Team



Team leader. Quick-build projects need a “chief” (usually city staff) tasked with project facilitation, keeping the momentum going, establishing lines of communication, and accepting and evaluating feedback.



Community leaders. Because evaluation and adjustment are essential for successful quick builds, make sure community leaders are on board from the beginning. Look to businesses, residential associations, places of worship, and nearby schools. Bring in bike/ped advocacy organizations and other CBOs, including those based in disadvantaged communities and led by people of color.



Department liaisons. Your project may impact transit, street sweeping, parking enforcement, maintenance, waste management and recycling, and emergency response. Involve other agencies as necessary to ensure you don't forget a critical aspect.



Elected Officials. They have the power to marshal funding for quick-build projects. They will hear from constituents, so communication channels between the project team and electeds must be open for effective project evaluation.



Communications. Ideally, include a dedicated communications person on your team. Because this is a new method, and people are used to years of discussion, publicize quick-build's temporary nature. Talk about the project's intended benefits, and listen to feedback about the actual impacts.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is essential and also very effective, because it's easy to engage people in providing feedback on real-world solutions that they can see and use. Here are the keys:

- Start engaging with the community before you install the project so that residents' opinions are included from the get-go.
- Be inclusive in your outreach, including perspectives from disadvantaged communities and people of color.
- Emphasize the project's temporary nature, and the ability to change the project after it's installed.
- Implement effective feedback mechanisms during the project, making sure to plan and budget for project adjustments in response to input.

CASE STUDY

The El Cajon Boulevard Business Improvement Association ("The Boulevard") got city councilmembers and the mayor on board to fund a pilot bus and bike lane along a 3-mile stretch of San Diego's El Cajon Boulevard. The Boulevard staff brought in diverse stakeholders and built on longstanding relationships to push the city to dedicate a lane for El Cajon Boulevard's new bus rapid transit line, and got bikes included on this Vision Zero corridor. The entire three-mile project, which launched in January 2020, cost \$100K, funded by San Diego's general fund.

Photo credit: Holly Raines



WHERE?

Which Projects are Best for Quick-Build?

Some projects are better than others for the quick-build method.

- **Look to existing plans.** Your community's current active transportation plan already identifies key improvements and priorities. Most such plans will take decades to complete with traditional methods and funding. Quick-build can take those plans to reality much sooner.
- **Fill gaps in the bikeway network, especially now when more people are bicycling.** Look to improve intersections that are dangerous to navigate, short sections of crosstown routes that use busy streets, or long sections of streets that could become "slow streets" to connect neighborhoods.
- **Put disadvantaged communities first.** If your plan doesn't already incorporate an equity analysis to set priorities, this is your chance. Look at a model plan like Oakland's "Let's Bike Oakland" bicycle plan which incorporates a framework of equity and a focus on improving well-being for the city's most vulnerable groups.

If a project is funded and on schedule to be built within a year or two, turn your attention to projects that will take years without quick build. Projects that require expensive modifications—new traffic signals, bridges, reconfigured curbs—are not good quick-build candidates.



Photo credit: Alta Planning + Design

Funding for Quick-Build

POTENTIAL FUNDING SOURCES IN CALIFORNIA

Available funding for quick-build projects varies a lot from one municipality to the next. But here are a few ideas.

- Public works departments' essential repaving and repair projects are great opportunities to put in quick-build projects at low cost.
- Local and regional funds such as general fund, sales tax revenue, and Air Quality Management District funds can be used for quick-build projects.
- Tack on costs to another publicly-funded transportation project, or even a private project. For example, a development project that is required to repave and stripe new bike lanes might install a protected bike lane using quick-build materials instead.
- In 2020, the **Active Transportation Program** piloted a special quick-turnaround funding pot for quick-build projects, with an earlier (summer) deadline. Keep an eye on the ATP to see if they continue to offer this funding in future years. CalBike will be pushing them to do so.
- PeopleForBikes has a **small grant program** for infrastructure projects.
- AARP's **Community Challenge grant** could fund a quick-build project.

This resource was prepared in partnership with Alta Planning + Design. For more information see our complete **Quick-Build Guide**.

