

Oakland Planning and Development Corporation Mon-Oakland Connector Update, November 2019

OPDC supports community-driven priorities in transportation infrastructure investments. We advocate for pedestrian and bicycle safety, and actively look for ways to reduce the demand for private vehicles in Oakland.

The city's Department of Mobility and Infrastructure (DOMI) proposes to improve non-automotive connectivity into Oakland through Junction Hollow, expanding the existing single bicycle trail connecting the Panther Hollow neighborhood of Oakland with the Eliza Furnace Trail to a double trail – one for slower recreational use, the other for faster bicycle and potentially electric-assisted personal mobility devices such as e-bikes and scooters – the construction of which would coincide with PWSA's planned reconstruction of the Junction Hollow watershed floor.

This proposed connection, the "Mon-Oakland Connector," has undergone many changes since it was first proposed several years ago. The current proposal appears to have stepped away from the autonomous shuttle track that was originally prominently featured. OPDC supports this change, as it indicates DOMI is responsive to neighborhood input, which was overwhelmingly opposed to the shuttle service. Pittsburghers for Public Transit authored a [letter](#) asking for DOMI and Port Authority to prioritize connections, improvements to transit service, and bicycle and pedestrian safety measures over any investment in a shuttle track. OPDC has signed on to this letter in support of community-driven priorities for transportation infrastructure.

We believe it important to note that none of the measures in that letter are enough to meaningfully reduce the volume of car traffic flowing into Oakland every day, nor do they offer significant enhancements for connectivity to Hazelwood and Oakland for commuters from the Mon Valley, the vast majority of whom travel to jobs in Oakland in single occupancy vehicles (SOVs). There remains a need to provide a better transit connection between Oakland and Hazelwood as well. Buses are currently unable to climb Bates or Brady streets from Second Avenue to provide an efficient connection to Oakland's employment center; and existing routes that do climb the hill through Greenfield and Hazelwood are local and slow. Oakland needs bold and progressive ideas for enhanced fixed-route transit access from the south that is reliable, efficient, and does not exacerbate traffic congestion on existing arterial roadways.

In addition, South Oakland residents need better mobility connections – to Schenley Park; to Central Oakland's business district, the Fifth/Forbes corridor; and to Second Avenue and Hazelwood. South Oakland was once served by multiple trolley lines that provided these connections, and later by a Port Authority circulator that allowed residents to access businesses and medical facilities "up Oakland," but these connections have now long gone, and aging homeowners in South Oakland are increasingly isolated and frustrated.

Where public options are not readily available and accessible, private shuttles appear to serve the interests of some, but most decidedly not all, of Oakland's constituents. Privately-operated gasoline- and diesel-powered shuttle buses and vans regularly ply Oakland's streets for particular constituent users, but none of these is accessible to non-affiliated Oakland residents. OPDC seeks viable sustainable solutions to Oakland's mobility challenges that support the quality of life for all of Oakland's residents.