

Activist's Diary on the Bicycle Plan and Hopkins Street

"If you build it, he will come" is the most famous quote from the 1989 Kevin Costner film, Field of Dreams where Ray Kinsella builds a baseball diamond in a corn field on his farm in Dyersville, Iowa.

It feels like Berkeley is working off that same magical premise "if we build it, they will come" with its bicycle plans.

After pouring over reports, prior plans and actions, it is the imbalance of attention showered on one street in Berkeley while other neighborhoods cry for attention for failing streets that makes councilmember Kesarwani's proposed makeover of Hopkins Street with cycle tracks on both sides of Hopkins from the Alameda to Peralta scheduled for City Council review on July 28, 2026 so controversial.

Hopkins Street is not in the best of conditions, but that is a street condition descriptor that can be used for much of Berkeley.

There is a lot to unpack besides the 2026 Bicycle Plan Update. During the budgeting season right up to and including the day of the vote on June 23, 2026, the Mayor and City Council stated over and over the difficulty of balancing the biennial budget for fiscal years 2027 and 2028 with a looming expected annual budget deficit of \$30,000,000. And that further staff cuts will need to be made if the sales tax increase is not passed by Berkeley voters in November. The planned \$300,000,000 bond for the November ballot is in addition. It is in this context that each new iteration of bicycle infrastructure on Hopkins keeps expanding.

Bikeway Classifications and Descriptions		
Classification	Description	Upgrades
Class I	Completely separated path or trail with no motorized vehicles or motorized bicycles	
Class II	Striped preferential lanes on roadways	Upgraded Class II bicycle lanes add separation and may use thermoplastic striping to increase visibility
Class III	Signed roadways and travel lanes with stenciling where people riding bikes share a travel lane with vehicles (sharrows)	Bicycle Boulevards are roadways where bicycles share traffic lanes with vehicles, however, traffic calming and diversion infrastructure has been added to prioritize bicycle travel and discourage or slow vehicle travel
Class IV	Bikeways also known as cycle tracks are on-street bicycle lanes that are separated from vehicles with curbs, bollards or a parking aisle	

From the beginning the plan for bicycle tracks down Hopkins Street drew resistance. On one side there were neighbors, shoppers who needed cars, the owners and workers in the businesses lining the two block busy commercial district with Monterey Market as the anchor

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worrying about the impact of removing parking and maintaining their businesses, persons with disabilities worrying about losing access and on the other side the bicyclists insisting on their priority for Class IV protected bicycle lanes on a street that is too narrow to accommodate parking on both sides of the street, a single lane of traffic in each direction and cycle tracks.

Bicycle infrastructure doesn't cause gentrification. It is instead an indicator of a privileged lifestyle which shows up most pointedly in travel to work. The [Census Reporter 2024 analysis](#) of Berkeley breaks down transportation to work as 4% bicycling, 31% working from home, 32% driving alone, 14% using public transportation, 13% walking, 4% carpooling, and 1% other.

Back in 2015 the consultant group Alta Planning + Design conducted a random sampling of 660 Berkeley residents for the Bicycle Plan adopted in 2017 and concluded that 90% of Berkeley residents would consider bicycling if the right bikeway facility or roadway conditions were available and that this result was higher than Portland, Edmonton or Austin.

Alta Planning + Design reached that 90% conclusion when participants in the survey were asked to identify with one of four labels. Only 3% of the respondents identified as "Strong and Fearless" bicycle riders, 16% as "Enthusiastic and Confident" riders and 71% as "Interested but Concerned" and 10% identified as "No Way No How".

To reach the 90%, Alta Planning + Design operates on the assumption that everyone in the 71% that checked Interested but Concerned could be converted to a bicycle rider.

The 2015 survey is used over and over and even when it is not cited it sits in the background of decision making a decade later.

The 2026 Bicycle Plan Update arrived with an \$85,329,800 price tag to implement it.

Councilmembers Lunaparra and Tregub jumped onto Humbert's glowing praise to all involved in the update. Berkeley residents had other comments.

What I found or more accurately what I didn't find in the 233-page [2026 Bicycle Plan Update](#) by Alta Planning + Design, Inc. produced at a cost of \$367,451 funded through a Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) Transportation Development Act (TDA) Article 3 program grant of \$351,951 and Measure BB Fund 134 for \$15,500 was that nowhere in the document is there an assessment of how well the already built bicycle infrastructure is used. Nowhere is there any bicycle count.

On page 24 of the Bicycle Plan is the list of what was not done for that price tag of \$367,451. Chapter 4 titled "Needs Analysis/Public Outreach" includes as not done bicycle counts, bicycle demand, collision analysis, bicycle preference survey and level of traffic stress.

Nowhere in either the 2017 or 2026 Bicycle Plan Update is there any mention of the potential impact of removing parking on the businesses in the commercial districts.

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In all the pages of the report, I did not find how the design of vehicles impacts safety. Newer cars come with cameras, which can greatly improve safety in traffic and ease parking and backing up, however, looking at the camera display on the car dash to back out of a driveway does not tell the driver if there is a bicyclist headed down the bike lane the driver is about to cross.

There are physical changes to the street and sidewalk that can be added to slow the driver backing out of a driveway or backing into a driveway, but the main safety feature to prevent collisions between bicyclists and drivers requires the driver to be looking over their shoulder and not using the camera display.

Multiple driveways along a bicycle track is a known hazard.

In my saved Zoom transcript from the January 19, 2023 Transportation and Infrastructure Commission meeting on agenda item 2 "Hopkins Street, Gilman St. to west end" when asked Farid Javandel (former Deputy Director of Public Works) could not answer how many driveways the proposed protected bikeway would cross. Bryce Nesbitt provided the answer 55 from Gilman to Kains.

In Kesarwani's iteration with co-sponsors mayor Ishii and councilmember Humbert published for the July 13, 2026 Agenda and Rules Committee the treatment for Hopkins from Peralta to Stannage is traffic calming speed cushions to the extent feasible and pedestrian safety features that are compatible with potential future bike lanes.

This is interesting as the eastern half of Hopkins to which Kesarwani places so much attention falls into Councilmember O'Keefe's District. O'Keefe has been pushed out of the picture.

When councilmembers O'Keefe (listed as the contact) and Kesarwani brought Hopkins Street back to life as co-authors with co-sponsors mayor Ishii and councilmember Humbert by submitting "Scheduling Hopkins Street for Paving with Pedestrian Safety Improvements" the agenda item was referred to the Facilities, Infrastructure, Transportation, Environment and Sustainability Committee (FITES) for further review where it sat from February 2026 until April.

Once the April 15 FITES Committee meeting started with O'Keefe present to answer questions, FITES Committee member and co-sponsor Humbert District 8 for the proposal to schedule Hopkins Street paving with pedestrian improvements and NOT the bicycle track, quickly threw O'Keefe under the proverbial bus and planted his support firmly on the bike lanes on Hopkins.

The April 15 FITES meeting was filled with a well-choreographed parade of children and teens saying how much they needed the Hopkins Street bicycle lane so they could ride their bikes to school.

What is interesting about the insistence of a bike lane on Hopkins to travel to and from elementary school age children is how little attention was given to the public Ruth Acty

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Elementary School surrounded by streets Ada, Sacramento, Rose and Acton with around 400 students in grades from kindergarten to 5th grade.

The main entrance to Ruth Acty Elementary School on Rose is the same street as the main entrance for King Middle School with grades 6 to 8 and 876 students.

There is no mention of Rose Street with a traffic signal at Rose and Sacramento Street in the Kesarwani proposal. Rose Street is placed at priority Tier 1 in the 2026 Bicycle Plan Update. Hopkins was placed as a lower priority as Tier 2 for study.

The hazard of multiple driveways along a bicycle track is now moved to the North side of Hopkins from Monterey to the Alameda with the proposal of a cycle track on each side of Hopkins.

I am particularly interested in how well existing bicycle infrastructure is used because when I walk to and from the downtown I might see one or two bicycle riders in the protected bike lanes on Milvia which is probably a good thing, because the protected bicycle lanes really don't appear to be designed for heavy use. On those rare occasions I see more than one bicycle rider they are always single file. Much of the time there is no one. I see fewer riders in the Bancroft Way bike lane if that is even possible.

Only three of us commented on the 2026 Bicycle Plan Update at the June 16, 2026 city council meeting.

I asked for bicycle counts before and after construction noting that bicycle counts done by the community in 2023 replicating earlier city bike counts showed no significant increase in bicycle riders.

Helen Walsh who is pictured in the bicycle plan on her adult electric tricycle stated she has been involved in accessibility in the public right of way and that bicycle infrastructure can unintentionally create new barriers noting, "the plan acknowledges disability concerns but it does not yet include a defined framework of evaluating access" and it is being adopted without discussion.

One could hope accessibility access in the public right of way will reach the attention of the Berkeley City Council and the Public Works Department. Agenda item 10 at the Commission on Disability on July 8, 2026 is, "A request that the City conduct a supplemental analysis of the Bicycle Plan, with specific attention to accessibility in the public right-of-way".

The City of Berkeley appears to be dragging its feet in addressing PROWAG (Public-Right-of-Way Accessibility Guidelines) which should be an embarrassment in a City known for the first curb cuts, the Independent Living Center and the Ed Roberts Campus described as a national and international model dedicated to disability rights and universal access.

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The Commission on Disability sent a request to City Council **May 20, 2025** asking Council to refer to the City Attorney to insert a clause in all City of Berkeley contracts that requires city contractors to comply with PROWAG. The Agenda Committee sent the item to the FITES Committee where it is finally back on the FITES agenda for July 15, 2026 after languishing for over a year.

The response to the request, the Companion Report from the current city manager Buddenhagen and former director of Public Works Davis essentially states that the City isn't required to adhere to PROWAG, there are no funds to do it, there are no protocols and they don't know how anyway.

We will learn on Wednesday, July 15 at 2 pm at FITES if this entrenchment has changed.

Berkeley will soon be on to the third Director of Public Works in as many years. There are also new Public Works staff and consultants in the Transportation Division.

July 28 will mark the second go around with Hopkins Street and bicycle infrastructure since former councilmember Hahn submitted a budget request in January 2018 for \$200,000 to initiate a Hopkins Corridor traffic and placemaking study after two fatalities in 2017. One fatality involved a car and a bicyclist on Sacramento Street (not Hopkins) between Rose and Hopkins and the other fatality involved a car and pedestrian (not a bicyclist) at Monterey and Hopkins.

The last plan for cycle tracks on Hopkins collapsed in April 2023. There is always more to the story which makes for interesting reading in, ["What Has Happened with Hopkins and Why"](#) published in the Berkeley Daily Planet on April 10, 2023.

In the intervening years there have been significant changes besides the turnover in the Public Works Department. Berkeley has a new City Manager. Six of the nine commissioners on the Transportation and Infrastructure Commission are new. Mayor Ishii and councilmembers Tregub, O'Keefe and Blackaby were all elected in 2024.

The Kesarwani plan calls for removing "old trees" intruding into the usable street and replacing them 1 to 1. If the "old trees" to be removed are London plane trees a cross between the American sycamore and the Oriental plane tree they are mere youngsters in tree life. The highly resilient London plane trees with large canopies live for hundreds of years flourishing in urban environments surviving drought and pollution. The earliest known London plane trees planted in London in the mid-seventeenth century are still alive.

The benefit of moderating heat in a warming climate should not be discounted as unimportant. The recorded high temperature in Portland, Oregon during that June 2021 heat dome was 116°, but Vivek Shandas who studies urban heat islands drove around Portland measuring air temperature. In the poorest areas with few trees and lots of concrete the temperature was 124°. That is called urban heat island effect.

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Over 650 people in Oregon, Washington and Canada died from the June 2021 Northwest heat wave.

We actually change the micro climate when we cut down trees and cover the land with buildings, concrete and asphalt. The end result of tree removal and replacement is not unimportant to be taken casually. Newly planted trees will take decades to grow. If small trees are chosen as I suspect will be the case, much more will be lost than just the serenity created by the large canopies of the London plane trees.

There are no street diagrams accompanying the Kesarwani proposal which uses the term reallocated for what happens to parking. There is not even an approximate count of how much parking will be removed to create protected bike lanes. From the written descriptions parking loss will be substantial and not just for neighborhood residents and shoppers. Loss of parking will also impact access to the recreational facilities including King Pool.

No one should expect an empathetic ear from City Council given the response of councilmembers to the June 9, 2026 agenda item 24 "Adjust the goBerkeley Parking Management Program," the plan expanding paid street parking hours from 9 am to 8 pm everyday including Sunday and increasing fees and fines.

Humbert started off with, "[R]elying on parking enforcement to raise money is regressive in nature." He voiced worrying about the impact on businesses, bemoaned that delivery services don't share in the cost and suggested that with the evolution of automated transport vehicles there should be a review, reevaluation in 2 years.

After hearing Taplin complain that streets are being used for car storage and nondrivers have to pay for them and the downtown parking garage won't be paid off until 2046, Humbert embarked on cars using 200 square feet of public space to store a private vehicle, that it makes sense to charge for parking for curb management, that Sunday is a busy day in commercial districts and the folks from the surrounding residential neighborhoods park their cars and store them all day Sunday displacing potential shoppers.

Curb management is the new term for limiting where, when and how long a vehicle can be parked.

Kesarwani picks up with people in her district owning seven vehicles.

O'Keefe aligns with the councilmembers who have spoken and states liking charging for parking on Sunday.

Lunaparra aligns with Taplin and Kesarwani and adds, "economically disadvantaged members of our community, they don't drive. Most of the time they take public transportation, which isn't free on Sundays."

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The goBerkeley Parking Management Program plan passed by City Council on June 9, 2025 proposes that by extending paid parking hours, increasing fees and fines and replacing coin accepted parking meters with card only payment with an added cost of 35 cents per card to offset transaction costs will turn paid street parking into a robust profit center generating \$5,302,000 in revenue per year after covering the projected \$1,000,000 deficit from parking garages and the operating costs of the goBerkeley Parking Program.

The Kesarwani July 28, 2026 calls for floating island bus boarding platforms. Floating island bus boarding platforms are promoted as creating bikeways for all abilities, but what gets less attention are the hazards created for persons with low vision or who are blind and who now must cross a bikeway to [board a bus](#).

Nancy Radar representing the Berkeley Firesafe Council urged council to move the bicycle plan to action noting major street infrastructure projects will be evaluated for their impact on emergency response is instead replaced with, “balancing the need for new bikeways with the need to preserve and improve emergency personnel response times”. This wording suggests that the City could sacrifice emergency response times if necessary to install bike lanes on major thoroughfares without considering how many residents benefit from emergency response versus bike lanes or whether adequate alternative bike routes exist.”

City Council passed the 2026 Bicycle Plan Update listed as item 29 in the city council agenda along with 32 other items on consent with only praises and no discussion on June 16, 2026.

The Berkeley Fire Department (BFD) Open Data Portal reports responding to over 17,000 emergency calls annually with 8600 incidents in 2026 through June 21, 2026, 269 fires and 5,664 EMS/Rescue Incidents

The problem with protected bike lanes/cycle tracks is they are designed for a small number of riders. Pedal bicycles, adult tricycles, scooters and e-bikes and e-tricycles don't travel well together. An actual increase in bicycle riders and the use of personal mobility devices becomes a problem in protected bike lanes.

If the direction of the future is the already emerging e-bikes, then the Class IV protected lanes are the wrong solution. E-bikes do not belong in bike lanes/cycle tracks with pedal bikes.

Sources:

2026 Bicycle Plan Update

<https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/2026-06/2026-06-16%20Item%2029%202026%20Bicycle%20Plan%20Update.pdf>

2019 Vision Zero Action Plan (Vision Zero is

<https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/2022-02/Berkeley-Vision-Zero-Action-Plan.pdf>

Transportation and Infrastructure Commission Agenda Thursday, January 19, 2023 with Hopkins Street Documents.

<https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/legislative-body-meeting-agendas/2023-01-19%20Agenda%20packet%20FINAL.pdf>

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2017 Bicycle Plan Executive Summary

<https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/2022-01/Berkeley-Bicycle-Plan-2017-Executive%20Summary.pdf>

2017 Bicycle Plan with links to all files

<https://berkeleyca.gov/your-government/our-work/adopted-plans/berkeley-bicycle-plan>

June 9, 2026 presentation of goBerkeley Parking Program expansion increasing metering hours from 9 am to 8 pm every day of the week and adding parking meters to heavily used blocks.

<https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/2026-06/2026-06-09%20Item%2024%20Repeal%20and%20Reenact%20Berkeley%20-%20Pres.pdf>

January 19, 2023 Transportation and Infrastructure Commission Agenda with Hopkins Corridor Safety Project proposal

<https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/legislative-body-meeting-agendas/2023-01-19%20Agenda%20packet%20FINAL.pdf>

January 19, 2023 Transportation and Infrastructure Commission action minutes

<https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/legislative-body-meeting-minutes/2023-01-19%20Minutes%20-%20FINAL.pdf>

October 11, 2022 City Council agenda item 23. Reconsideration of Hopkins Corridor Plan in Light of Newly Available Material Information

<https://berkeleyca.gov/city-council-regular-meeting-eagenda-october-11-2022>

October 11, 2022 revised material (Supp 2) from Dee Williams-Ridley, City Manager, the supplemental proposes for Staff study and report of benefits and constraints including considering Ada Bypass, Hopkins/Rose Combination and Hopkins One-Way Uphill

<https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2022-10-11%20Item%2023%20Rev2%20City%20Manager.pdf>

October 11, 2022 City Council annotated agenda

<https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/city-council-meetings/2022-10-11%20Annotated%20Agenda%20-%20Council.pdf>

Census Reporter

<https://censusreporter.org/profiles/16000US0606000-berkeley-ca/>

Original January 23, 2018 referral by Sophie Hahn on consent for Hopkins Street Corridor Traffic and Placemaking Study

<https://records.cityofberkeley.info/PublicAccess/api/Document/AVebOE6MkxCw99suX3JmikWX4lMf35soNxeg4boW4y3PHRmocdnJLvogfunRHdBpmogfZ8L1QpY2ba5jiT6xGQk=/>

July 28 Bicycle Plan for Hopkins from councilmember Kesarwani pages 63 – 90

<https://berkeleyca.gov/sites/default/files/legislative-body-meeting-agendas/2026-07-13%20Agenda%20Packet%20-%20Agenda%20Committee.pdf>

YouTube video of floating island hazards

<https://youtu.be/0VVoPA6mvWs?si=VpgMmm-Gd6OmxiaA>

“What Has Happened with Hopkins and Why” published in the Berkeley Daily Planet on April 10, 2023. [https://www.berkeleydailyplanet.com/issue/2023-04-](https://www.berkeleydailyplanet.com/issue/2023-04-09/article/50248?headline=What-Has-Happened-with-Hopkins-and-Why--Kelly-Hammargren)

[09/article/50248?headline=What-Has-Happened-with-Hopkins-and-Why--Kelly-Hammargren](https://www.berkeleydailyplanet.com/issue/2023-04-09/article/50248?headline=What-Has-Happened-with-Hopkins-and-Why--Kelly-Hammargren)