

Lake Merritt to Estuary Area Channel Concerns

Background Info for DD Meeting May 20, 2019

This attachment contains background information regarding the area surrounding the walking, biking, and boating areas connecting Lake Merritt and the San Francisco Bay via a channel and the estuary.

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Available DD Funding

- According to the July 2019 meeting, we've approximately
 - 4 million in funds left for water quality improvements
 - 1 million in funds for bike and ped improvements.
 - Possible 1 million at the Coastal Conservancy
 - Some money needs to be held over for help with any plans for the Flood control gate.
 - We don't have an option for moving other funds from DD into this. Money could be moved from water quality to bike and ped improvements, but the council would have to vote on that.

Satellite Map of Area in question ([see annotated version](#))



What is already happening: DD plans/conversations

- Street crossing over the pump station being designed. From latest update: *Task Order NTP for design was issued on 3/6/19. Staff is working w/ the consultant for a detail design submittal schedule. Design estimated to be complete by June or July. The design alternative Alt. C-hybrid (a crosswalk w/ 2 hawk signal lights and a bulb-out n each traffic side to minimize the bike traffic conflicts).*
- Pump station. From latest update: *County has hired a consultant to conduct a facilities assessment. After completion of assessment City will discuss options with County for possible changes to the pump station to accommodate pedestrians and boats.*
- [Study and potential for Lake to Bay \(LM2B\) bike and pedestrian bridge](#) (likely funded by non-DD funds at some point in the future). Just presented at BCDC late April 2019. However, DPW person just left - Diane Tannenwald(sp?), what is the next step on this from city? Naomi will reach out.
- Improvements to the mudflats (there is a currently unmet state mitigation requirement), which is largely about recovery from use by homeless, replanting and fence fixing, but this work has not been done. [City submitted a letter about this](#), but have not heard and update.
- [Channel art project](#). Uncertain of timeline of this project. (Kristen Zaremba from City Public Arts Program and artist John Roloff presented [May 2018](#)).

Context - Non-DD Projects near the channel

These projects will have some impact on the channel mainly by bringing more people to it. Especially if the LM2BT is every completed.

- [Henry J Kaiser building](#) (plan for opening 2020?) a workplace, but also social gathering.
- [Embarcadero bridge](#) (project nearing completion, Summer 2019?)
- [Estuary Park](#) (in design)
- [Oak to Ninth development](#): Brooklyn Basin and related projects - impact on southern end of channel. [Latest update](#).
- Proposed building at 12th and the channel - [Lakehouse Commons](#)- still proceeding?
- Old schools builds at 10th and the channel?
- Laney college parking lot potential development?
- Oakland Downtown Plan, victory court developments?
- BRT Terminus Point?

Pedestrian Access Details

How can we fund the repair and improvement of paths to be safe from Lake to Jack London

- Shore-up banks by paths near Laney community garden. Erosion already cut into the path.
 - People think this would be a relatively easy project -- Joel Peter has a specific info and suggestion for this - the spot where the bank has eroded back and is threatening the bike path is directly over the BART tunnel. When they built the tunnel, they backfilled over the tunnel with fine beach sand, which can be seen on the channel bottom at that point. With no cohesion, the sand is easily eroded. That's why this spot has eroded so much more than other places. Dumping and compacting a load of soil there, laying a low layer of cobble-size rocks at the water's edge, and planting with marsh plants would be an easy fix.
 - This ought to be a relatively inexpensive project within the bounds of Measure DD.
 - What are the best ways to mitigate this kind of erosion, planning for the future? Other at risk areas (towards 880 for instance)
 - The banks are being undercut on much of that section of the channel.
- Modify currently non-used RR right of way to a be "Highline with a view" path
 - This would be temporary. The pedestrian/bike bridge plan presented at BCDC (if ever build) takes this out
 - Currently one end of it is a gated homeless encampment.
 - In the map below I have this marked as owned by a railroad. Recent maps from LM2BT show the parcel as owned by City of Oakland, but the bridge is owned by the railroad. Alameda Parcel shows the land and bridge as owned by a "Public Utility"
- Fixes could be made to the tunnels -- improved motion sensor lights, regular maintenance, fixes to the concrete to solve flooding.
 - Joel Peter: There is a very old City-County agreement that puts responsibility for maintaining those tunnels, and adjacent ramps and stairs, on the City. The City started designing a tunnel upgrade several years ago, but the project stalled. At this point it makes sense to wait until the County's facility assessment is completed to see if the tunnels will continue to be there.
- For access along channel all the way to Embarcadero, negotiate a safe passage across the railroad right of ways and crossings? The RR's have proved unwilling to do anything on this front.
- Fishermen are now regulars on the Channel. Some bank wear and tear from this, especially by 880. These banks also eroding.
- Wetland
 - July 20, 2020 - trying to figure out encampments. Hahn Nguyen is the PM
 - Thinking about fence -- paid for by homeless? or DD?
 - Estuary no camping zone? could be acted upon.
 - Tide Gate -- Wood Rogers creating an operating manual.
 - 1st draft done, but needed a lot of work. Reworking.
- Street crossing
 - bid package, build planned to start in early 2021

Water Access Details

Currently there is no access for boats in the channel to go from Lake to Bay. Is this a priority of the City? for the committee? Boat access along the channel is in the bond language.

- Challenges of access to bay
 - Maybe only every possible at low tide
 - Railroad right of way bridge (non-used) -- bridge is only low enough at the lowest of tides.
 - UP RR bridge. This also is pretty low. They are not easy to work with. Objected to idea of raising the bridge.
 - Gas pipeline between the RR bridge and Embarcadero bridge. This also is pretty low.
 - Pump Station/Tide Gates - City will looking at this after the County does its facility assessment.
 - The Measure DD EIR includes a ban on boating during the winter migratory season as a mitigation measure to protect the birds. Booms would be put up just like we do each winter at the Trestle Glen arm of the lake, to keep boats out.
- Is this actually an ideal?
 - Wildlife frequent the channel. Boating could be a big disturbance? Seasonal Access?
 - Winter birds use this spot (hundreds by Laney and Kaiser), mostly Scaups, Coots, Golden-eyes, Buffleheads, a smaller number of grebes
 - Gulls, Egrets, Herons, Mallards, Geese, and Cormorants in the dozens intermittently throughout the year. Some Killdeer, and Sandpipers common (if in small numbers).
 - Inland Silverside and Anchovy schools, Bat Rays, and Striped Sea bass show up in numbers intermittently. Swallows use mud to build nests at Laney.
 - [iNaturalist observations - all species](#) (the lionshare of these are from Adrian Cotter and a few other local naturalists)
 - [iNaturalist bird observations](#)
 - Are the obstacles to boating surmountable? from a cost perspective? from a boating perspective?
 - Would low tide boating be worth it if things weren't raised or removed? (aka people easily trapped by tides on one side or the other).
 - channel available only 6 months. and only ~6h a day where tide is good to get to Bay, not necessarily overlapping with boating hours...
 - Building portages would have similar problems to bike and pedestrian access.
 - Fixing up a couple of small exit spots on either side of the 7th St Pump Station for portages would be fine.

Other soft-issues

How do we manage and protecting DD projects along the channel?

- Graffiti - esp the 10th street bridge. Ivy may eventually cover some but progress of the ivy is slow and will unlikely cover everything
 - A mural (Laney college art students?) and active graffiti abatement would be nice
 - People are also living inside this bridge.
- Litter
 - not as much of an issue above the pump station in terms of what ends in the Bay/Alameda channel (the pump station collects much of it) Pump station has grates that collect trash, which is cleaned by divers a couple times a year.
 - Below the station, trash can be blown in from the Sunday flea market. How to work with the organizers of that?
 - Trash and trash collection. What is the current pickup schedule at any trash containers? Who is in charge? Would additional containers be a Measure DD-allowed element? Presumably pickup service would not. What source of funds could be used?
- Homeless impacts, trash in the channel, mudflats. Some improvement since the Cabins were put in place.
- Park Maintenance (from Joel Peter) — There is a maintenance agreement between the City and Peralta that dates back to 1982, which show who maintains what. Peralta seems to have taken on some of the areas supposedly maintained by the City, so I'm not sure if anyone remembers that this agreement exists. The lease I negotiated with Peralta several years ago shows the new landscaping at the 10th St. bridge to be maintained by the City, but otherwise leaves the 1982 agreement intact.
How do we follow up on this?
- Landscaping - especially by the Laney parking lot, maintaining trees
- How could improve the parks to activate their use.
- Replacing the 1974 art pieces?
 - May 17, 2019: They were removing one of the pieces outside of the Peralta offices.

How would we pay for anything?

- What DD funds are available for any of these concerns?
- Coastal conservancy grants for erosion issues?
- Money for landscaping from Laney/Peralta?

Organizations (owners/regulators of the land involved)

- Peralta Community College District (including Laney)
- City of Oakland
- Union Pacific Railroad
- California Coastal Commission
- CalTrans
- Alameda County

Potential Collaborators

- Laney green team (do some landscaping replanting and cleanup)
- Laney staff and students (they were very outspoken on the Stadium)
- Green Streets or other homeless-employment plan could be interested in - helping control litter, maintain the parks better.
- Fire Department (their training yard regularly floods)

Pictures:

Tunnel Flooding



Low Tide

At low tide -- at the bottom of the tide, this is kayakable -- stand up paddleboard would require ducking or sitting on their board. Compare to the photo below.



High Tide

At high tide there is often no room under bridge.



Erosion



Note from Joel Peter: the spot where the bank has eroded back and is threatening the bike path is directly over the BART tunnel. When they built the tunnel, they backfilled over the tunnel with fine beach sand, which can be seen on the channel bottom at that point. With no cohesion, the sand is easily eroded. That's why this spot has eroded so much more than other places. Dumping and compacting a load of soil there, laying a low layer of cobble-size rocks at the water's edge, and planting with marsh plants would be an easy fix. There's plenty of money in Measure DD for this relatively inexpensive project.

Bird usage

This is beneath the defunct railway bridge at low tide, there were a dozen cormorants in the water and egrets lining the banks.



The state of the tunnels



View from the embarcadero bridge



The defunct railway bridge

Just south of 880. This is looking west toward Jack London (the tower is the practice firefighter tower). The far end is an enclosed fence encampment.



Other Pictures

[A mostly full tour of the Lake Merritt Channel](#)

Annotated Map

More or less the parcel map of the channel.



Addendum to the map.

- The utility in question is a EMBUD facility. Joel Peter believes this is owned by the city and with a long term lease to EMBUD
- As indicated in the text, the top listing of UPRR, the land might actually might be owned by the City, the bridge structure UPRR. Alameda parcel maps say it is owned by a public utility, but this may just be wrong. (again thanks Joel Peter for info)

Downtown plan Images

Victory Court... check out the right bottom corner, the image of the channel, particularly to the left of the Channel and below 880. This is currently where the fire training facility is, a dog hotel, a storage facility, and a basketball

court among other things. New additional buildings fall in the Laney College parking lot and in the Peralta administrative area.

An aerial photograph of Oakland, California, showing a dense urban grid. Overlaid on the image are numerous architectural renderings of buildings, mostly in light blue and white, representing proposed developments. The city is situated along the waterfront, with a large body of water (the Oakland Estuary) visible on the left and bottom. A major highway (I-880) runs diagonally across the right side of the image. The text 'Oakland Preliminary Draft Plan' is superimposed in large, white, sans-serif font across the top and middle of the image.

Oakland Preliminary Draft Plan

