

RECONNECTING

COMMUNITIES
HANDBOOK

A RESOURCE FOR DEVELOPING
PARTNERSHIPS

December 2022



Contents

Executive Summary	3
Background	3
Focus Areas	3
1.0: The Foundation for Reconnecting Communities	4
1.1 – Introduction	5
1.2 – Addressing Past Harms	7
1.3 – Implementing California Policy	7
1.4 – Caltrans’ Role in Reconnecting Communities	8
2.0: Funding Opportunities for Reconnecting Communities ..	10
2.1 – Federal Discretionary Grant Programs	11
2.2 – State Discretionary Grant Programs	16
3.0: Equitable Public Engagement	20
3.1 – Assessing Community Needs	21
3.2 – Alignment with California’s Commitment to Equity	22
3.3 – Developing Engagement Strategies for Reconnecting Communities	22
4.0: How to Evaluate Projects That Reconnect Communities: Criteria, Definitions, and Data	24
4.1 – Equity, Environmental Justice, and Community Engagement	25
4.2 – Mobility and Community Connectivity	27
4.3 – Community-Based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships ..	29
4.4 – Equitable Development and Shared Prosperity	30
Conclusion	33
Appendices	34
A – Caltrans Contacts	35
B – References and Resources	35
C – Reconnecting Communities Case Studies	36



Executive Summary

Background

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans or the Department) has developed this Caltrans Reconnecting Communities Handbook to serve as a resource for Caltrans districts, government agencies, and community organizations statewide to navigate the opportunities and strategies for developing projects that restore community connectivity.

This handbook, at the highest level, aligns with Department's core mission to provide a safe and reliable transportation network that serves all the people of California. In an ongoing commitment to advancing equity and livability in all communities, Caltrans and the California State Transportation Agency (CalSTA) acknowledge the negative impacts created by the state's transportation system and how it has harmed Black, indigenous, and communities of color. The Department and CalSTA have established commitments to eliminate the barriers that have divided communities and exacerbate racial inequities.

Focus Areas

The purpose of this handbook is to provide a framework for how agencies can partner with Caltrans on implementing planning and capital construction projects that reconnect communities. The handbook will cover the following topics:

1. Understanding the significance of addressing past harm
2. Identifying available funding resources
3. Defining the role and process for partnerships
4. Embracing equitable public engagement
5. Exploring data tools and resources to bolster projects that reconnect communities

Given the broad intent of this handbook, the listed items are intended as examples for monitoring progress towards efforts that reconnect communities. Rather than focus on restoring community connectivity through the lens of a new program, the topics covered aim to synthesize the existing efforts and priorities of the Department to enable a more flexible process that necessitates partnerships with other state, regional, tribes, and local agencies on projects on and off the state transportation system.



1.0: The Foundation for Reconnecting Communities

1.0: The Foundation for Reconnecting Communities



1.1 – Introduction

United States (US) housing and transportation policies have had significant impacts on the livelihood of communities across the country with the creation of both opportunities and barriers. Federal housing policies in the 1930's addressed a national housing crisis following the Great Depression through low-cost mortgages and low-interest loans, while federal transportation policies in the 1950's developed and constructed a network of transcontinental highways to spur growth in interstate commerce and suburbanization. Communities of color were physically and economically segregated because of these policies, leading to decades of inequalities. Today federal and state policies are being developed to address the history of past harms and to restore connectivity to the very communities that were affected.

Those communities are historically underserved, adversely affected, and include Black, indigenous, or communities of color. In California, there are examples of removal or conversion of transportation infrastructure, such as the Embarcadero Freeway in San Francisco or the



Photo 1: Cypress Street Viaduct in Oakland, CA.



Photo 2: The new Mandela Parkway in Oakland, CA following conversion from the Cypress Street Viaduct.

conversion of the Cypress Street Viaduct to the Mandela Parkway in Oakland. These projects demonstrate solutions that work to address the past harm in these very communities. Caltrans' department-wide commitment to address past harms in communities of color and underserved communities associated with transportation policies directly include plans and projects that restore and reconnect communities. However, projects that reconnect communities aren't limited to multimillion-dollar projects that cap freeways or convert roadways into mile-long park spaces. They can consist of a mix of other multi-modal transportation and safety improvements, economic development strategies, and cultural or artistic investments (e.g., murals and sculptures) and are guided by community perspective on what is needed to reconnect their community.

This handbook will present a framework for planning and project implementation at Caltrans that focuses on addressing transportation infrastructure that has historically created barriers to community connectivity, access, mobility, and economic development. The audience and scope of this handbook goes beyond Caltrans and the State Highway System (SHS). Breaking down structural barriers requires transparency and coordination between Caltrans, partnering agencies, and communities affected by transportation infrastructure. In this manner, the handbook can be used by Caltrans Districts, tribes, regional and local agencies, and community-based organizations to coordinate and collaborate on project ideas that reconnect communities. The process of this coordination is what the handbook will explore and contextualize with the acknowledgement that efforts to reconnect communities do not exist in a vacuum and are subject to economic and political factors. This handbook aligns well with department-wide commitments to equity and state-wide plans, including the Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI), Caltrans Strategic Plan 2020-2024, and the California Transportation Plan 2050.

As funding commitments continue to grow for reconnecting communities with the development of new state and federal discretionary grant programs, so does the need to better understand how transportation projects will achieve or take steps to achieve knitting together these affected communities. Caltrans may update and transition the handbook as more details and program guidelines are released for the state program and future federal funding cycles of the RCP grant program. Future iterations may speak with greater depth on concepts introduced in this handbook and to support continual coordination and collaboration between Caltrans, partnering agencies, and affected communities.

1.2 – Addressing Past Harms

The Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 called for the construction of 41,000 miles of interstate highway in the US by 1970. While the development of the Interstate Highway System brought many benefits to the US, it also was the product of a time when social impacts of projects were not considered. Homes and businesses were razed in the path of highway construction. In many cities throughout the US, freeways were built to bisect communities with significant populations of Black and Latino residents, displacing thousands of families and breaking apart communities. These highways were built directly, and purposefully, through Black and Latinx communities. Racial zoning was being repealed by courts during this time, but some highways were built on the same boundary lines used for racial zoning as way to create a barrier between white and racial minority communities. When coupled with other forms of systemic racism, such as redlining, there have been multiple negative impacts to these communities that persist to the present and will continue to harm these communities into the future if left unaddressed.

These traumatized communities were left fragmented; essential linkages to work, school, shopping, and healthcare were severed. Home values were reduced, and land-use patterns shifted to accommodate the new placement of freeways, specifically becoming more attractive to commercial and industrial activities. Communities within California's most urban neighborhoods especially felt these impacts as they were not only bisected by one freeway, but multiple freeways; for example, Boyle Heights in Los Angeles is bisected by four major freeways.



The United States Department of Transportation (USDOT) recognizes that, “in the 20 years after the passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act, a growing number of households were displaced to make way for the construction of federal aid highways...and that a majority of those displaced lived in low income and minority urban communities.”

Source: USDOT

1.3 – Implementing California Policy

In alignment with the California Transportation Plan 2050 (CTP 2050) and the Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI), efforts to reconnect communities implement California policy and further define how Caltrans advances equity, livability, and climate resiliency in all communities.

CAPTI calls for exploring a highways to boulevard conversion pilot program that would plan and ultimately fund the conversion of underutilized state highways into multimodal corridors. Such a program would enable local and regional entities to create lists of potential locations that have been identified as barriers and prioritize project locations that are in or near underserved communities. The implementation of this program will also need to address affordable housing and anti-displacement, given its priority as a core strategy in CAPTI and as a related goal for restoring community connectivity through innovative community-centered solutions.

The CTP 2050 presents a roadmap for change that includes making transformational transportation decisions and meeting the needs of urban, suburban, rural, and tribal communities. Caltrans' and its partners' work to reconnect communities align with this approach and implements key CTP 2050 goals, objectives, and strategies. Communities

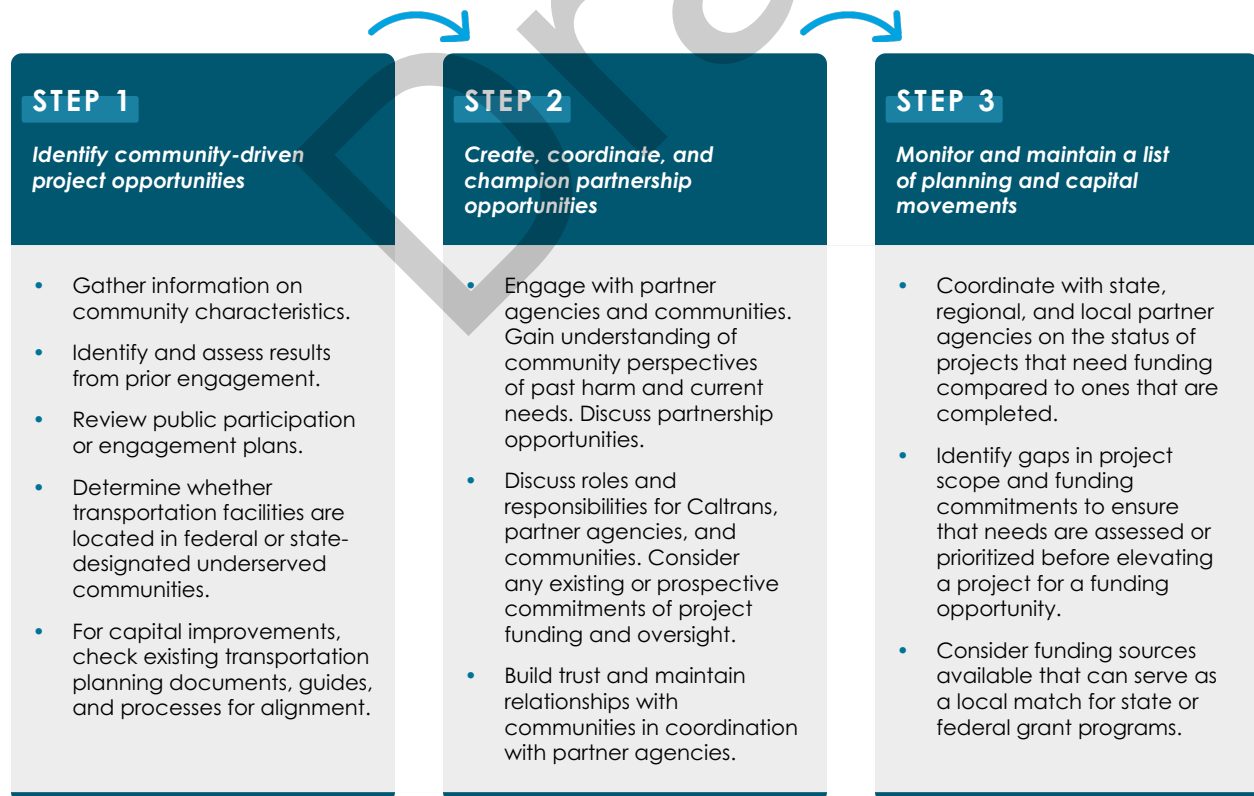
throughout California, from urban core to isolated rural areas, have been affected by transportation infrastructure and can benefit from actions to address barriers.

1.4 – Caltrans’ Role in Reconnecting Communities

1.4.1 Defining a Process for Partnership with State, Regional, and Local Agencies

Restoring community connectivity and addressing disparities caused by transportation infrastructure is an integral part of Caltrans-wide equity efforts. Caltrans' role in addressing the legacies of harm in underserved communities is dependent on the type of transportation infrastructure and its location. Opportunities for Caltrans to restore connectivity primarily focuses on the SHS. Partnerships with other state, regional, and local agencies enable a broader support for planning and capital construction work that occurs off-system. With reconnecting communities, Caltrans' role in public engagement expands from engagement conducted at specific phases to ongoing trust building and relationship maintenance. A process that enables the Department to proactively identify or coordinate on opportunities for planning and capital efforts that reconnect communities can ensure that there is an active commitment to addressing barriers caused by the SHS. **Table 1** provides an example of this process to support Caltrans district staff with determining whether planning or capital projects align with restoring connectivity, how partnership opportunities can be advanced, and how project opportunities can be monitored and maintained for future funding.

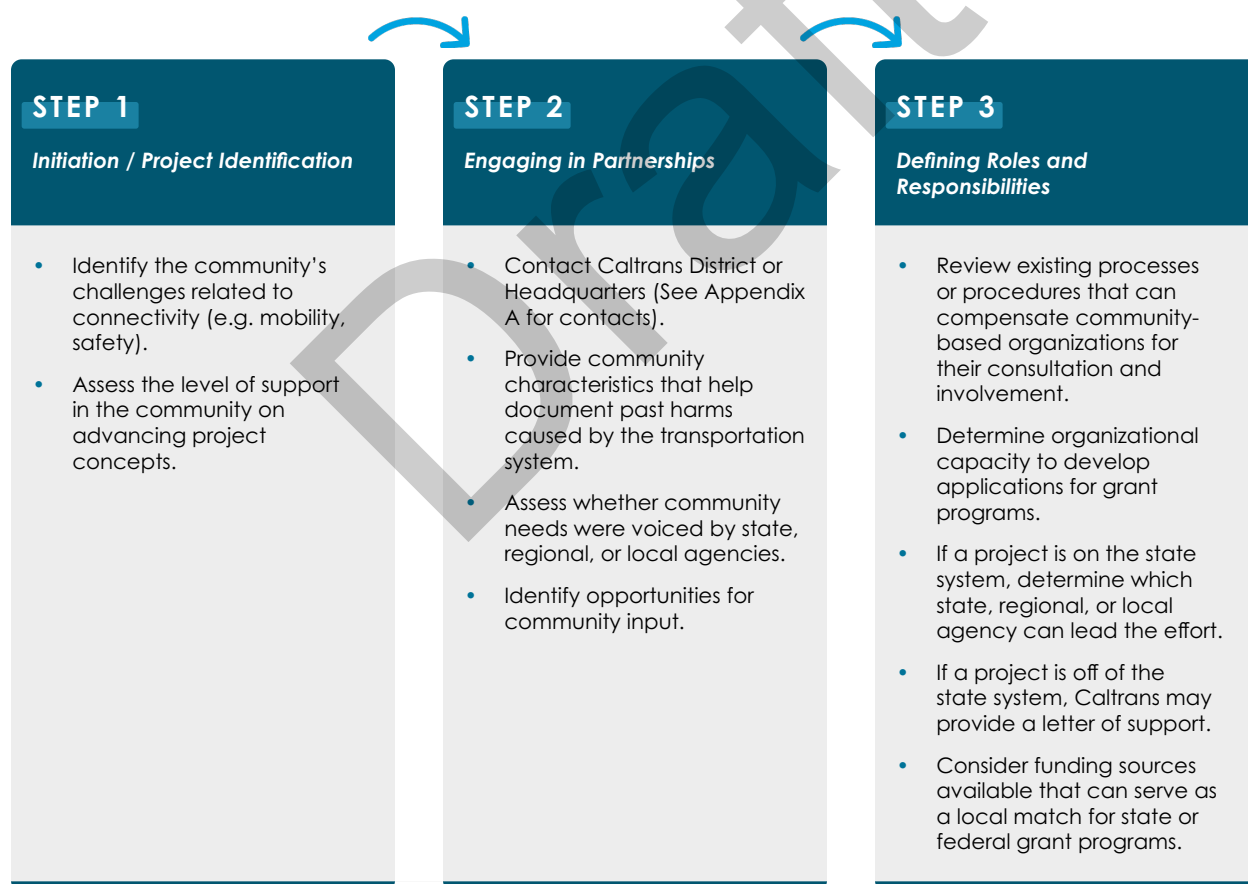
Table 1: How Caltrans Can Advance Reconnecting Communities and Engage with Partners



1.4.2 Defining a Process for Partnership with Caltrans

There's a twofold ability to initiate partnerships. Caltrans districts will look for and engage with partner agencies and communities and, at the same time, communities, a community group, or partner agencies can initiate discussion and engagement with Caltrans. Local agencies, communities, tribal governments, non-profits, etc. can contact Caltrans with ideas for community engagement and capital projects. Regional or local agencies and community organizations are encouraged to identify project opportunities similar to the Department's process for coordinating with external partners. There are varying levels of coordination with Caltrans depending on whether the project opportunity is located on- or off- the state transportation system. For example, a project proposing to construct a safer crossing for bicycles and pedestrians along a state highway may require general oversight from Caltrans or the development of cooperative agreements. In scenarios where agencies are applying for state or federal programs to fund a project on the SHS, local match funding is not committed or guaranteed for the construction; but, agencies may be the project lead pending the program guidelines. Agencies may request a letter of support from Caltrans for projects that are off the SHS. **See Table 2.**

Table 2: How Partners Can Advance Reconnecting Communities and Engage with Caltrans





2.0: Funding Opportunities for Reconnecting Communities

2.0: Funding Opportunities for Reconnecting Communities



As partners work together to meet community needs to reconnect, new federal and state funding programs are available to fund engagement efforts and infrastructure changes. Funding for improvements that acknowledge and address the legacy of harm caused by transportation facilities in California is a barrier for many underserved communities. Attention to removing barriers and reconnecting communities is increasing and the following programs in this section should not be considered an exhaustive list of funding opportunities. It does highlight programs to fund planning and capital construction projects that reconnect communities.

A level of technical readiness is required to effectively navigate grant requirements and emerging grant opportunities. Navigating the number of state and federal discretionary grant programs that provide billions of dollars in transportation improvements can be a daunting task for regional and local agencies, tribes, and community-based organizations (CBOs). Technical assistance for applying and administering federal and state grant funds is available. The following are funding opportunities that have a special emphasis or nexus to reconnecting communities and highlight key points that can serve as a template to determine what type of project would best reconnect communities.

2.1 – Federal Discretionary Grant Programs

2.1.1 Federal Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) Grant Program

In 2021, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) established a new \$1 billion discretionary grant program to reconnect communities divided by transportation infrastructure.

This federal Reconnecting Communities Pilot (RCP) grant program supports planning, capital construction, and technical assistance to restore community connectivity through the removal, retrofit, mitigation or replacement of eligible transportation infrastructure that create barriers in communities. Partnerships with state, tribal, regional, local government agencies, and community organizations are critical to addressing the past harms and barriers created by our country's and state's transportation infrastructure.

Federal RCP Funding and Award

The IIJA directs the Secretary of Transportation to establish a discretionary pilot program where an eligible entity may apply for funding. In fiscal year 2022, the bill allocates up to \$195 million for the program, with \$50 million for Planning Grants and \$145 million for Capital Construction Grants). **Table 3** summarizes the award amounts, which range from \$100,000 to \$2 million for Planning Grants and from \$5 million to \$100 million for Capital Construction Grants.

Additionally, the RCP provides up to \$30 million for fiscal year 2022-2026 to provide technical assistance support for RCP applicants and grant recipients, with a priority for recipients serving economically disadvantaged communities. The goal of this technical assistance is to build capacity to engage in transportation planning and support these communities with identifying solutions as part of the RCP program.

Table 3: Available Funding for the RCP Grant Program from FY 2022-2026

Grant Category	Fiscal Year					5-Year Total
	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	
Planning	\$50 M	\$50 M	\$50 M	\$50 M	\$50 M	\$250 M
Capital Construction	\$145 M	\$148 M	\$150 M	\$152 M	\$155 M	\$750 M
Total Authorized Amount	\$195 M	\$198 M	\$200 M	\$202 M	\$205 M	\$1 B

If a Capital Construction Grant recipient does not receive the full funds requested, the funded RCP project will receive a 'Reconnecting Extra' designation, which encourages RCP Program recipients' pursuit of supplemental USDOT discretionary program funding. If a project designated 'Reconnecting Extra' applies for funding under the FY 2023 – FY 2026 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) or Multimodal Projects Discretionary Grant (MPDG) programs and is determined eligible, USDOT will deem the RCP project application "Highly Recommended," subject to evaluation with the relevant program's merit criteria.

Federal RCP Program Goals and Outcomes

The purpose of the RCP grant program is to identify and fund innovative solutions that restore community connectivity caused by transportation infrastructure. The federal program goals align with the State's equity and climate goals which will be beneficial to projects in the state that are competitive for both state and federal funding. (See Section 2.2).

Federal RCP Eligible Entities

Eligible entities for the RCP grant program are dependent on the two grant categories: Planning Grants and Capital Construction Grants. While USDOT defines the eligible applicants for Planning Grants broadly, specific examples in each have been clarified in **Table 4**.

Table 4: Examples of Eligible Entities Under the 2022 RCP Grant Program

Planning Grants	Additional USDOT Examples	Capital Construction Projects	Additional USDOT Examples
States	Public universities (depending on charter)	Owner(s) of eligible facility proposed in the project	Tribes, transit agencies, private sector entities, any university
Units of Local Government	Public universities (depending on charter), Council of Governments (COGs), Rural Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs), transit agencies	Facility owners that partner with eligible entities listed for planning grants	
Tribes	Federal recognized tribal governments		
Metropolitan Planning Organization			
Non-Profit Organizations	Private, non-profit universities		

Federal RCP Eligible Facilities

Eligible facilities are defined as highways or other transportation facilities that create barriers to community connectivity. This includes barriers to mobility, access, or economic development, due to high speeds, grade separations, or other design factors.

While highways are common examples of transportation facilities that create barriers, others include arterial roads, streets, rail, airports, ports, and other Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Highway Functional Classifications.

USDOT has clarified that a bridge can be an eligible facility under the RCP program if it creates a barrier to community connectivity. However, rivers, lakes, mountains, and other natural geographic features are not eligible transportation facilities that create barriers under the RCP Program guidelines. Other examples of infrastructure or facilities that are not eligible include buildings (e.g., schools and wastewater treatment facilities) and water pipeline infrastructure.

Federal RCP Eligible Planning Activities and Capital Improvements

Activities or projects that qualify under the Federal RCP program are those that work to restore community connectivity through planning or capital construction.

Eligible work under the planning grant includes:

- Public engagement efforts for a plan to remove and convert an eligible transportation facility.
- Evaluating environmental impacts of reconstructing a transportation facility.
- Evaluating anticipated economic impacts or development opportunities created from facility removal.
- Planning activities in advance of a project such as: conceptual and preliminary engineering, or design and planning studies that support the environmental review for a construction project that do not result in construction.



Eligible work under the capital construction grant includes:

- The removal, retrofit, or mitigation of an eligible facility:
 - » Linear parks and trails.
 - » Community and Main Street revitalization.
 - » Pedestrian walkways and overpasses.
 - » Roadway redesigns and complete streets conversions.
- The replacement of an eligible facility with a new one that restores community connectivity.
- Preliminary and detailed design activities and associated environmental studies.
- Evaluating environmental impacts of reconstructing a transportation facility.
- Permitting activities including the completion of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.



Federal RCP Project Readiness

Project readiness is determined by USDOT as the likelihood of project success and includes factors such as financial completeness, technical assessment, and environmental risk (for capital planning grants only).

Financial completeness is dependent on the inclusion of a full budget with the requested grant amount, and local match funding with documentation of funding commitments and sources.

Technical assessment refers to the applicants' previous experience with federal agencies, experience with compliance and civil rights, and the resources of the organization.

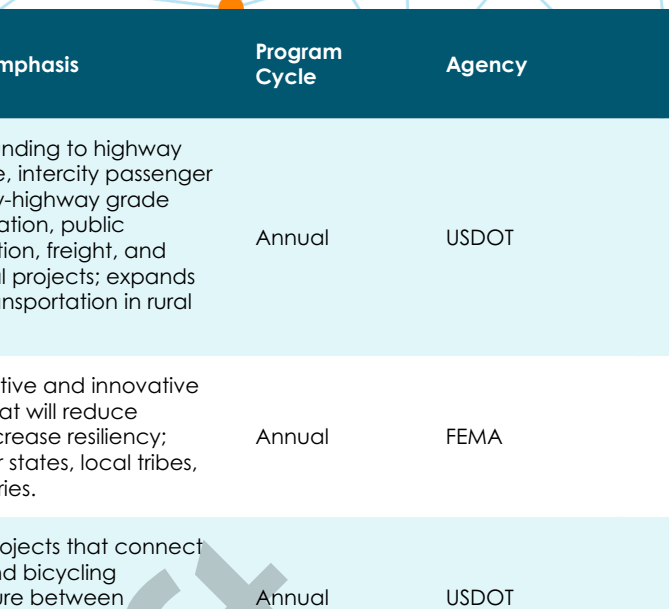
Environmental Risk Assessment assigns risk levels to indicate whether the proposed project has completed environmental review or secured necessary federal permits and how likely the project will complete environmental review to meet project schedule.

2.1.2 Other Federal Funding Sources

The competitive grant programs in **Table 5** are federal programs administered by agencies including USDOT, FHWA, Federal Railroad Administration, Federal Transit Administration, and the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA). While not a comprehensive list, they may be appropriate sources for funding projects that reconnect communities. They include funds for planning and capital construction improvements and may emphasize a specific transportation facility (e.g., railroad, transit, highway).

Table 5: Examples of Relevant Federal Discretionary Funding Programs

Program Name	Annual Funding (FY 22)	Program Emphasis	Program Cycle	Agency
Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvement Program (CRISI)*	\$362 M	Improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of intercity passenger and freight rail.	Annual	Federal Railroad Administration
Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A)*	\$200 M	Funds regional, local, and tribal initiatives to prevent roadway deaths and serious injuries.	Annual	USDOT
Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program*	\$600 M	Highway-rail or pathway-rail grade crossing improvement projects that focus on improving the safety and mobility of people and goods.	Annual	Federal Roadroad Administration
Bridge Investment Program*	\$600 M	Focuses on existing bridges to reduce the overall number of bridges in poor condition or in fair condition.	Annual	FHWA
Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development	\$13 M	Integrating land use and transportation planning for a transit capital project corridor.	Annual	Federal Transit Administration
Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE)*	\$2.275 B	Investments in road, rail, transit, and port projects that promise to achieve national objectives.	Annual	USDOT
Neighborhood Access and Equity Grants	\$3.9 B	Removing, replacing, or retrofitting highways and freeways to improve connectivity in communities and for planning and capacity building to increase community involvement in transportation planning and related activities.	TBD	FHWA



Program Name	Annual Funding (FY 22)	Program Emphasis	Program Cycle	Agency
Multimodal Project Discretionary Frant	\$2.85 B (across Mega, INFRA, and Rural programs)	Provides funding to highway and bridge, intercity passenger rail, railway-highway grade and separation, public transportation, freight, and multimodal projects; expands surface transportation in rural areas.	Annual	USDOT
Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program (BRIC)	6% set-aside of estimated disaster expenses	Fund effective and innovative projects that will reduce risk and increase resiliency; Support for states, local tribes, and territories.	Annual	FEMA
Active Transportation Infrastructure Investment Program*	\$200 M	Invest in projects that connect walking and bicycling infrastructure between communities, metropolitan regions, or states.	Annual	USDOT
PROTECT*	\$250 M	Planning, resilience improvements, community resilience and evaluation routes, and at-risk coastal infrastructure.	Annual	FHWA
Healthy Streets*	\$100 M	Projects that mitigate heat islands, improve air quality, and reduce stormwater runoff; Prioritized for low-income and disadvantaged communities.	TBD	USDOT
Charging and Fuel Infrastructure	\$300 M	Funds accessible electric vehicle charging infrastructure and other alternative fueling infrastructure; 50% of funding will expand infrastructure in rural areas and low-income neighborhoods.	Annual	FHWA

*New competitive fund programs established under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law in 2021.

2.2 – State Discretionary Grant Programs

State transportation grant programs provide benefits to California communities and include improvements to roads and highways, goods movement, active transportation, and public transit. California's new Reconnecting Communities: Highways to Boulevards Pilot Program will be administered by Caltrans and is highlighted in Section 2.2.1. Additional state level funding sources are detailed in Section 2.2.2.

2.2.1 Reconnecting Communities: Highways to Boulevards Pilot Program

The Reconnecting Communities: Highways to Boulevard Pilot program (RC:H2B) was codified in California Streets & Highway Code Section 104.3 by the California State Legislature and begins in Fiscal Year 2022-2023. The RC:H2B pilot program will award competitive grants to eligible entities in partnership with Caltrans for planning and capital construction projects that convert or transform underutilized state highways into multimodal corridors that serve residents of underserved communities. As shown on **Table 6**, the RC:H2B pilot program aligns with a specific **CAPTI Strategy**, which focuses on addressing California’s housing crisis, ensuring transportation programming dollars help incentivize smart housing and infill development, and providing opportunities for technical assistance on State transportation funding programs. The State RC:H2B program implements CAPTI actions – a highways to boulevards pilot program and technical assistance for applicants and awardees.

Table 6: Actions from the Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure (CAPTI) that Align with the RC: H2B Pilot Program

Strategy S7: Strengthen Transportation-Land Use Connections						
In order to simultaneously address California’s housing crisis while reducing VMP, these actions seek to ensure that transportation programming dollars help incentivize smart housing and conservation policies and decisions, while also supporting the creation of infill development.						
Action	Description	Program(s) Impacted	Lead Agency	Support Agencies	Time Frame	
S3.2 Strengthen and Expand Coordinated, Targeted Technical Assistance on State Transportation Funding Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Caltrans to evaluate existing technical assistance portfolio and identify opportunities for targeted expansion. Caltrans to cultivate partnerships with and build capacity of community-based organizations and residents to engage in the SHOPP and ITIP project development. California Transportation Commission (CTC) to provide ongoing technical assistance to applicants on tools, methods, and practices required for CTC funding programs. CTC to explore structures for ad hoc in-house TA for program applicants. 	SHOPP, ITIP, TIRCP, SCCP, ATP, LPP	Caltrans, CTC	CalSTA, SGC, CARB	Short-Term (0-2 years)	
S7.3 Explore a “Highways to Boulevards” Conversion Pilot Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify locally nominated candidate locations for pilot program. Pursue creation of Highways to Boulevards Conversion Pilot Program Integrate anti-displacement strategies as part of pilot program concept. 	SHOPP, ITIP	CalSTA	Caltrans, HCD, OPR, SGC	Medium-Term (3-7 years)	



How does the State RC:H2B pilot program compare to the Federal RCP grant program?

Restoring community connectivity by addressing past harms from transportation infrastructure is the concurrent theme for both grant programs. The state legislation that established the RC:H2B program adds Section 104.3 to the Streets and Highways code, which provides general directions to Caltrans on the development of discretionary grants. This includes meeting the following goals:

1. Restore community connectivity through the removal, retrofit, mitigation, or replacement of eligible transportation infrastructure facilities that create barriers to mobility, access, or economic development.
2. Provide match funding for potential federal grant funds.
3. Advance health and equity outcomes for underserved communities by removing health, safety, and access barriers associated with transportation infrastructure within communities.
4. Improve access to opportunity by improving travel options and reducing combined household transportation and housing costs for underserved communities.
5. Create opportunities for implementation of affordable housing and affirmatively furthering fair housing.
6. Avoid or minimize direct and indirect displacement effects from project implementation.
7. Advance community-based or community-driven transportation planning.

The State RC:H2B program funding guidelines will be developed in late 2022 with statewide input from partners. The funding guidelines will address eligible planning and implementation (construction) projects, application process, evaluation criteria, etc. The timing of RC:H2B awards will allow awarded projects the opportunity to be used as match for future USDOT Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program applications.

How does the State RC:H2B pilot program differ from this handbook?

While this handbook makes references to both the federal RCP and state RC:H2B pilot grant programs, it does not establish specific program guidelines. The handbook offers strategies and resources to help Caltrans staff and partnering agencies determine whether their planning or capital construction project meets the intent of a Reconnecting Communities effort. It also proposes how partnership and collaboration can occur to prioritize the needs of specific communities affected by state and local transportation systems.

2.2.2 Other State-Level Funding Sources

There are several state-level competitive grant programs that may support a project scope of work to address planning or capital needs related to reconnecting communities. **Table 7** highlights some including Senate Bill 1 (SB1) funding to help address highways and local roads, active transportation, and transit.

The Solutions for Congested Corridors Program (SCCP) is a statewide, competitive program created by SB1 to fund projects designed to reduce congestion in highly traveled corridors. The Active Transportation Program (ATP) encourages an increased use of active modes of transportation. The Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program supports and funds significant planning efforts, including in disadvantaged communities across California. While the programs are not designed specifically to restore community connectivity, there can be a nexus between these programs and planning or capital construction needs to reconnect communities.

Table 7: State Discretionary Funding Programs that May Support Planning and Projects to Reconnect Communities

Program Name	Annual Funding (in millions)	Program Emphasis	Program Cycle	Agency
Solutions for Congested Corridors Program	\$250 M	Provides statewide funding to achieve a balanced set of transportation, environmental, and community access improvements to reduce congestion.	Biennial	California Transportation Commission (CTC)
Active Transportation Program (ATP)	\$223 M	Improve the safety, efficiency, and reliability of intercity passenger and freight rail.	Biennial	CTC
Sustainable Transportation Planning Grants	\$25 M	Funds local and regional multimodal transportation and land use planning projects.	Annual	Caltrans



3.0: Equitable Public Engagement

3.0: Equitable Public Engagement



Public engagement is a core part of Caltrans' transportation planning and project development and refers to the processes whereby Caltrans provides project information and opportunities for meaningful public participation in transportation planning and decision-making to the public and affected stakeholders. Through public engagement, Caltrans receives and incorporates public comments and concerns into the transportation planning process. Among the goals of public engagement are information sharing, identifying specific community needs, alternatives evaluation, project concept improvement, collaboration, and consensus building. At its highest level, public engagement is inclusive, authentic, meaningful, and equitable. At Caltrans, this process is evolving and will include: (1) Building capacity within Caltrans Planning functions to equip staff with equity-based resources, tools, training, and expertise; and (2) Building a coalition among districts and other programs that have actively engaged with the public.

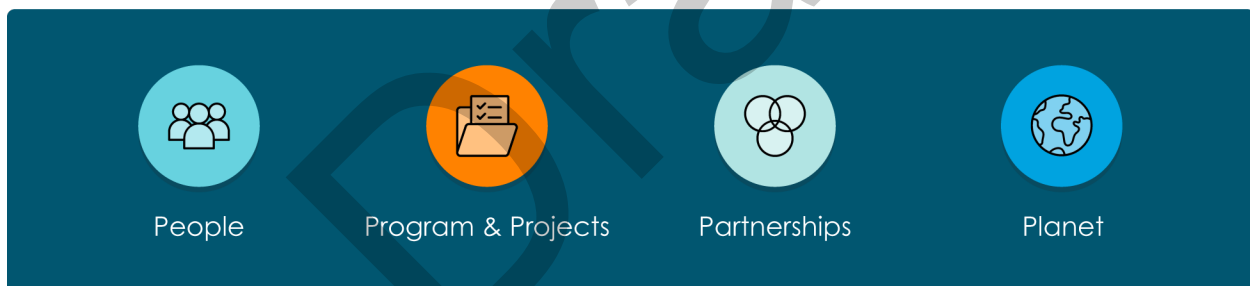
3.1 – Assessing Community Needs

A traditional approach for public engagement is to inform or consult communities about a proposed project solution or alternative. In some cases, community needs are assumed based on data gathered by an implementing agency and outreach to affected communities is conducted during the project's environmental review. Caltrans encourages a process for public engagement that is focused less on project phases or a one-time approach and instead focuses on continuous engagement that begins before project conception and beyond the construction of a project.

To restore connectivity for communities divided by transportation infrastructure, Caltrans and partner agencies should consider identifying the specific groups within an underserved community who are not typically prioritized and how their needs can be addressed. These include, but aren't limited to: rural and tribal communities, aging communities, and communities with disabilities. The specific needs of these communities should not be determined solely with the use of demographic data or screening tools, but through authentic engagement. This can include a host of in-person and virtual techniques (e.g., workshops, focus groups, phone teleconferences, and social media campaigns) and consulting with representatives of CBOs that are trusted within specific communities.

3.2 – Alignment with California's Commitment to Equity

Building trust within communities takes a considerable amount of effort and is integral to Caltrans' commitments to equity. At the end of 2020, CalSTA and Caltrans released an Equity Statement acknowledging that communities of color and under-served communities experienced fewer benefits and a greater share of negative impacts associated with the state's transportation system. Some of these disparities reflect a history of transportation decision-making, policy, processes, planning, design, and construction that divided communities and amplified racial inequities. Included in this statement are commitments to implement actions in Caltrans' Race & Equity Action Plan and establish metrics for accountability that addresses the four P's: People, Program & Projects, Partnerships, and Planet. Projects focused on reconnecting communities that demonstrate equitable public engagement will align with the Federal and State programs' goals to advance community-based or community-driven transportation planning and Caltrans' commitment to equity.



One of CAPTI's guiding principles is to strengthen the State's commitment to social and racial equity by reducing public health and economic harms. This also includes involving disproportionately impacted disadvantaged communities early in the decision-making process. As part of the project nomination process established by the Interim Caltrans Strategic Investment Strategy (CSIS), equitable public engagement is vital to determining project solutions and intrinsically linked to the question of whether the project will benefit disadvantaged communities. State policy and principles around equity will continue to guide Caltrans' approach to reconnecting communities.

3.3 – Developing Engagement Strategies for Reconnecting Communities

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to equitable engagement for planning or capital construction projects that aim to reconnect communities. Instead, engagement requires robust

strategies that focus on: (1) Centering the needs of specific community groups that are often not prioritized; (2) Implementing engagement techniques that work best for specific groups; (3) Conducting engagement early and continuously throughout the project; and (4) Partnering with CBOs who are an invaluable resource for understanding or representing the needs of communities where the project is located.


Outside of engagement techniques, a robust engagement strategy may include a public engagement plan or project specific engagement plan that identifies actively involved CBOs, partnering agencies, and other community stakeholders. Consider the following questions when developing public engagement strategies for reconnecting communities:

- What is the history of the neighborhood or transportation facility? Is there a legacy of harm? (i.e., economic, transportation, and housing policies).
- What recent prior engagement was conducted related to the facility?
- What type of engagement techniques are most appropriate for the community members who live, work, and recreate in and around the project area?
- Is there motivation across the community to address barriers and explore solutions?
- If specific community groups are consulted or brought on for expertise, will the implementing agency or partner agencies provide monetary or non-monetary compensation (e.g., stipends, childcare services, transportation)?
- What data sources and tools were used in identifying project location and communities? Are there more tools that can help supplement project information and engagement efforts? **See Section 4**
- Can engagement activities be coordinated with other local or regional agencies to avoid overburdening communities?

Other barriers may also exist that make equitable engagement a challenge for state, regional and local agencies. One example is providing compensation for CBOs as paid members of the consulting team to conduct engagement. State policies currently limit the mechanisms in which California state agencies (including Caltrans) can directly compensate CBOs. State and local agencies may be able to address these limitations by sharing best practices and explore statutory/policy proposals to enable compensation in the future.

Continual community involvement is integral once an opportunity to restore community connectivity is identified and aligns with a community's needs. Utilizing appropriate public engagement strategies is crucial whether the concept is being evaluated for funding or further along in project implementation. This establishes accountability to help ensure that the proposed solutions provide benefits to underserved communities and avoids placing new burdens or exacerbating existing burdens in these communities.





4.0: How to Evaluate Projects That Reconnect Communities: Criteria, Definitions, and Data



4.0: How to Evaluate Projects That Reconnect Communities: Criteria, Definitions, and Data

The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) establishes the criteria that USDOT will use to evaluate and select Planning Grant and Capital Construction applications for the RCP grant program. These merit criteria emphasize the restoration of community connectivity through the removal, retrofit, or replacement of eligible transportation facilities that create mobility, access, and economic barriers in disadvantaged communities. The state RC:H2B pilot program will similarly address restoring community connectivity in alignment with the federal program and contain a separate set of guidelines that include project selection criteria, evaluation metrics, and technical assistance to implement the program.

Drawing from the federal RCP NOFO, this section will reference the four primary merit criteria and provide relevant definitions and data resources from both a federal and state perspective. This accomplishes the goal of this handbook's role to help supplement project information, which may increase project competitiveness for discretionary grant programs that directly or indirectly support reconnecting communities. The state perspective includes resources and tools specifically used by Caltrans and other state agencies to gather information on specific criteria (e.g., using CalEnviroScreen tool to identify disadvantaged communities in California). Both state and federal tools will be applicable with reconnecting communities. The federal and state programs may have specific guidelines on definitions and data resources that differ from what's listed in this handbook.

While the criteria in this section is not exhaustive, it is meant to serve as a starting point to support Caltrans districts, tribes, regional agencies, local governments, CBOs, and other partners to determine if a project may be suitable for reconnecting communities.

4.1 – Equity, Environmental Justice, and Community Engagement

For the RCP grant program, USDOT uses the **equity, environmental justice, and community engagement** criterion to assess how applicants have documented the historic harm of local or regional policies (e.g., displacement, segregation, zoning), existing disparities, and needs of the surrounding community. While this criterion covers multiple topic areas, it focuses on factors that create disparities such a community access to transportation and environmental burden from proximity to roads and highways. Equity is often the framework for environmental justice and community engagement. For reconnecting communities, these criteria depend on the narrative and evidence that provide a broader context that supplements the project scope.

4.1.1 Definitions

Economically disadvantaged communities

Areas that face adverse economic, health, and environmental burdens environmental, impacts due to state and federal policies. The demographics of an economically disadvantaged community are diverse and may include persons of color, religious minorities, tribal and rural communities, LGBTQ+, persons with disabilities and people living in poverty. See *data resources* for specific tools that are used to screen for these communities from a federal and state perspective.

Equitable public engagement

The process in which public participation is conducted in a manner that takes into consideration the needs of all communities, including those who are economically disadvantaged, and includes a robust suite of approaches (e.g., virtual and in-person).

4.1.2 Data Resources

Federal Perspective

The Federal RCP program utilizes the following data points to assess projects alignment with RCP program goals:

- 1. EPA EJ Screen:** The Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) environmental justice mapping tool combines 12 environmental and 7 demographic indicators (e.g., particulate matter 2.5, ozone, diesel particulate matter, percentage people of color, percentage low-income, etc.). Applicants applying to the RCP grant program may demonstrate the "economic disadvantage" using this tool among others.
- 2. Areas of Persistent Poverty:** A definition developed by USDOT to help grant applicants determine whether the locations of their proposed projects are in a disadvantaged community for Justice40-covered grant programs. It is defined as:
 - » Any county with greater than or equal to 20% of the population living in poverty during the last 30-year period.
 - » Any Census Tract with a poverty rate of at least 20% (ACS 2014-2018).
 - » Any US Territory
- 3. USDOT Historically Disadvantaged Communities:** Disadvantaged census tracts in this tool exceed 50th percentile across four of the following transportation disadvantaged indicators: Transportation access, Health, Environmental, Economic, Resilience, and Equity. Indicators display census tract level data using data from sources such as the CDC Social Vulnerability Index, Census American Community Survey, EPA EJ Screen, and the HUD Location Affordability Index.

State Perspective

Tools used to screen or determine disadvantaged communities in California are similar in layout and comprised of interactive interfaces showing census tract-level data. They are usually color-coded to represent an index score (e.g., 0-100) and represent a greater or lesser presence of a specific indicator (e.g., transportation access, pollution burden, and more healthy community conditions). The tools highlighted here are used by some state discretionary grant programs.

1. **CalEnviroScreen (CES 4.0):** The California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment's (OEHHA) screening tool is used to identify communities disproportionately burdened by multiple sources of pollution in California. The tool uses 21 indicators which characterize both pollution burden and population characteristics and combined to calculate an overall CalEnviroScreen Score. The tool was updated to its current version of 4.0 as of October 2021.
2. **Healthy Places Index (HPI 3.0):** Developed by the Public Health Alliance of Southern California, the Healthy Places Index produces scores by Census Tracts to examine neighborhood measures linked to health outcomes. Overall percentile scores are comprised of eight indicators (Economic, Education, Social, Transportation, Neighborhood, Healthcare Access, Housing, and Clean Environment).
3. **Priority Population Investments (4.0):** This tool was developed by the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to set investment minimums for California Climate Investments. The map shows disadvantaged communities (as defined by CalEPA) and low-income communities, which represent priority populations that are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.
4. **Caltrans Equity Quality Index (EQI):** The Caltrans Equity Index (currently under development) will identify, and measure underserved communities by using environmental, mobility, accessibility, and socioeconomic information to produce a transportation equity score for census tracts across the state. The EQI will demonstrate how Caltrans can use quantitative analysis and data-driven methodology to identify disadvantaged communities statewide, based on a series of transportation and equity indicators. The EQI will also give Caltrans a benchmark metric that can be used to prioritize projects through an equity lens. The EQI will be used with additional program analysis to determine project benefits and identify potential harm. Additionally, the tool will help prioritize communities for equitable engagement to support Caltrans' strategic goals.

4.2 – Mobility and Community Connectivity

The Mobility and Community Connectivity criterion focuses on addressing specific challenges to community connectivity caused by transportation facilities. It may be difficult to draw the distinctions between transportation projects that reconnect communities compared to ones that generally improve mobility and access in a community given the amount of overlap of the goals in both types of projects. For example, a proposed project that improves access to a transit station by removing barriers for bicyclists and pedestrians across a busy corridor may be a good candidate for a project that reconnects communities and provides complete streets improvements that meets multiple types of needs (e.g., multi-modal access and safety). The context of Reconnecting Communities means that a legacy of harm from transportation infrastructure barriers can be established, and a community-led conversation identifies the infrastructure solutions.

Within this criterion, there is an opportunity to develop a narrative focused on improving affordable, multi-modal access to jobs, schools, and other destinations, enhancing safety for people of all abilities, and addressing mode shift to more active modes of transportation. Additionally, quantitative and qualitative data on connectivity may help provide context to the existing transportation network where the facility is located and the barriers that impede specific communities from reaching their destinations. They include attributes such as location and conditions of existing sidewalks, bicycle facilities, transit stops, pedestrian-scale lighting, grade/topography, and perceptions about bicycle and pedestrian safety.

4.2.1 Definitions

Community Connectivity

People in a community can access resources and services to live, work, and recreate. Transportation facilities such as highways and rail lines have historically created barriers to community connectivity in disadvantaged communities across California. The restoration of community connectivity due to the harm caused by transportation facilities is one of the goals for the federal RCP and state RC:H2B Pilot grant programs.

Safe Mobility

The ability for a person to access a destination safely and reliably. Safe mobility has traditionally focused on automobile safety, but also includes walking, bicycling, public transit, and other modes of transportation. Solutions to enable safe mobility include the development of laws and policies (e.g., helmet laws, speed limits, and seatbelt laws) and engineering solutions (e.g., traffic calming, bicycle, and pedestrian infrastructure). Caltrans and USDOT prioritize safety through a Safe Systems Approach.

Safe Systems Approach

A holistic view of the road system that anticipates human mistakes and keeps impact energy on the human body at tolerable levels. This includes six principles: death and serious injuries are unacceptable, humans make mistakes, humans are vulnerable, responsibility is shared, safety is proactive, and redundancy is critical.

4.2.2 Data Resources

Federal Perspective

Safety is a priority for USDOT in its evaluation of RCP applications. USDOT encourages communities to adopt and implement data-driven strategies that prioritize the safe mobility of all users. This specific aspect of safety focuses on transportation solutions that prioritize mobility and connectivity for all, including people with disabilities through active modes of transportation and lower-carbon transportation options (e.g., transit). Federal tools and resources include Complete Streets policies and the FHWA's Proven Safety Countermeasures.

State Perspective

Collaboration between Caltrans, CBOs, partner agencies, and the public is encouraged to discuss safety and assess how to incorporate safety into planning efforts and capital projects that reconnect communities. The following resources may provide data and perspective:

- 1. Improve Safety:** One of the 10 CAPTI guiding principles and a scoring criteria that Caltrans uses to evaluate projects nominated for state and federal programs. The criterion is represented as a question in the Interim CSIS and asks whether “the project reduces fatalities and severe injuries for all users in alignment with the Safe Systems approach?” The purpose of this question is to identify how the project incorporates safety countermeasures to reduce fatalities and severe injuries of all users toward zero on our roadways. Caltrans seeks to prioritize projects in alignment with the Safe Systems Approach, which involves anticipating human mistakes and designing and managing infrastructure to keep the risk of a mistake low.

2. **Strategic Highway Safety Plan (SHSP) Crash Data Dashboard:** An important component of the safety narrative for reconnecting communities can be supplemented using existing traffic fatalities and injury data. The SHSP dashboard provides direct access to statewide crash data to support the data-driven implementation of the SHSP and coordinated safety programs. The dashboard currently uses finalized crash data from the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS) and the Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS) and can be filtered to look specifically at pedestrian and bicyclist crash data. This is helpful if a specific need has been identified in the public engagement process or if safety solutions are being proposed in the planning or capital construction project for reconnecting communities.
3. **Measures of Quality:** The **Pedestrian Environmental Quality Index (PEQI)** and **Bicycle Environmental Equality Index (BEQI)** are examples of tools that measure the quality and safety of the physical pedestrian and bicycle environment. In the context of planning and capital construction projects, they can be used to gather data to understand the existing conditions of the project study area and the perceptions of comfort and safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. Both tools can be used effectively when conducted in collaboration with affected community groups (e.g., residents, businesses, local schools, etc.).
4. **Caltrans Accessibility Tool:** An online tool that measures access to destinations, both as a current baseline and with the addition of proposed projects. The scores produced are based on travel times between common origins and destinations, such as homes to jobs or homes to groceries, and on traffic hazards to active travelers. The scores cover four modes: walking, biking, transit (including first- and last-mile walk connections), and motor vehicle. The tool may be particularly helpful to understand how much connectivity would be gained from proposed projects that aim to restore community connectivity. The tool is currently being populated with land use data and piloted on several Caltrans projects and will be available for analysis of state highway projects in late 2022.

4.3 – Community-Based Stewardship, Management, and Partnerships

A strategy to reconnect communities is the development of partnerships needed across state, regional, and local entities to address past harms caused by a transportation facility. These partnerships include the active involvement and guidance of CBOs, community advisory groups or organizations that may help to develop community-developed priorities and initiatives.

4.3.1 Definitions

Partnerships

A formal or informal collaboration between State and local governments, CBOs, and other institutions that are represented or involved in the planning and implementation of projects to reconnect communities. Check federal program guidelines for requirements that constitute a formal partnership. These may include a formal signed agreement, a commitment letter or budget, or a funding agreement.

Community Advisory Board

An advisory group or other place-based management organization that can help develop and represent community developed priorities and initiatives (e.g., community land trust or community benefits agreement). They may consist of community members or CBO representatives.

Joint Application Requests

As part of Caltrans' Call for Projects to the Federal RCP grant program, partner agencies and CBOs are encouraged to submit a formal request for Caltrans to partner on a project located on the SHS. Tribes, regional or local agencies and CBOs may apply as a lead applicant and serve as a grant recipient. Roles and responsibilities outside of the application submittal are to be defined by both Caltrans and its partners which may include details on local match funding, project development oversight and approval and public engagement strategies.

Letter of Support Requests

As part of Caltrans' Call for Projects to the Federal RCP grant program, partner agencies and CBOs may submit a formal request for Caltrans to partner on planning projects located on or off-system or for capital improvements off the SHS.

4.3.2 Resources

Federal Perspective

For the federal RCP grant program, USDOT is interested in the documentation of formal partnerships that are established through either signed commitment letters or a budget proposal. There is an emphasis on these partnerships to include entities that have geographic ties to communities adjacent to the facility. Partners can specifically include CBOs, community development financial institutions, philanthropic and civic organizations, private sector entities, and State and local government. Additional mechanisms for a community-centered approach may include community advisory boards, land trusts, and community benefits agreements. From the federal perspective, Capital Construction Grant applicants will need to address how the resources of partners and other Federal and non-Federal funds will support the project scope. This is detailed in the RCP grant application's narrative and outlines funding commitments from sources such as: local entities receiving the grant award, (e.g., cities, counties, tribes, MPOs, State organizations or agencies, and funds from private sector, non-profit, philanthropic, or other partner organizations.

State Perspective

Partnerships as identified by Caltrans is not a commitment of State funding. The parameters for partnerships are to be determined by Caltrans districts, partnering agencies, and community organizations. For example, Caltrans' role as a partner may extend to providing technical assistance for federal and state grant applications, letters of support or project delivery support. A partnership extends beyond a list of agencies, tribes, and CBOs that eligible entities plan to submit. Like equitable engagement, partnerships should be robust and authentic with a goal centered on addressing past harms faced by disadvantaged communities and developing transformative solutions that reconnect communities while preventing displacement and addressing affordable housing.

4.4 – Equitable Development and Shared Prosperity

Equitable development is an outcome of reconnecting communities that focuses on the long-term livability of a community beyond the removal, replacement, or mitigation of a transportation facility. While the legacy of harm and transformative solutions are a core component of the narrative, equitable development describes the policies and processes at play that ensures the affected communities have the resources and investments they need to thrive.

Projects that restore community connectivity should consider the following elements to help address equitable development and shared prosperity:

- **Anti-displacement policies and strategies** that include affordable housing development, tenant protection policies, community ownership (e.g., through community benefits agreements and community land trusts), and inclusionary zoning
- **Compact and infill development for underserved communities** (including income restricted infill housing) which provides affordable housing and helps to reduce the housing and transportation costs
- **Opportunities for creative place-making** (i.e., repurposing of an underutilized space into a community space for recreation, economic development, and cultural activities)
- **Local inclusive economic development** (e.g., utilization of Disadvantaged Business Enterprises)

Depending on whether a project is a planning or capital construction improvement, individual agencies alone cannot address or account for equitable development without the input and involvement, and partnership from other agencies and CBOs. Local and state agencies focused on housing policies are a good resource to identify existing anti-displacement strategies or share housing-specific needs for communities living in or near the project area.

4.4.1 Definitions

Affordable Housing

Federal and California State law defines affordable housing as one in which the occupant is paying no more than 30% of the gross household income on housing costs, including utilities.

Anti-Displacement Policies and Strategies

State, regional, and local policies that address the current and future displacement and relocation of residents in disadvantaged communities. The policies and strategies may be regulatory (e.g., municipal ordinances), guidance (e.g., housing elements), or other recommendations formally adopted to address displacement. Key attributes of these policies and strategies are the prioritization by timeline (e.g., near-term, or medium-term) and a forum for equitable representation of historically disadvantaged communities.

Community Benefits Agreements

A Community Benefits Agreement (CBA) is a legal agreement between community organizations (e.g., including community advisory boards), private contractors, and local and state government entities that stipulates benefits that the community will receive in exchange for their support on a project. Examples of agreement benefits may include local inclusive economic development, affordable housing, and the improvement of community facilities.

Equitable Development

Equitable development is a development approach for meeting the needs of all communities, including underserved communities through policies and programs that reduce disparities while fostering livable places that are healthy and vibrant for all.

4.4.2 Data Resources

Federal Perspective

Location Affordability Index: A tool developed by USDOT and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that provides estimates of household housing and transportation costs at the neighborhood level along with constituent data on the built environment and demographics. This tool helps address gaps with standardized data sources on household transportation expenses, which have historically limited the ability to account for the cost of living in a particular city or neighborhood.

State Perspective

One of CAPTI's 10 guiding principles is "promoting compact infill development while protecting residents and businesses from displacement." Caltrans and CalSTA play a role in accomplishing this through funding transportation projects that support housing for low-income residents, providing walkable communities, and addressing affordability to reduce the housing and transportation cost burden. The tools and resources available to address housing and transportation extend beyond Caltrans purview and will rely on partnerships with state agencies such as the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) and the Strategic Growth Council (SGC). A few examples of helpful tools to assess affordable housing opportunity sites and policies include the following:

1. **Statewide Affordable Housing Opportunity Sites:** Under Executive Order (EO) N-06-19, the California Department of General Services (DGS) and HCD identified and prioritized excess state-owned property to address the shortage of housing for Californians. The Statewide Affordable Housing Opportunities Sites are deemed potentially suitable for housing. The tool displaces parcels that are color coded to show housing needs (e.g., moderate to very high) and overlaid with USDOT Opportunity Zones.
2. **TCAC/HCD Opportunity Map:** A mapping tool developed by the California Fair Housing Task Force that identifies characteristics shown by research to support positive economic, educational, and health outcomes for low-income families. The Task Force was convened by HCD and the California Tax Credit Allocation Committee.
3. **Housing Element Download Tool:** A repository of housing elements submitted by HCD; may help to learn about localities' plans to address development constraints and meet future housing need.
4. **Affirmatively Furthering Fair Housing Data Viewer:** A tool developed by HCD to assess fair housing issues, patterns of segregation and integration, and access to opportunity across California.



Conclusion

The effort to restore connectivity to communities bisected by federal and state transportation facilities is a deliberate process that includes the partnership of state, regional and local agencies, tribes, and CBOs. These partnerships aim to foster community-driven solutions that will address past harms, develop strategies for affordable housing and anti-displacement and encourage economic development in communities that were affected by these transportation facilities.

A framework for planning and project implementation is introduced in this handbook, focusing on addressing transportation infrastructure that have created historic barriers to community connectivity, access, mobility, and economic development. This handbook serves as a starting point for Caltrans staff and partnering agencies to better conceptualize planning and capital construction projects that reconnect communities. Funding sources and data tools from the federal and state perspectives offer relevant resources for practitioners to plan and implement community-driven projects. While this handbook draws from the federal RCP grant program, it outlines a process for partnership with external partners and for local or regional agencies and community-based organizations to partner with Caltrans.

Caltrans may update and transition the handbook into an active resource document as more details and program guidelines are released for the state program and future federal funding cycles of the RCP grant program. Topics explored in this handbook will be further developed to align with the California Reconnecting Communities: Highways to Boulevard Pilot program and include best practices and lessons learned from the first round of the federal Reconnecting Communities Pilot grant program and strategies for project development with a specific scope for restoring community connectivity.

As funding commitments continue to grow for reconnecting communities with the development of new state and federal discretionary grant programs, so will the need to better understand how transportation projects will achieve or take steps to achieve knitting together these affected communities.



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Appendices

Appendices

A – Caltrans Contacts

Caltrans Headquarters and Districts

A new webpage for the Caltrans Reconnecting Communities Program will be available for inquiries related to partnerships or existing federal and state funding opportunities focused on Reconnecting Communities. For inquiries on project ideas that align with ongoing work in specific Caltrans districts, visit Caltrans' District Office webpage for District Office contacts.

- [Caltrans District Offices](#)

B – References and Resources

Federal

- [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act \(IIJA\) of 2021](#)
- <https://www.transportation.gov/grants/reconnecting-communities>

State of California

- [Caltrans Equity Statement \(2020\)](#)
- [Caltrans 2020 – 2024 Strategic Plan](#)
- [California Transportation Plan 2050](#)
- [Climate Action Plan for Transportation Infrastructure \(CAPTI\)](#)
- [Housing Open Data Tools \(HCD\)](#)
- [California Climate Investments Priority Populations](#)
- [Caltrans Safe System Approach](#)

Data Resources and Tools

1. Equity, Environmental Justice, and Community Engagement

- [EJ Screen: Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool](#)
- [Areas of Persistent Poverty](#)
- [Historically Disadvantaged Communities](#)
- [USDOT Opportunity Zones](#)

- [HUD Choice Neighborhoods](#)
- [HUD Promise Zones](#)
- [CalEnviroScreen 4.0](#)
- [California Healthy Places Index 4.0](#)
- [Priority Populations Investments 4.0](#)
- [Caltrans Equity Quality Index \(EQI\)](#)

2. Mobility Connectivity

- [Strategic Highway Safety Plan \(SHSP\) Crash Data Dashboard](#)
- [Pedestrian Environmental Quality Index \(PEQI\)](#)
- [Bicycle Environmental Quality Index \(BEQI\)](#)
- [Caltrans Safe Systems Approach](#)

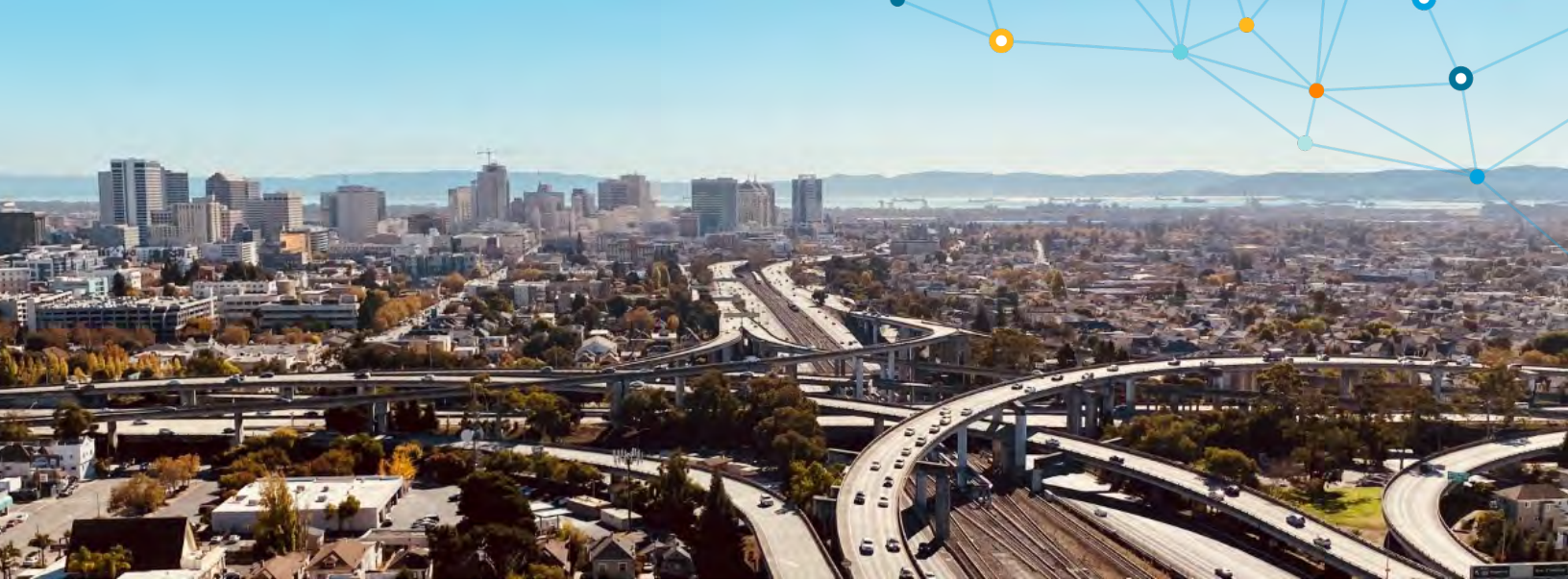
3. Equitable Development and Shared Prosperity

- [HUD Location Affordability Index](#)
- [Statewide Affordable Housing Opportunities Sites](#)
- [TCAC/HCD Housing Opportunity Area Maps](#)
- [Housing Element Download Tool](#)
- [Affirmative Furthering Fair Housing Data Viewer](#)

C – Reconnecting Communities Case Studies

The federal RCP grant program and the State RC:H2B pilot program provide a much-needed avenue for transformative solutions that aim to restore connectivity in disadvantaged communities. Efforts that address community connectivity should focus on addressing the legacy of past harm and the strategies for partnerships and equitable public engagement. Historic examples in California to replace and mitigate an existing transportation facility may not have had all the components that are prioritized today as a project that truly restores community connectivity. These examples nonetheless provide a foundation for evaluating the implementation of the project and the affects (e.g., housing and transportation) on the communities today.

This section will highlight two examples in California where a planning study or capital improvements were proposed to address legacies of harm and to restore connectivity in communities. While these examples are in dense urban areas, it is important to note that transportation facilities across the state with legacies of harm also exist in rural areas. Case studies will be added and updated in future versions of the document as more planning and capital construction projects are funded and constructed.



Vision for the I-980 in West Oakland

The first case study is an example a planning effort currently funded in its first phase to address the legacy of harm created by the Interstate 980 (I-980) in Oakland. I-980 serves as a physical barrier between Downtown Oakland and West Oakland. Per the West Oakland Specific Plan (2018), pedestrian connections between West Oakland and Downtown are of limited quality and are challenging for safe and comfortable pedestrian use. While Downtown Oakland's jobs, services and retail/entertainment uses are immediately adjacent to West Oakland, residents of West Oakland have difficulty accessing these amenities of Downtown Oakland due to I-980.

The Vision 980 Study will explore alternatives for reconnecting communities along the I-980 corridor with an expanded focus on community integration and environmental justice to deliver more equitable outcomes.

Table 8: Vision 980 Project Description

Project Title	Vision 980
Project Type	Planning Study
Community Location	Caltrans District 4, Downtown Oakland and West Oakland
State Highway System	Interstate-980 (I-980)
Partners Involved	Potential community organizations include: Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD), Bay Area Rapid Transit District (BART), Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District (AC Transit), Port of Oakland, Alameda Public Health Department, CBOs, Downtown Business Associations, Trucking Associations, Bicycle and Pedestrian Advocates, Transit Advocates, Environmental Advocates, West Oakland Environmental Indicators Project, Communities for a Better Environment, Ditching Dirty Diesel Collaborative, and potentially the FHWA. The stakeholder list shall be expanded and further developed and refined with partner input. Local and regional agency partners include the City of Oakland, Alameda County Transportation Commission (Alameda CTC), Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).

Project Description

The Vision 980 Study will explore alternatives for reconnecting communities along the I-980 corridor, with an expanded focus on community integration and environmental justice to deliver more equitable outcomes for the City of Oakland, the Bay Area region, and the State. A broad range of multimodal options for using or crossing the corridor will be considered. Land use options will also be explored, including options that reallocate right-of-way.

What was the legacy of harm caused by the facility?

The I-980 in the San Francisco Bay Area has a controversial history of impacting and dividing historically disadvantaged communities in Oakland. The freeway was intended to provide direct vehicle access to downtown Oakland undergoing redevelopment. Construction of the freeway created barriers to active transportation and limited access to employment and services in Downtown Oakland for residents of the adjacent West Oakland community. Its construction started in the 1960s, was temporarily halted by an injunction in 1972, and completed in 1985. The construction of I-980 resulted in significant displacement of Oakland residents and businesses located in its right-of-way.

How will barriers be removed?

An application for a feasibility study for Vision 980 will be submitted to the Federal RCP grant program. This study will expand on the public engagement and vision development proposed in the first phase of the project and will address options to remove, mitigate or replace the transportation facility.

What are the benefits to the community?

The Vision 980 Study will incorporate disadvantaged community input into the planning process and will identify their needs. The study will aim for safer travel and improved connections from West Oakland to Downtown to access jobs, services, and shopping through infrastructure and transit improvements. Incorporating the disadvantaged communities and the CBOs that represent them into the planning process throughout the study will help identify their needs. Also, the study could identify adding more community amenities depending on what is done with the space (transit, parks, housing, bike lanes, sidewalks). There is potential to repurpose land currently used for on/off ramps or the freeway for other land uses, including affordable housing.



Photo 3: Current aerial view of I-980 separating West Oakland (top) from Downtown Oakland (bottom). The Vision 980 Study will seek alternatives to reconnect these two communities.



Removing the Central Freeway in San Francisco

The 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake caused significant damage to the San Francisco Bay Area's transportation infrastructure. The segments of SHS that collapsed from the earthquake included the Cypress Street Viaduct (I-880) in Oakland, Embarcadero Freeway (SR-480), Interstate 280, and the Central Freeway (US 101) in the City of San Francisco. The demolition and replacement of these segments occurred over the span of a decade and are examples of projects where Caltrans did not restore the former structure and instead re-routed or replaced the facility with a new multi-modal corridor.

In this second case study, the Central Freeway was a spur that bisected the Hayes Valley neighborhood of San Francisco and was converted into an at-grade multimodal corridor following the earthquake. While the northern portion of the freeway was removed in 1992, the southern portion (five blocks south of Market Street) remained until its demolition in 2003. Community advocacy for and against the replacement of the Central Freeway continued until voters decided to remove the freeway through a ballot initiative.

Table 9: Octavia Boulevard Project Description

Project Title	Octavia Boulevard
Project Type	Capital Construction; Freeway removal and conversion to boulevard
Community Location	Caltrans District 4, Hayes Valley neighborhood in San Francisco
State Highway System	Former Central Freeway (Octavia Boulevard between Fell Street and Market Street)
Partners Involved	Neighborhood residents in Hayes Valley, the City of San Francisco, and Caltrans
Project Description	The conversion of the Central Freeway segment between Market and Fell Street to a boulevard that accommodates commuter traffic, transit, bicycles, and pedestrians.

Timeline

Central Freeway damaged in the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake; freeway permanently closed in 1992; rebuilt to surface grade multi-use boulevard in 2005.

What was the legacy of harm caused by the facility?

The Central Freeway was constructed as part of the City of San Francisco's 1951 plan to create a network of freeways that would address traffic congestion and prioritize the movement of motor vehicles to downtown. The Central Freeway was only partially constructed in 1959 when the San Francisco County Board of Supervisors voted to cancel seven of the ten freeways planned, including the Central and Embarcadero Freeway. The remaining spur like many freeway segments across the country bisected the Hayes Valley and was perceived as urban blight.

How were barriers removed?

Support from San Francisco's mayor and community advocacy from Hayes Valley residents helped to bring a ballot initiative to the city to remove the Central Freeway along Octavia Boulevard from Fell Street to Market Street.

What are the benefits to the community?

Octavia Boulevard replaced the Central Freeway's footprint with landscaping, side lanes for local traffic and parking, and pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements.

Restoring connectivity to a neighborhood that had experienced disproportionate burden of economic and transportation barriers due to the location of the freeway segment; Economic investment opportunities and changes to surrounding land uses; Improved perceptions of safety for active transportation users due to the design of the new boulevard and creation of a park space.

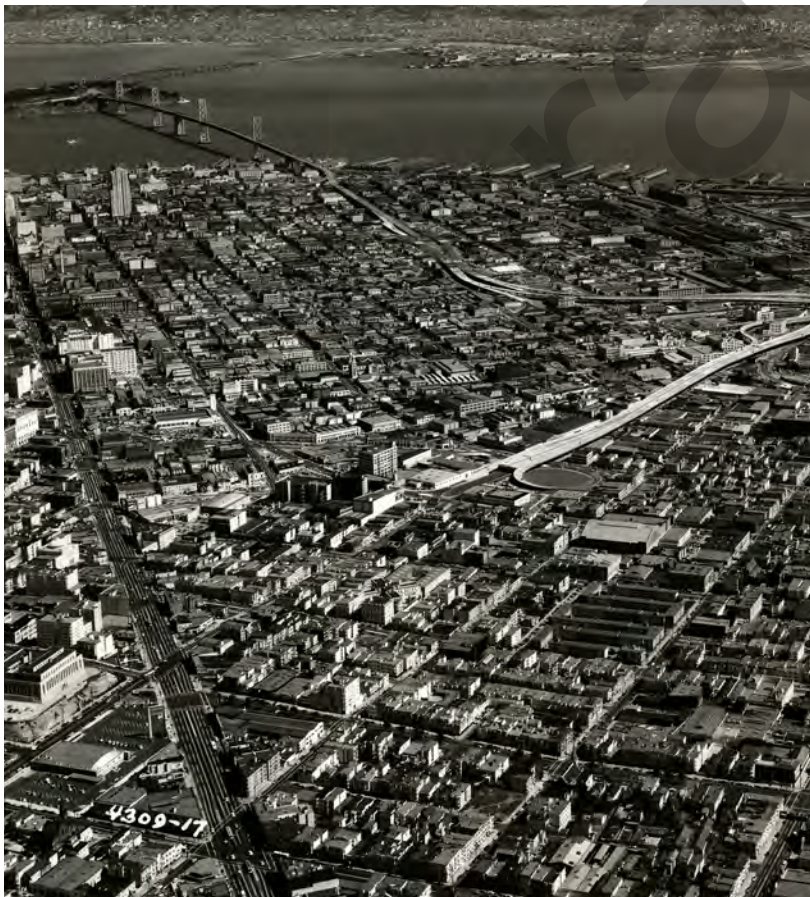


Photo 4: Aerial view of the Central Freeway, where it ended at South Van Ness Avenue in the mid-20th century.



Photo 5: Market Street, looking east towards the bay.

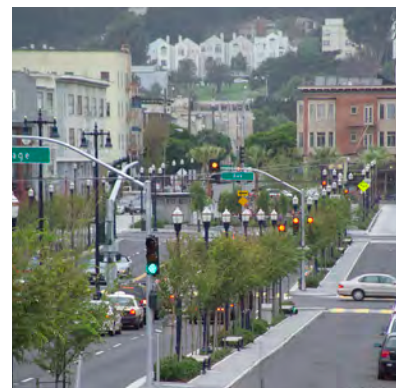


Photo 6: Octavia Boulevard, San Francisco in 2005

National and International Examples of Completed Projects

The new federal funding programs provide opportunities for eligible entities to advance planning and capital improvements that restore connectivity across the nation. While the list of completed projects are smaller in number, they serve as useful case studies for diverse demographic regions across the Country. Case studies in New York City, Milwaukee, and Chattanooga are examples of freeways that similarly created a legacy of harm and were eventually removed and replaced with multimodal boulevards. International examples in Paris, Seoul, and Madrid offer solutions that focus on car-free spaces and pedestrian priority. Details on these national and international examples can be found on the Congress for New Urbanism's (CNU) resource page for Highways to Boulevards projects and campaigns.

[Link to CNU's Webpage for Highways to Boulevards](#)



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California Department of Transportation
Reconnecting Communities Handbook: A Resource for Developing Partnerships