

# Health Impacts of Transit Oriented Development (TOD)

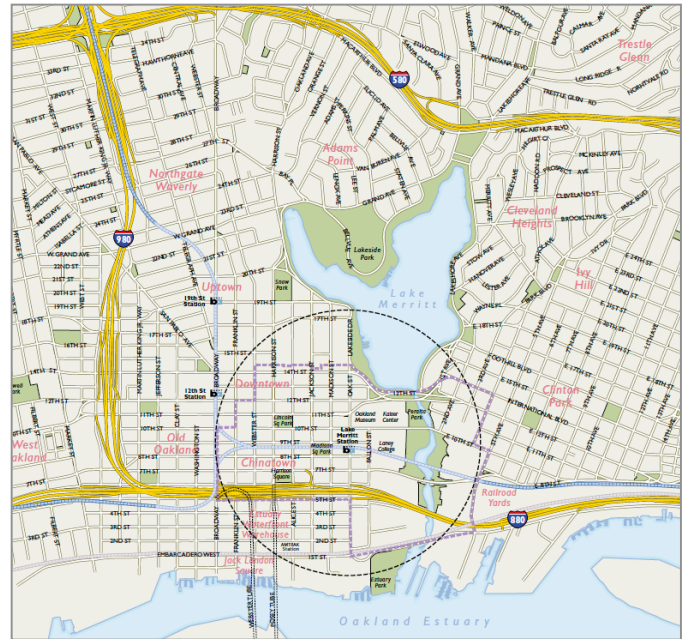
## The Lake Merritt BART Station Area Plan Health Impact Assessment



The City of Oakland, the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system, and the Peralta Community College District, through a grant from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, together are developing a Station Area Plan (SAP) for the area surrounding the Lake Merritt BART Station in Oakland. Meeting demand for projected future growth, the SAP will steer future development within the project area (including all parcels within a 10 minute walk surrounding the BART station), establish regulations for development projects on public and private property, and guide the redesign of streets and sidewalks to make the area more transit-oriented.

Oakland Chinatown, a regional center for Chinese and Pan-Asian populations throughout the Bay Area, accommodates over 20,000 shoppers and tourists each weekend and makes up a particularly large portion of the planning area. Crime and air pollution have been primary concerns of this community, and other community needs include improved pedestrian resources (such as benches, streetlights, and trees), neighborhood parks and spaces for tai chi and other athletic activities, and affordable and senior housing.

Through a grant from the U.S. Federal Transit Administration (FTA), Human Impact Partners collaborated with ChangeLab Solutions, TransForm, Asian Pacific Environmental Network, Asian Health Services, and East Bay Asian Local Development Corporation to conduct a health impact assessment of the proposed Lake Merritt BART Station Area Plan.



### *HIA Scope*

A main goal of this HIA was to engage a broad spectrum of community stakeholders—including neighborhood leaders, nonprofit technical experts, and government agencies directing significant public resources—in a coordinated effort to improve public engagement and public health outcomes of this and future public transportation projects.

To achieve this goal, the HIA assessed the potential impacts of the SAP on health through its impacts on transportation, housing, economic development, parks, and public safety. To predict impacts, the HIA used the public health literature, publicly available data and data obtained from Alameda County Public Health Department, expertise of partners and community residents, an observational survey conducted in the area, and GIS analysis.



# Lake Merritt BART Station Area Plan Health Impact Assessment

## *Findings*

The Lake Merritt BART SAP has the potential to create lasting impacts to health and wellness among residents, workers, and visitors to the planning area. This planning process presents a tremendous opportunity to ensure development that optimizes conditions for a healthy and vibrant community. Transit access, pedestrian improvements, traffic calming designs, healthy and affordable housing, local jobs, increased access to existing regional parks, and probable improvements to public safety are elements of the SAP that are likely to lead to health benefits. However, some negative health impacts of the proposals are predicted, such as a higher risk for housing displacement and gentrification, increased pedestrian and bicycle collisions, and hazardous air quality impacts associated with increased vehicle trips and increased resident exposure to Interstate 880. Recommendations developed within this HIA process will help address these negative impacts and improve future health outcomes.

## *Recommendations*

Some of the key recommendations made by this HIA, through each of five determinants of health analyzed, include the following:

- **Transportation:** implement streetscape improvements for pedestrian and bicycle safety.
- **Housing:** create and maintain affordable housing to accommodate existing and future residents while also preventing displacement.
- **Parks:** increase public park acreage where possible, and improve access to and safety of existing local-serving and regional parks.
- **Public Safety:** increase “eyes on the street” and reduce vehicle traffic by improving pedestrian resources such as street lighting, and implement violence prevention programs.
- **Economic development:** create policies to encourage local businesses and local hiring, and maintain the cultural character of Chinatown.



## *Outcomes*

HIP and partners submitted multiple letters, supplementary research analyses, and a full HIA report to city planning staff at various stages of the SAP planning process. In addition, HIP met with planning staff throughout the planning process to coordinate and communicate health impact findings. As a result of the HIA and other communication products, health language was included in the text of subsequent SAP planning documents prepared by city staff. The Lake Merritt BART SAP process is expected to be completed by Fall 2013.

As part of the same grant and based on this HIA process, ChangeLab Solutions is developing a toolkit to help policy makers better incorporate health in transportation planning.