



CONSENT CALENDAR
May 10, 2022

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Ben Bartlett (Author)

Subject: Addition of Semi-diverter Traffic Bollards at the intersection of Newbury Street and Ashby Avenue.

RECOMMENDATION

Refer to the Fiscal Year 2022/2023 Budget Process, an allocation of \$50,000 to install semi-diverter traffic bollards at the east corner of the intersection at Newbury Street and Ashby Avenue.

CURRENT SITUATION

Recently, Newbury Street has been plagued with dangerous driving behaviors that threaten pedestrians, cyclists, property, and other vehicles. The observed behaviors include speeding, substance-impaired awareness, not stopping at stop signs, and not yielding to pedestrians and bicyclists.

Within the past few years, dangerous driving behaviors along Newbury Street have resulted in numerous episodes of near-miss accidents for pedestrians and bicyclists, collision damage to parked vehicles, and residential property damage collisions from vehicles speeding into Newbury Street to escape police pursuits along Ashby Avenue. Of the greatest safety concern is that, within the past year, the intersection of Newbury Street and Ashby Avenue (Highway SR-13) has been the site of one fatal vehicle accident and two near-fatal vehicle accidents.

BACKGROUND

Newbury Street is one block long, narrow, and extends from Russell Street to Ashby Avenue. The community it serves is residential, and it has an increasing number of families with infants and young children. Decades ago, the street was bordered by a coal yard at one end and a lightly used thoroughfare at the other end. Outside of use by residents, there was very little vehicle traffic. Over the recent decades, the coal yard, at one end of the street, was replaced by the Berkeley Bowl Market. At the other end of the street, the lightly used thoroughfare became Highway SR-13. In addition, the Ashby Bart Station (with its cross-bay commuters) was built only a block away. Individually, each of these changes had impacts on the vehicle traffic along Newbury Street. Combined, these changes have significantly contributed to Newbury Street being increasingly dangerous for both residents and non-residents. Now, with planned major housing projects in the immediate area, there may be further increases in vehicle traffic along Newbury Street and, with it, additional vehicle hazards.

The City must support infrastructure that promotes pedestrian and bicyclist safety and reduces traffic collisions in order to avoid further tragedies. Further work needs to be done in order to deter traffic violations and ensure pedestrian and bike safety. The

residents of the neighborhood that is plagued by dangerous and illegal driving want to see clear safe passage for pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as a reduction of vehicle collisions and property damage.

RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

In Berkeley, street safety is a priority. Based on consultations with constituents and reported vehicle incidents, action must be taken to substantially decrease traffic violations and prevent the potential for serious injury on this street. The urgency for this action is particularly high given the number of young children who live at or near this street as well as patrons of the Berkeley Bowl Market, BART commuters, and the increasing number of cyclists.

Based on consultation with community residents, there is a consensus of opinion that vehicle traffic along Newbury Street has become increasingly dangerous for pedestrians, cyclists, parked cars, and property. There is overwhelming support for measures that reduce the traffic dangers along Newbury Street, especially at the intersection of Newbury Street and Ashby Avenue (Highway SR-13).

At the intersection of Newbury Street, vehicles traveling along Ashby Avenue (Highway SR-13) are not controlled by traffic lights or stop signs. Vehicles that are speeding along Ashby Avenue tend to maintain an excess speed as they turn to enter Newbury Street. In addition, vehicles illegally parked in yellow zones at the east corner of the intersection create blind spots for west-bound vehicles that are speeding onto Newbury Street. These unsafe conditions significantly contribute to vehicle dangers on Newbury Street.

VEHICLE TRAFFIC BOLLARD DIVERTERS

Traffic bollard diverters are a recognized method for reducing vehicle traffic dangers in Berkeley. According to a 2015 study, *“Traffic diversion has been quite effective in many of the neighborhoods where the bollards have been installed. The Claremont neighborhood is a prime example of this success. Traffic that used to spill into the neighborhood during peak commuter hours is now unable to penetrate the interior. Children can safely walk from their homes to Monkey Island Park without encountering commuters slicing frantically through the back streets to get from Claremont Blvd. to Derby St. At the same time, cyclists and pedestrians are able to pass through the barriers and therefore have unrestricted access to any part of the neighborhood.”*

Berkeley is currently served by two types of traffic bollard diverter systems; Full-diverter bollards and Semi-diverter bollards. A full diverter bollard completely blocks access to, and exit from, one end of the street. The blocked end of the street creates a cul-de-sac. Although this method is effective at reducing vehicle traffic, it may contribute to other street problems such as impaired access for emergency and delivery vehicles, vehicle and property damage from drivers making a u-turn at the blocked end of the street, and illegal dumping of trash at the “dead end” cul-de-sac. This is especially true for full-diverter bollards that are installed on narrow streets.

Semi-diverter traffic bollards block only half of one end of the street. The bollard prevents entrance to the street on one side, while it maintains exit from the street on the other side. This allows for a smooth flow of traffic along the street. It avoids the potential bollard problems of impaired emergency and delivery vehicle access as well as the need for vehicle u-turns to exit the street. In addition, it reduces the motivation for illegal dumping.

Installation of a semi-diverter bollard system at the east corner of the Newbury Street and Ashby Avenue (Highway SR-13) intersection would significantly reduce the traffic vehicle dangers along Newbury Street. The bollard system would prevent access to Newbury Street from vehicles traveling along Ashby Avenue (Highway SR-13). This safety measure is especially important for west-bound vehicles that are speeding along Ashby Avenue and are partially blinded by illegally parked vehicles on the east corner of the intersection prior to turning into Newbury Street.

Vehicles can enter Newbury Street from Russell Street. Vehicles traveling along Ashby Avenue can turn onto Adeline Street and travel one block to Russell Street. Exit from Newbury Street can be by Russell Street, as well as by the non-barricaded section of Newbury Street at the Ashby Avenue intersection. Doing this would contain the traffic flow, make it easier for pedestrians, cyclists, and property along Newbury Street, and decrease the number of traffic violations. Although this item is not a silver bullet in addressing all of the problems, it is a needed step in order to bring much-needed safety to the area.

TRAFFIC BOLLARD DIVERTERS ALONG ASHBY AVENUE

Traffic bollard diverters are especially recognized as a preventive measure for vehicle traffic along Ashby Avenue (Highway SR-13). From Telegraph Avenue to Shattuck Avenue, all streets along the Ashby Avenue corridor are currently protected by bollard traffic diverters. Newbury Street is the only street between the major thoroughfares of Telegraph Avenue and Adeline Street that is not protected by a bollard traffic diverter system (see photos).

Both types of traffic bollard diverter systems are located along Ashby Avenue; Full-diverter bollards and Semi-diverter bollards. Newbury Street would best be served with a semi-diverter traffic bollard system.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

No adverse effects on the environment are anticipated. A semi-diverter bollard conversion will help mitigate traffic, promote pedestrian safety, and create a safer intersection for families, pedestrians, and bicyclists. Drivers heading along Ashby Avenue can easily access Newbury Street by utilizing Russell Street, one block away.

FISCAL IMPACTS

Staff time and additional costs are to be determined by the Public Works Department.

CONTACT PERSON

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