

THIS PRINT COVERS CALENDAR ITEM NO.: 10.2

**SAN FRANCISCO
MUNICIPAL TRANSPORTATION AGENCY**

DIVISION: Sustainable Streets

BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

Approving a temporary parking-protected bikeway on Fell Street between Baker Street and Shrader Street and associated parking and traffic modifications to create more space for socially distanced walking and biking as part of the Panhandle Social Distancing and Safety Project.


SUMMARY:

- In response to the COVID-19 Emergency, the SFMTA installed a temporary parking-protected bikeway on Fell Street between Baker Street and Shrader Street to create additional space on the roadway for socially distanced essential travel and exercise and alleviate crowding on the Panhandle Path.
- The parking-protected bikeway will only be in effect until 120 days after the termination or expiration of the COVID-19 Emergency unless the SFMTA Board of Directors takes further action.
- The San Francisco Planning Department has determined that the proposed parking-protected bikeway is statutorily exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
- Final SFMTA Decisions can be reviewed by the Board of Supervisors pursuant to Ordinance 127-18. This project is not subject to the Board of Supervisors review because the project establishes a Class IV bicycle facility and all of the parking and traffic modifications in the proposed approval action are directly related to the establishment of the bikeway.

ENCLOSURES:

1. SFMTAB Resolution

APPROVALS:

DIRECTOR  _____

DATE

August 10, 2020

SECRETARY  _____

August 10, 2020

ASSIGNED SFMTAB CALENDAR DATE: August 18, 2020

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PURPOSE

Approving a temporary parking-protected bikeway on Fell Street between Baker Street and Shrader Street and associated parking and traffic modifications to create more space for socially distanced walking and biking as part of the Panhandle Social Distancing and Safety Project.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS AND TRANSIT FIRST POLICY PRINCIPLES

The proposed project will support the following goals and objectives of the SFMTA Strategic Plan:

Goal 1: Create a safer transportation experience for everyone.

Objective 1.1: Achieve Vision Zero by eliminating all traffic deaths.

Goal 2: Make transit and other sustainable modes of transportation the most attractive and preferred means of travel.

Objective 2.2: Enhance and expand use of the city's sustainable modes of transportation.

Objective 2.3: Manage congestion and parking demand to support the Transit First policy.

Goal 3: Improve the quality of life and environment in San Francisco and the region.

Objective 3.1: Use agency programs and policies to advance San Francisco's commitment to equity.

Objective 3.2: Advance policies and decisions in support of sustainable transportation and land use principles.

Objective 3.4: Provide environmental stewardship to improve air quality, enhance resource efficiency, and address climate change.

The proposed project will support the following Transit First policies:

1. To ensure quality of life and economic health in San Francisco, the primary objective of the transportation system must be the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.
2. Public transit, including taxis and vanpools, is an economically and environmentally sound alternative to transportation by individual automobiles. Within San Francisco, travel by public transit, by bicycle and on foot must be an attractive alternative to travel by private automobile.
3. Decisions regarding the use of limited public street and sidewalk space shall encourage the use of public rights of way by pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit, and shall strive to reduce traffic and improve public health and safety.
5. Pedestrian areas shall be enhanced wherever possible to improve the safety and comfort of pedestrians and to encourage travel by foot.
6. Bicycling shall be promoted by encouraging safe streets for riding, convenient access to transit, bicycle lanes, and secure bicycle parking.

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DESCRIPTION

Background

On March 16, 2020, San Francisco's Health Officer issued a Public Health Order in response to the COVID-19 Emergency, requiring that residents shelter in place, with the exception being for essential needs. The COVID-19 Emergency has significantly impacted San Francisco's transit system and required the SFMTA to reduce transit service. With Muni service reduced, many San Francisco residents walk, bike, or take other travel modes to make essential trips. However, members of the public cannot safely and practically maintain the six feet of social distance required by the City's Public Health Order C19-07b on many sidewalks, park paths, and bikeways. Due to these issues, bicyclists and pedestrians are choosing to travel on the roadway, putting them at a higher risk of being in a collision with a vehicle in the roadway. Recent data shows that drivers are operating at higher and unsafe speeds during the public health emergency, which increases the risk for severe injuries to vulnerable road users in a collision.

The Panhandle Path is an east-west off-street path located in the Panhandle for Golden Gate Park. It is traversed by both people walking and biking. Due to a high volume of users, the Panhandle Path is crowded and there is not enough adequate space for travelers to maintain six-foot separation. During the COVID-19 Emergency, the SFMTA has developed the Transportation Recovery Plan (TRP) to outline strategies the agency is pursuing to enable safe and essential travel, including expansion of the City's bicycle network.

As such, the SFMTA installed a temporary parking-protected bikeway on Fell Street between Baker Street and Shrader Street to provide relief to crowding on the Panhandle Path in July 2020. By creating more space on the roadway that is comfortable for bicyclists to use, more bicyclists may choose to ride on the roadway instead of the Panhandle Path, thus lessening the volume of users on the Panhandle Path. The addition of the parking-protected bikeway is needed for essential walk and bike travel while transit service levels are temporarily reduced.

Prior Conditions

Fell Street between Baker Street and Shrader Street is an arterial road that is bordered by residential houses on the north side and Golden Gate Park's Panhandle on the south side. Within these project limits, Fell Street is one-way westbound with unmetered parking on both sides of the street. The north side of Fell Street has a 15-foot wide sidewalk whereas the south side is bordered by The Panhandle. The roadway consisted of four travel lanes and no bicycle facilities. All intersections are signalized. At the intersection of Masonic Avenue, there is an additional left turn pocket. There are no passenger or commercial loading zones, but there are two on-street carshare parking spaces (36 feet total) on the southwest corner of Fell Street at Masonic Avenue. The 7X normally runs on Fell Street, but due to COVID-19, there is currently no Muni service here.

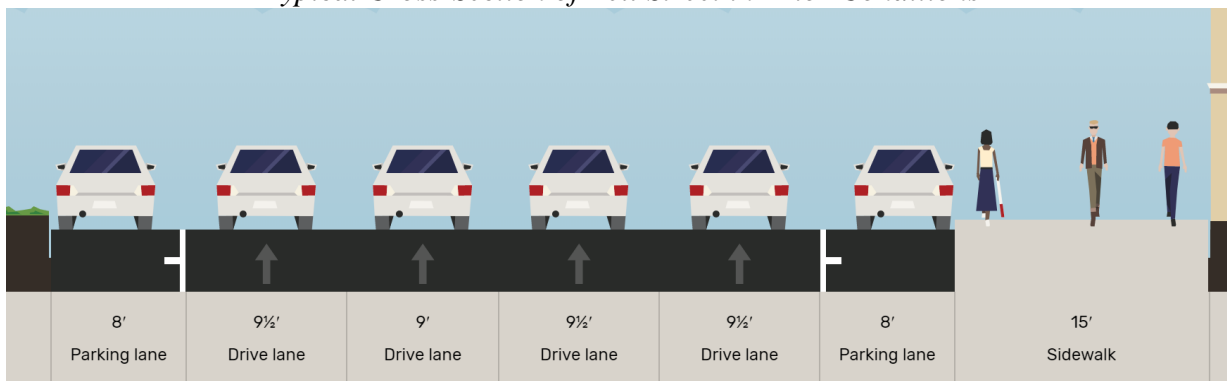
Current Conditions

In July 2020, the SFMTA removed one of four vehicle travel lanes and added a westbound temporary parking-protected bikeway on the south side of Fell Street adjacent to the curb. Since the temporary bikeway is adjacent to The Panhandle, there are no conflicts with garages or driveways. The south side parking lane was reconfigured between the bikeway and the travel lane. Twelve on-street parking spaces were removed to create visibility at intersections. There were no major changes made to cross streets, sidewalks, or curb ramps. All intersections remain signalized.

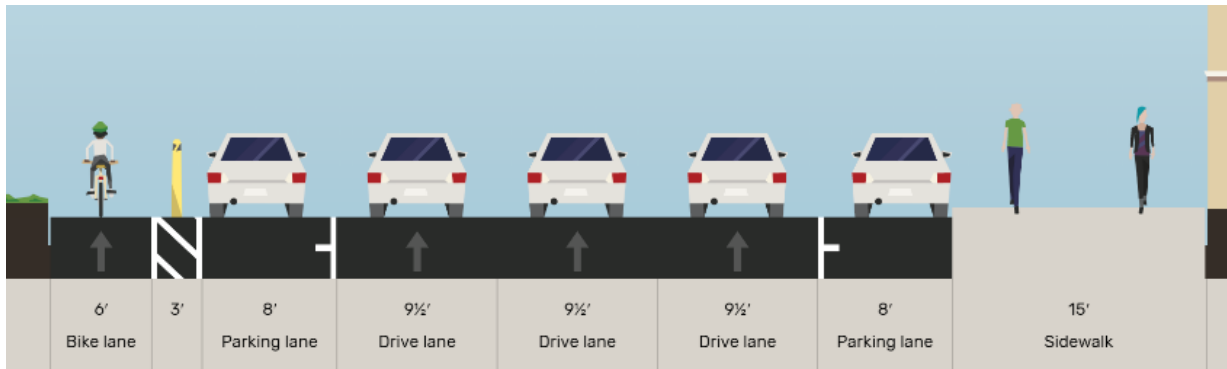
The specific parking and traffic modification are as follows:

- A. ESTABLISH – CLASS IV PROTECTED BIKEWAY (PARKING-PROTECTED BIKEWAY) – Fell Street, westbound, south side, from Baker Street to Shrader Street
- B. ESTABLISH – RED ZONE – Fell Street, south side, from east Lyon Street property line to 53 feet westerly (between limit line and crosswalk); Fell Street, south side, from east Central Avenue property line to 38 feet westerly (between limit line and crosswalk); Fell Street, south side, from Ashbury Street to 30 feet easterly; Fell Street, south side, from Clayton Street to 30 feet easterly; Fell Street, south side, from east Clayton Street curb line to 54 feet westerly (between crosswalk and property line); Fell Street, south side, from Cole Street to 30 feet easterly; Fell Street, south side, from Shrader Street to 30 feet easterly
- C. ESTABLISH – TOW-AWAY, NO STOPPING ANYTIME – Fell Street, south side, from 200 feet to 220 feet east of Masonic Avenue (extends existing tow-away restriction by 20 feet)

Typical Cross-Section of Fell Street in Prior Conditions



Typical Cross-Section of Fell Street in Current Conditions



The temporary parking-protected bikeway on Fell Street is a protected bikeway (Class IV, also known as a separated bikeway or cycle track). A Class IV bikeway is a bikeway for exclusive use of bicycles and includes required separation between the bikeway and through vehicle traffic. A parking-protected bikeway is a type of separated bikeway that uses a parking lane and painted buffer between the vehicle travel lanes and the bikeway so that people on bikes are protected from moving traffic.

Protected bikeways, including parking-protected bikeways, are authorized under California State law (Assembly Bill No. 1193 effective January 1, 2015). Section 891 of the Streets and Highways Code provides that agencies responsible for the development or operation of bikeways or roadways where bicycle travel is permitted may utilize minimum safety design criteria other than those established by Section 890.6 if all of the following conditions are met:

1. The alternative criteria are reviewed and approved by a qualified engineer with consideration for the unique characteristics and features of the proposed bikeway and surrounding environs;
2. The alternative criteria, or the description of the project with reference to the alternative criteria, are adopted by resolution at a public meeting, after having provided proper notice of the public meeting and opportunity for public comment; and
3. The alternative criteria adhere to guidelines established by a national association of public agency transportation officials.

The temporary parking-protected bikeway on Fell Street meets these three conditions. The alternative criteria for the parking-protected bikeway design have been reviewed and approved by a qualified engineer prior to installation. The alternative criteria for the project are to discourage motor vehicles from encroaching or double parking in the bicycle lane, provide a more inviting and greater sense of comfort for bicyclists, and to provide a greater perception of safety for bicyclists. Lastly, the project's alternative criteria adhere to guidelines set by the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) Urban Bikeway Design Guide, Federal Highway Administration Separated Bike Lane Planning and Design Guide, and California Department of Transportation Design Bulletin Information Number 89 Class IV Bikeway Guidance. The NACTO guidelines state that parking protected bikeways require the following features:

- A protected bikeway, like a bike lane, is a type of preferential lane as defined by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

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- Bicycle lane word, symbol, and/or arrow markings shall be placed at the beginning of a protected bikeway and at periodic intervals along the facility based on engineering judgment.
- If pavement markings are used to separate motor vehicle parking lanes from the preferential bicycle lane, solid white lane line markings shall be used. Diagonal crosshatch markings may be placed in the neutral area for special emphasis. Raised medians or other barriers can also provide physical separation to the protected bikeway.

The temporary parking-protected bikeway on Fell Street conforms to these NACTO design guidelines.

The temporary parking-protected bikeway also conforms to best practices and design standards, including design guidelines developed jointly by the SFMTA, Mayor's Office of Disability, and Department of Public Works to ensure accessibility for all street users. The painted buffer alongside the parking lane that separates vehicle travel lanes from the bikeway is clearly marked with cross-hatching and at least 36-inches in width, the minimum buffer width. The design was also reviewed by the San Francisco Fire Department.

The Panhandle Social Distancing and Safety Project was implemented in July 2020 after it was initially approved as an emergency measure through delegated authority of the City Traffic Engineer to the SFMTA Department Operations Center (DOC), including the COVID-19 TASC group, pursuant to Transportation Code Section 201(a)(5) which allows for the installation and removal of traffic control devices "for the purpose of controlling parking or traffic during emergencies, special conditions or events, construction work, short-term testing, or when necessary for the protection of public health and safety." SFMTA staff are seeking approval from the SFMTA Board of Directors for the emergency improvements. The approvals and actions would be limited in duration and expire 120 days following the expiration or termination of the COVID-19 Emergency, unless the SFMTA Board takes action prior to the expiration. SFMTA staff will return to the SFMTA Board prior to the 120-day expiration period and present findings from project evaluation and outreach in order for the SFMTA Board to make an informed decision on whether the parking-protected bikeway should be made permanent.

Construction

Construction of the Panhandle Social Distancing and Safety Project was carried out by SFMTA Field Operations staff. The parking-protected bikeway was installed using paint and plastic delineators primarily. Temporary construction-related lane closures had little to no effect on transit, pedestrians, and bicyclists. No utilities were relocated.

Evaluation

SFMTA staff will conduct thorough and transparent project evaluation to study the effects of the implementation of this project. Results will be made available on the project website and SFMTA staff will report to the SFMTA Board prior to 120 days after the conclusion of the COVID-19 Emergency, including evaluation findings and recommendations regarding the Panhandle Social Distancing and Safety Project in order for the SFMTA Board to make an informed decision on whether the parking-protected bikeway should be made permanent.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Given the COVID-19 Emergency, SFMTA staff have been developing and using new strategies for public outreach and engagement. SFMTA staff coordinated with the District 5 Supervisor's Office to share information about this project through a district mailing list and engage residents through an online meeting. On May 13, 2020, Supervisor Dean Preston hosted an online community meeting in which SFMTA staff presented the proposed project, collected feedback, and answered questions by residents. In addition to the online event, SFMTA also utilized strategic social media, targeted blog posts, and a dedicated project webpage to notify residents about the upcoming changes. These outreach methods also provided multiple ways for the public to contact SFMTA staff regarding additional feedback or questions. Since the project manager and team could be directly contacted, the public was able to receive timely and responsive replies to questions or concerns about the project.

Most feedback on the project has been positive. Many of those submitting feedback appreciate the effort that the SFMTA is undertaking to provide additional space for socially distanced essential travel and exercise. Many users of the Panhandle Path expressed the challenge of navigating its congested condition and are hopeful that the temporary parking-protected bikeway will have an alleviating effect. Concerns related to bicyclists not stopping at red lights for pedestrians and related to the potential for increased congestion on Fell Street were received. Another concern raised by nearby residents was the on-street parking loss that would result from the proposed changes. After considering these concerns, the SFMTA still supports the changes in order to address existing congestion on the Panhandle Path and the potential of higher risk of exposure to COVID-19.

As a stakeholder, the San Francisco Fire Department (SFFD) also provided feedback regarding the project design. The concern expressed by SFFD was regarding a potential increase in emergency response times resulting from the reconfigured Fell Street roadway. SFFD staff opined that by removing one of the four vehicle travel lanes on Fell Street between Baker Street and Shrader Street, traffic will be more congested on the remaining three vehicle travel lanes and lead to an increased travel time for emergency response vehicles to arrive at their destination. In response to this concern, the SFMTA and SFFD agreed on a comprehensive evaluation, monitoring, and adjustment program following installation to closely examine the traffic effects along this corridor. Vehicle speeds, volume, travel times, and queue lengths will be measured. Quantifiable metrics are set for comparison before and after project installation so that if certain thresholds are exceeded, the SFMTA will perform further detailed analysis and evaluate mitigation measures if necessary.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

One alternative to the temporary parking-protected bikeway is to not install a temporary parking-protected bikeway on Fell Street. If the changes are not implemented, residents may be at a greater risk of exposure to COVID-19 since many need to walk, bike, or take other travel modes to make essential trips. They cannot practically maintain the six feet of social distancing required by Public Health Orders on the crowded Panhandle Path. People thus either face the choice of not being able to socially distance and put themselves at risk of COVID-19 or are traveling by bicycle on the Fell Street roadway, putting them at a higher risk of being in a more severe collision with a vehicle than

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compared to the Panhandle Path. Meanwhile, crowding on the Panhandle Path degrades the facility itself, becoming less safe and comfortable for its all users.

Another alternative that SFMTA considered is to install the parking-protected bikeway on the north side of Fell Street. This alternative is less ideal because the north side of Fell Street has more driveways than the south side and access to the driveways must be preserved. The south side of the street has no driveways, which allows for an uninterrupted and continuous protected bikeway. Furthermore, at both east and west ends of the project extents, existing bicycle infrastructure on the south side makes it more feasible for a protected bikeway to be installed on the same side.

At Masonic Avenue, an alternative design that kept the bikeway along the curb and required left turning vehicles to stay to the right of the bikeway prior to turning was considered, but deemed undesirable for several reasons:

- A new curbside bikeway with signal separation would result in signal heads out of alignment with the bikeway and lanes, potentially resulting in confusion and red light running.
- A signal modification and changes to the red light camera would be required and would delay the project substantially if signal modifications could not be made using existing hardware.

FUNDING IMPACT

The total cost of the Panhandle Social Distancing and Safety Project is approximately \$425,000. \$75,000 accounts for planning and design staff labor while \$350,000 accounts for construction staff labor and materials.

Staff will be seeking Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and State reimbursement as it responds and facilitates the City's COVID-19 response during the pandemic. The maximum reimbursable amount by FEMA is 75% of the program cost and currently the State has not promised any share of the nonfederal amount yet. In the scenario that FEMA or the State does not reimburse the SFMTA for costs associated with the Fell Street parking-protected bikeway, capital funds through the Prop B General Fund programmed for bicycle improvements in the Streets Capital Improvement Plan will be used.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The parking-protected bikeway is subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). CEQA provides a statutory exemption from environmental review for emergency projects pursuant to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations Section 15269.

On July 17, 2020, the San Francisco Planning Department determined (Case Number 2020-006678ENV) that the parking-protected bikeway is statutorily exempt from CEQA pursuant to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations Section 15269. A copy of the CEQA determination is on file with the Secretary to the SFMTA Board of Directors and may be found in the records of the Planning Department at 1650 Mission Street in San Francisco and is incorporated herein by reference.

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OTHER APPROVALS RECEIVED OR STILL REQUIRED

Final SFMTA Decisions, whether made by the City Traffic Engineer or the SFMTA Board of Directors, can be reviewed by the Board of Supervisors pursuant to Ordinance 127-18. Information about the review process can be found at:

https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/SFMTA_Action_Review_Info_Sheet.pdf

This project is not subject to the Board of Supervisors review because the project establishes a Class IV bicycle facility and all of the parking and traffic modifications in the proposed approval action are directly related to the establishment of the bikeway.

The City Attorney's Office has reviewed this item. No additional approvals are required.

RECOMMENDATION

SFMTA staff recommends that the SFMTA Board of Directors approve a temporary parking-protected bikeway on Fell Street between Baker Street and Shrader Street and associated parking and traffic modifications, as set forth in Items A through C, to create more space for socially distanced walking and biking as part of the Panhandle Social Distancing and Safety Project.

SAN FRANCISCO
MUNICIPAL TRANSPORTATION AGENCY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RESOLUTION No. _____

WHEREAS, On March 16, 2020, San Francisco’s Health Officer issued a Public Health Order requiring that residents remain in place, with the only exception being for essential needs which significantly impacted San Francisco’s multimodal transportation system, and required the SFMTA to reduce transit service per the COVID-19 Muni Core Service Plan, and on May 28, 2020, the Mayor released a plan and timeline, informed by the Economic Recovery Task Force, to safely reopen San Francisco; and,

WHEREAS, The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency, in response to the COVID-19 Emergency and the City’s reopening timeline, developed a Transportation Recovery Plan (TRP) that serves as a framework for temporary improvements to the multimodal transportation system; and,

WHEREAS, The expansion of City’s bikeway network, a component of the TRP, would install protected bikeway facilities on corridors to provide more space for socially distant essential travel or exercise by bicycling; and,

WHEREAS, The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency is committed to making San Francisco a Transit First city that prioritizes non-private automobile transportation; and,

WHEREAS, The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency has installed a parking-protected bikeway and associated parking and traffic modifications on Fell Street between Baker Street and Shrader Street, the Panhandle Social Distancing and Safety Project, as follows:

- A. ESTABLISH – CLASS IV PROTECTED BIKEWAY (PARKING-PROTECTED BIKEWAY) – Fell Street, westbound, south side, from Baker Street to Shrader Street
- B. ESTABLISH – RED ZONE – Fell Street, south side, from east Lyon Street property line to 53 feet westerly; Fell Street, south side, from east Central Avenue property line to 38 feet westerly; Fell Street, south side, from Ashbury Street to 30 feet easterly; Fell Street, south side, from Clayton Street to 30 feet easterly; Fell Street, south side, from east Clayton Street curb line to 54 feet westerly ; Fell Street, south side, from Cole Street to 30 feet easterly; Fell Street, south side, from Shrader Street to 30 feet easterly
- C. ESTABLISH – TOW-AWAY, NO STOPPING ANYTIME – Fell Street, south side, from 200 feet to 220 feet east of Masonic Avenue; and,

WHEREAS, The traffic modifications will be temporary in nature and will expire 120 days after the termination or expiration of the COVID-19 Emergency unless the SFMTA Board of Directors takes further action; and,

WHEREAS, The improvements of the Panhandle Social Distancing and Safety Project shall include a thorough and transparent evaluation process to determine the effectiveness of the changes,

and its results made available on the SFMTA website and presented to the SFMTA Board of Directors in order for the SFMTA Board to make an informed decision whether the parking-protected bikeway should be made permanent; and,

WHEREAS, The changes are subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); CEQA provides a statutory exemption from environmental review for emergency projects pursuant to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations Section 15269; and,

WHEREAS, On July 17, 2020, the Planning Department determined (Case Number 2020-006678ENV) that the changes are statutorily exempt from CEQA pursuant to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations Section 15269; and,

WHEREAS, A copy of the CEQA determination is on file with the Secretary to the SFMTA Board of Directors and may be found in the records of the Planning Department at 1650 Mission Street in San Francisco, and is incorporated herein by reference; and,

WHEREAS, Final SFMTA Decisions, whether made by the City Traffic Engineer or the SFMTA Board of Directors, can be reviewed by the Board of Supervisors pursuant to Ordinance 127-18 and this project is not subject to the Board of Supervisors review because the project establishes a Class IV bicycle facility and all of the parking and traffic modifications in the proposed approval action are directly related to the establishment of the bikeway; and,

RESOLVED, That the SFMTA Board of Directors approves a temporary parking-protected bikeway on Fell Street between Baker Street and Shrader Street and associated parking and traffic modifications, as set forth in Items A through C above, to create more space for socially distanced walking and biking as part of the Panhandle Social Distancing and Safety Project; and be it further

RESOLVED, That all actions approved herein, are to be in effect temporarily during the COVID-19 emergency referenced in the Proclamation of the Mayor Declaring the Existence of a Local Emergency dated February 25, 2020 and shall expire 120 days after the termination or expiration of such proclamation; and be it further

RESOLVED, That SFMTA staff shall report to the SFMTA Board of Directors prior to the 120 days after the conclusion of the COVID-19 Emergency, including evaluation findings and recommendations regarding the approved traffic modifications.

I certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors at its meeting of August 18, 2020.

Secretary to the Board of Directors
San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency