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Sacramento, CA 95814
www.calbike.org

June 4, 2025

Dina El-Tawansy, Director
California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) District 4
111 Grand Avenue
Oakland, CA 94612

Re: Caltrans' State Route 61 Otis Drive/Doolittle Drive Preventative Maintenance Project

Dear Director Dina El-Tawansy:

California Bicycle Coalition (CalBike) is a statewide policy advocacy organization that works towards equitable, inclusive, and prosperous communities where bicycling helps to enable all Californians to lead healthy and joyful lives. We are California's statewide bicycle advocacy coalition, uniting local, statewide, and national partners to work for better biking across the state.

A critical aspect of our policy work focuses on Caltrans-controlled state routes that serve as local streets as they pass through towns and cities. These roads pass by schools, hospitals, senior centers, shops, and homes. They are often the most direct route across a neighborhood or a region that should act as Complete Streets. People walk, bike, and take public transit to destinations on these Caltrans corridors, yet we often see their important safety needs being disregarded or dismissed. Part of this work is tracking the development and implementation of the State Highway Operation and Protection Program (SHOPP), which is the State of California's primary program that funds the repair, preservation, and safety improvements on the State Highway System (SHS).

CalBike sponsored SB 960 (Wiener, 2024) which requires via state statute that Caltrans consider and implement safe and accessible streets for all road users within maintenance projects. This legislation addresses the shortcomings of Complete Streets project implementation that is too often occurring on SHOPP projects, despite internal policies mandating such improvements since 2008.

One such example is SHOPP project 20328, State Route 61 Otis Drive/Doolittle Drive/Broadway Preventative Maintenance Project, located in the cities of Alameda and Oakland. The northernmost leg of this project in the City of Alameda is a mixed-use zone with residential, a city park, and an elementary school. There are minimal setbacks on private property from the roadway. This portion of the project should be treated as a small suburban arterial, not as a state highway. It is clear that the elementary school, city park, and residents directly along SR-61 need safety improvements for kids walking to school, kids biking to school, and everyone else on foot.

Primary to these safety improvements includes the consideration of a 'road diet' on Otis Drive between Fernside Drive and Broadway. We understand that Caltrans has rejected this safety improvement for a number of reasons. Caltrans has already performed road diets on much of SR-61 in Alameda. Residents and businesses are now familiar with the benefits of 1 thru auto lane in each direction plus a center turn lane. The portion of SR-61 between High Street and Broadway should meet the same criteria.

We are aware that Caltrans District program managers and leadership staff have been meeting with public stakeholders to discuss details of the project. We appreciate the public update on May 28th at the Alameda City Transportation Commission which announced that Caltrans is now working to incorporate some City-requested pedestrian safety elements into the four-lane Otis Dr CAPM project design. We also appreciate that Caltrans is planning a more systematic future traffic calming project to actually realize a complete street on Otis Dr from the Bay Farm Bridge to Broadway. They have shared with the public that the agency will program this project into the 2028 SHOPP, with construction expected in the early 2030s. While it's disappointing that progress takes so long, we appreciate Caltrans District 4's ongoing commitment to safety improvements on this corridor. For the 2028 project to succeed, we trust that all relevant stakeholders will be included in discussions to craft and review the project initiation document (PID) and that this project will reflect all standing Caltrans directors policies, design information bulletins, and state legislation concerning complete streets and safety for all road users.

We appreciate the ongoing consideration of this important project, and trust that the implementation of SB 960 sheds light on projects that are already in the pipeline. We hope that Caltrans District 4, the California Transportation Commission, Caltrans Headquarters, and the City of Alameda remain collaborative on this specific project and ensure it is safe for all road users.

Please contact me at jared@calbike.org or (714) 262-0921 should you have any questions or concerns. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Jared Sanchez, Policy Director
California Bicycle Coalition

Cc:

CTC Executive Director, Tanisha Taylor
CTC Chair, Darnell Grisby
CTC Assistant Chief Engineer, Jon Pray
CTC Chief Engineer, Timothy Sobelman

Complete Streets Coordinator, Caltrans D4, Sergio Ruiz
Caltrans Chief Deputy Director, Mike Keever
Lead Advisor for Complete Streets (Acting), Susan Lindsay
CalSTA Director, Toks Omishakin
City of Alameda City Manager, Jennifer Ott