



Final Report to MTC, HUD Sustainable Communities Initiative

**Oakland Sustainable Development Initiative:
Business Impact Mitigation and Economic Development Strategies for International Blvd Bus
Rapid Transit**

March 31, 2015

A. Project Profile

Lead and Partner Organizations: PolicyLink, Urban Strategies Council, City of Oakland, East Bay Asian Youth Center, Oakland Sustainable Neighborhoods Initiative Economic Development Committee

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Sub-Grant Program: Housing the Workforce/Equity/Economic Prosperity

Project Type: Equity Initiatives

Total Grant Amount: \$20,000

Total Match: N/A

Geographic Coverage of Project: Oakland's International Boulevard Corridor, Oakland, CA; relevant to cities of Oakland, Hayward, Berkeley, Richmond; San Francisco Bay Area and other BRTs in diverse communities of color; drawn from national best practices.

Brief Description:

Since the adoption of the award-winning public plan for the International Blvd Transit Oriented Development corridor in 2011 —led by key community development, community organizing, and youth and family services organizations, the City of Oakland, and AC Transit—implementation has started to move forward. PolicyLink worked with the Oakland Sustainable Neighborhoods Initiative (OSNI) collaborative to: discern data needs for strategic equitable development within the corridor; translate Urban Strategies Council maps and data analysis into priorities for implementation of business mitigation and economic development; conduct best practice research; and move forward business impact mitigation policy and resources.

B. Project Description

I. Goals and Objectives

Goals: Ensure that residents and small businesses in East Oakland along International Boulevard receive equitable benefits from the Bus Rapid Transit implementation.

Objectives:

1. Facilitate OSNI data and policy development to mitigate business impact and foster equitable economic development along the corridor
2. Integrate best practice research into decision making
3. Inform policy framework from best practices and mapping

II. Work Plan

Q1. PolicyLink worked with the Economic Development (Co-chaired by East Bay Asian Youth Services) and Transportation (Co-Chaired by Transform) Committees to identify data needs for informing strategy along the corridor

-PolicyLink worked with co-chairs and Urban Strategies Council to identify data needs along the corridor relevant to each committee

Q2. PolicyLink worked with Urban Strategies Council to translate maps and data analysis into committee deliberation

-PolicyLink attended committee meetings where maps and data presented to committee; committee members identified priority areas for best practice research.

PolicyLink conducted best practice research on Business Impact Mitigation

-PolicyLink presented findings of research to both committees and to OSNI Leadership Council

Q3. PolicyLink conducted follow up research for informing Business Impact Mitigation fund

-PolicyLink provided policy-specific information to City of Oakland to inform development of Business Impact Mitigation Fund, appropriate \$2M in November, 2014

Q 4. PolicyLink conducted best practice research on Economic Development strategies

III. Role of Lead and Partners

-City of Oakland is the Lead convener of the OSNI work. The City staffed and co-chaired the OSNI Leadership Council and each of the working committees that included Transportation, Economic Development and Housing.

-East Bay Asian Youth Center, (later followed by East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation), co-chaired the Economic Development Committee, and guided the development of the Business Impact Mitigation Fund

-Transform co-chaired the Transportation Committee, which half-way through the year merged with the Economic Development committee

-Urban Strategies Council conducted data analysis and mapping of committee priorities

-PolicyLink conducted best practice research of business impact mitigation strategies and made policy recommendations to committees and City

C. Outcomes and Challenges

Outcomes: PolicyLink helped committees identify key data needs to inform economic and project strategies along the corridor, which were then analyzed and mapped by Urban Strategies Council. PolicyLink conducted best practice research and provided policy recommendations on business mitigation and economic development for the Oakland Sustainable Neighborhoods Initiative (OSNI) to help inform the initiative.

PolicyLink staff worked with the OSNI Economic Development Working Group to inform the development of business impact mitigation strategies for a bus rapid transit (BRT) corridor along International Boulevard in Oakland, California. We conducted research and interviews on light rail and BRT projects in seven cities to inform early discussions on how to address businesses negatively impacted by the BRT. We did further research into two cities—Seattle, Washington, and St. Paul, Minnesota—that recently built new light rail lines through neighborhoods rich with small, local, minority- and immigrant-owned businesses. We provided detailed information on how the business impact mitigation programs were developed, funded, and implemented in each city, and provided a list of six best practices for OSNI in developing their own program. This paper was presented to the economic development working group of the Initiative, and used to develop recommendations by the working group.

Those recommendations led to a City of Oakland establishment of a Business Sustainability Fund in November, 2014. The City Council allocated \$2 million of Community Development Block Grant and General Funds to effort. These funds are intended to supply grants and loans to small businesses affected by Bus Rapid Transit construction or loss of parking. AC Transit additionally made a commitment of \$2.5 million, intended to provide technical assistance to the businesses along the corridor—both to weather the construction, and to expand to take advantage of the new opportunities presented by the new BRT.

OBDC was subsequently recruited by the City in December of 2014 to provide business technical assistance along the corridor. OBDC has relied heavily on the PolicyLink report and consultations in developing their program for the corridor.

PolicyLink also shared published research detailing the impacts to small businesses of the Green Line in the Twin Cities, and lessons learned from their business impact mitigation research.

Challenges: Two challenges faced the implementation of this project—one minor and one major.

1. PolicyLink work on data and mapping relied on Urban Strategies Council to do mapping and data analysis. USC's contract from the City of Oakland was delayed, delaying the start of the mapping and data analysis, meaning that committees did not have their maps and data as early in the project period as optimal.
2. The primary outcome of this work was the development and establishment of the Bus Rapid Transit Business Impact Mitigation Fund and technical assistance program, capitalized by the City

of Oakland for \$2million; and pledged \$2.5 million by AC Transit. But AC Transit has not moved forward on implementing its funding, delaying the start of work with businesses owners along the corridor.

D. Replicability and Dissemination

Replicability. For any future BRTs developed within the region (and potentially other types of transit that impacts minority and small businesses along the alignment), transit agencies, municipalities, and business development entities can utilize the processes, materials and lessons learned from this project. Tools can specifically be applied to the following:

San Jose BRT: <http://www.vta.org/projects-and-programs/transit/santaclara-alum-rock-brt-project>

SF BRT: <http://www.sfcta.org/delivering-transportation-projects/geary-corridor-bus-rapid-transit-home>

El Camino BRT: <http://www.vta.org/projects-and-programs/brt-el-camino-real-brt-project>

Tools and Resources.

- Memo summarizing Community and Committee Input into Corridor Maps (Attachment 1)
- Maps produced by Urban Strategies Council (funded separately from this effort) (Attachment 2)
- Memo to Committees Summarizing Narratives and Case Examples (Attachment 3)
- Best Practices and Policy Recommendations: Business Impact Mitigations on Transit Projects (Attachment 4)
- Policy Documents for Business Mitigation Plan [Oakland City Council] (Attachment 5)
- Policy Documents for Business Mitigation Plan [AC Transit dockets] (Attachment 6)
- Business and Economic Development Policy Framework (Attachment 7)

Sharing and Dissemination

PolicyLink will post these tools to:

- the PolicyLink website on Infrastructure, Transportation Equity, and Sustainable Communities pages.
- the Sustainable Communities Learning Network.
- the Transportation Equity Caucus website.

PolicyLink will refer national colleagues working on TOD to these resources.

PolicyLink will highlight OSNI efforts in other best practice work that we do.

PolicyLink will highlight the Business Impact Mitigation work in our America's Tomorrow newsletter that reaches an audience of 50,000 once the work is underway.

PolicyLink will share outcomes with FTA.

If PolicyLink wins a contract with FTA this Spring to provide TA on Equitable TOD nationally, we will share these tools with those jurisdictions.

E. Recommendations and Next Steps

1. All BRT or other transportation infrastructure projects that impact small businesses should establish a Business Impact Mitigation Fund and technical assistance program that protects small businesses during construction, and supports strategic business expansion to leverage transportation opportunities created by the new service.
2. An equity lens should be applied to Business Impact Mitigation funds and technical assistance, to ensure people of color and new immigrant businesses are well served and survive new infrastructure investments.
3. MTC should develop expertise and allocate funding and technical assistance to ensure equitable business impact mitigation outcomes.
4. The success of International Boulevard BRT Business Mitigation Fund and Technical Assistance should be lifted up as a national model (if successful).
5. Case study of effective TA for business impact mitigation and business expansion post-capital investments should be conducted.

Support needs to be brought to ensure the AC Transit commitment of investing in the mitigation fund and technical assistance proceeds rapidly, so that business owners can be supported before the construction (which is eminent) begins. PolicyLink will reach out to the Office of Economic Resilience and the FTA to see if they can bring resources to remove the road blocks.