SITE TREATMENT PLAN FOR
THE ALAMEDA-CONTRA COSTA TRANSIT DISTRICT’S
EAST BAY BUS RAPID TRANSIT PROJECT
IN BERKELEY, OAKLAND, AND SAN LEANDRO

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INTRODUCTION

The Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District has proposed construction of a Bus Rapid Transit Project (BRT) that will run through Berkeley, Oakland, and San Leandro, generally extending from downtown Berkeley through downtown Oakland and ending at the Bayfair BART station in San Leandro. The route is located primarily on Telegraph Avenue from Berkeley to downtown Oakland, and on International Boulevard/E. 14th Street from Oakland to San Leandro. The BRT will include the construction of stations and transitways, the latter consisting of exclusive lanes for buses in existing streets. The configuration of the transitways in the street varies depending on the specific street widths and conditions. Transitway pavement and adjacent platforms will be constructed above the roadway. In some instances sidewalks will be extended. The proposed project will take place primarily within the existing right-of-way and typically between existing curbs. Subsurface modifications are expected to be shallow and associated with sidewalk and curb modifications.

The project alignment follows historic roads that have long played a central role in the history of the East Bay from the time of the Spanish ranchos until the present day. It is also in terrain that was heavily utilized by the prehistoric inhabitants of the region—the Huchiuin, Jarquin, and Yrgb. Buried prehistoric or historic sites or features might exist anywhere along the entire length of the project corridor.

In order to comply with the requirements of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act and the California Environmental Quality Act, an archaeological study of the above project was undertaken (Baker 2005). In November and December of 2004 Archaeological/Historical Consultants conducted an on-foot archaeological survey and record search for the project area. This study determined that six prehistoric sites and four historic archaeological sites or features had been previously recorded within or in the near vicinity of the project corridor. During the archaeological survey, shell, often considered a prehistoric site indicator, was found in small quantities at twelve other locations, generally planting areas, adjacent to the street (see Site Location Maps attached). On the advice of the Northwest Information Center, California Historic Resources Inventory System, Sonoma State University, primary records were prepared for these locations (see Baker 2005).

DISCUSSION

This project has presented difficulties for the archaeologist. The project corridor passes through a highly built environment with little open space in or adjacent to the alignment. Most construction will be in existing streets. The streetscape provided few areas of ground observation aside from open parkways, open tree planting areas, adjacent lawns and planters, and an occasional vacant lot. Notwithstanding these circumstances, shell was observed in some of these tightly constrained areas. A few pieces of shell cannot definitively indicate the presence of a prehistoric site in these circumstances, since so little ground could be observed, because shell could be present in imported fill or as a natural element of the soil in locations close to estuaries, or might represent redeposited midden. Nevertheless, many of the locations where shell was
found were in highly sensitive areas archaeologically—near previously reported sites or adjacent to freshwater sources and estuaries. It, therefore, must be presumed that shell could indicate the presence of a prehistoric archaeological site.

Normally, archaeological testing would be conducted to determine if archaeological sites exist in these locations and to evaluate their significance; however, the circumstances of this project—almost entirely located within streets or sidewalks—make testing largely impractical. Hand augering could be conducted in some of the parkways within the right-of-way, but augering itself is rarely definitive, especially if confined to a parkway. In addition, utility lines may preclude augering.

In making recommendations, another factor is being considered. The potential impacts to possible archaeological sites from this construction project appear to be low. It is anticipated that there will be little pavement removal or utility re-alignment. Most of the work will be above ground and between present curbs. Some curb reconstruction will occur. It is clear, however, that even shallow construction activities could impact or reveal site materials. For example, at site Ala-10 on East 14th Street in Oakland, a site was found in the street near the surface during utility work (Oakland Tribune 1934). The locations of known sites are particularly sensitive. Sensitivity must also be assumed for other areas where shell was found.

SITE TREATMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

1) It is recommended that an archaeologist monitor any construction work within the project alignments in the following locations:

_In Berkeley:_
- Oxford Avenue, between Center Street and Allston Way.

_In Oakland:_
- Telegraph Avenue in North Oakland between 57th Street and 52nd Street.
- The intersection of 13th Street and Broadway and south along Broadway to 12th Street.
- Broadway Street from Highway 880 south to 2nd Street and along 2nd Street from Broadway to Alice Street.
- Jackson Street between 7th and 8th streets.
- 10th Street from Fallon Street to Channel Park.
- Southeast shore of Lake Merritt along 12th Street and 14th Street (International Boulevard) from Lakeshore to 3rd Avenue.
- E. 14th Street (International Boulevard) at 6th Avenue.
- E. 14th Street (International Boulevard) between 8th and 9th Avenues.
- E. 14th Street (International Boulevard) between 14th and 23rd Avenues.
- E. 14th Street (International Boulevard) at Hegenberger Road/73rd Avenue.
In San Leandro:

- E. 14th Street at Toler Avenue.
- Old Town of San Leandro, E. 14th Street at San Leandro Creek to Williams Street/Elsie Avenue.

2) If buried cultural materials (either prehistoric or historic) are encountered during construction, work should stop in that area until a qualified archaeologist can evaluate the nature and significance of the find. Depending on the type of feature, the archaeologist may recommend archaeological excavation to either evaluate, record, or remove the feature. Such excavation would not be undertaken without consultation with AC Transit or Parsons.

3) If human remains are encountered, construction work in the area should be halted and the Alameda County Coroner contacted. In addition, if the remains are Native American, the California Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) should be immediately contacted. The NAHC will identify the most likely descendants, who should be consulted in order to reach agreement on disposition of Native American human remains and associated artifacts.

4) Arrangements should be made with an authorized facility for permanent curation of any recovered artifactual materials.

4) If the project changes to include areas not previously surveyed, additional survey will be required and an addendum to the Archaeological Survey Report should be prepared.

5) It is recommended that the archaeological monitor inform construction crews prior to construction work with regard to the types of materials that might be encountered under the street. Construction companies and their workers should be informed prior to the project regarding reporting requirements in the event that buried cultural materials or human remains are found, whether in monitored areas or not.

REFERENCES CITED

Baker, Suzanne

Oakland Chronicle
1934 (August 31) Site of Indian Village Found.
Archaeological Site Location Maps