

# Frida Kahlo Way Quick-Build Project: Public Outreach Summary

Overview of public outreach performed in 2023 and next steps for 2024.

[FridaQB@SFMTA.com](mailto:FridaQB@SFMTA.com)

January 4th, 2024



## Summary of public outreach activities in 2023:

The Frida Kahlo Way Quick-Build Project was initiated in the spring of 2023 with the purpose to improve safety for people walking and bicycling on Frida Kahlo Way and Judson Avenue west of Foerster Street. The project team conducted public outreach throughout the rest of 2023 to inform the project design and make members of the community and partner organizations aware of the project. This process is ongoing and will continue in 2024. This document outlines the outreach that the team project team performed in a general chronological order.

### Partner organization coordination:

During the spring and summer of 2023, the project team primarily sought feedback on the project from partner organizations, namely City College of San Francisco (City College) and Archbishop Riordan High School (Riordan High). These two educational institutions are the primary trip generators on Frida Kahlo Way and Judson Avenue. Preliminary engagement centered on identifying mobility needs and project coordination opportunities for these institutions.

#### **Riordan High School:**

At Riordan High, the project team worked directly with the school's Director of Safety and Logistics, Vigen Rassam. He highlighted ongoing challenges with vehicle circulation during pick-up and drop-off hours for the school, including rampant double parking in the bike lane and blockage of the 43-Masonic bus stop directly in front of the school. Additionally, he informed the team of unsafe mid-block crossing behavior by students disembarking the bus at the stop across the street from the school.

Additionally, he identified northbound U-turns at the Frida Kahlo Way / Judson Avenue intersection as a problematic movement that impedes vehicle traffic circulation and vehicle speeding on Judson Avenue as a safety issue, particularly approaching the intersection at Frida Kahlo Way. Rassam was generally supportive of the project.

In response to the issues identified at Riordan High, the project team prepared a work order in August 2023 which moved the existing southbound bus stop to the south side of North Access Road and extended the passenger loading zone in front of the school. These changes were intended to reduce conflicts between buses, drivers accessing the curb, and people using the bike lane. The project as a whole proposes to ban U-turns at the Frida Kahlo Way / Judson Avenue intersection, to install traffic calming on Judson Avenue, and to move the northbound bus stop to the south side of the North Access Road to encourage students to cross at the signalized intersection.

## City College of San Francisco

At City College, the project team worked extensively with staff from the facilities department, namely Alberto Vasquez and Joyce Oishi, to identify mobility needs within the project area and to coordinate with ongoing construction on the City College campus adjacent to Frida Kahlo Way. The project team had regular check-ins with these staff to reconcile changes to the curb and quick-build project frontage due to the construction of the Student Success Center on the east side of Frida Kahlo Way between Ocean Avenue and Cloud Circle (South) and the STEAM Building and Diego Rivera Theatre on the west side of Frida Kahlo Way between the existing Multi-Use Building and North Access Road. Coordination with City College staff was primarily technical and logistical in nature, and these staff did not express support for or opposition to the Project.

In July and September, 2023, the project team attended meetings of the City College Facilities Committee, made up of administrative staff, faculty, and students, to inform the members of the Project and seek feedback on the proposed changes. At both meetings the committee members primarily expressed opposition to the project due to the removal of on-street parking spaces and the belief that the project was not adequately supported by collision data or by existing bicycle volumes.

### Other stakeholder engagement:

The project team met with additional existing stakeholder groups during the Summer and Fall 2023 to discuss the Project. The strategy of engaging stakeholder groups rather than initiating a broader outreach campaign to the general public was selected because the project team anticipated the proposed changes to be relatively uncontroversial.

In June 2023, the project team met with Sara Barz of Slow Hearst, a neighborhood advocacy group centered around the Hearst Slow Street just north of the project area. She expressed strong support for the protected bikeway, transit improvements, and traffic calming elements. She also expressed concern over the retention of the existing southbound bikeway.

In June 2023, the project team met with Rachel Clyde of the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition. She expressed strong support for the project and weighed in on various design elements.

In July 2023, the project team met with representatives of the Ocean Avenue Mobility Plan Task Force, a group of stakeholders convened by the San Francisco County Transportation Authority to advise on transportation issues along and across the Ocean Avenue Corridor. The Task Force members were generally supportive of the project and emphasized the need for traffic calming on Judson Avenue and for transit reliability improvements on the corridor.

In August and November 2023, the project team attended meetings of the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association to speak with residents of the area north of the project limits. At

both meetings, attendees expressed a mix of support for the proposed bikeway improvements and concern about the removal of on-street vehicle parking. At the second meeting, an informal straw poll at the second meeting revealed approximately even numbers of attendees in support and in opposition to the project, with an additional cohort of attendees with mixed or no position.

In September 2023, the project team met with Nora Collins of Avalon Bay Communities, Inc., the developer responsible for the Balboa Reservoir project, which will add 1,100 units of mixed-income housing on the Lower Reservoir lot just west of Frida Kahlo Way. At this meeting, staff learned more about the timeline and phasing of this project, the parties responsible for housing, roadway, and utility elements of the project, and about coordination opportunities between the SFMTA and the developers.

The project team also corresponded via email with Senior and Disability Action (SDA) and SF Transit Riders. Representatives from these groups expressed support for the proposed changes.



**Photos from Dec. 5<sup>th</sup> Event**

Top: Pop-up along corridor

Middle: Staff presentation

Bottom: Focus group discussions

**Open House Event**

After engaging existing stakeholder groups during the summer and fall 2023, the project team found that the proposed changes were more controversial than expected, primarily due to concerns about the removal of on-street parking in front of City College on Frida Kahlo Way, which would exacerbate the planned reduction by up to 60% of surface parking near City College by other projects. In response, the team paused the process of legislating the process and added an additional round of outreach centered around an open house event that would be open to the public.

On December 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the project team hosted the open house event at City College from 3-7pm. The team advertised the event by posting flyers on the street, sending notices to stakeholder groups, posting on SFMTA’s social media, sending a mailer to nearby residents, and sending an email blast to people who had signed up for the project mailing list.

During the first two hours of the event, the team set up a table along Frida Kahlo Way near the bus terminal, a busy multi-use path, and the main parking lot. During this time, staff had informal conversations with attendees, including some people who had never heard about the project before.

Attendees with opinions on the project were encouraged to leave comment cards, summarized below.

From 5:30-7pm, the project team hosted a more formal event in the nearby Multi-Use Building. During this portion of the event, staff gave a presentation on the project and facilitated a Q&A session before attendees broke out into smaller groups to talk about the following focus areas: design, parking, background, and process. Staff representing Muni's K-Ingleside Rapid Project also gave a presentation and hosted a focus group. This event was attended by approximately thirty people. Again, attendees were encouraged to leave comment cards, summarized below.

### Summary of public feedback on the proposed changes:

The following are major themes of public feedback:

- **Need for better bike facilities on Frida Kahlo Way and Judson Avenue:** Many community members expressed support for the Project at neighborhood meetings, outreach events, and by sending emails to the Project email address. The Project team heard that the protected bikeways proposed by the Project would make people feel safer when travelling between City College, the Sunnyside and Ingleside neighborhoods, Ocean Avenue, and Balboa Park BART Station, among other destinations. Further, some respondents indicated they would make trips by bike that they currently make by other modes if the Project were implemented. Respondents expressed a desire to see more robust bikeway separation elements, such as concrete curbs.
- **Need for pedestrian safety improvements:** Some community members reported feeling unsafe while walking along or across Frida Kahlo Way and Judson Avenue. These comments highlighted the need for pedestrian crossing improvements and vehicle traffic calming.
- **Concern about parking loss at City College:** Some community members, including neighbors and City College faculty and students, expressed strong opposition to the Project due to the impacts of parking removal on City College students and faculty. Some respondents view the proposed removal of on-street parking as an existential threat to the College, exacerbating the greater reduction of parking supply due to the Balboa Reservoir development on the Lower Reservoir Lot and construction of the Diego Rivera Theatre and STEAM Building on the Upper Reservoir Lot. Some community members are worried that the loss of parking spots would lead to decreased enrollment at the College.

In particular, key themes around City College parking were related to the assertion that City College is a "commuter college" serving lower-income students, students who work non-traditional schedules, and students who generally may have little or no choice but to drive to campus. Whereas parking spots in lots around City College are paid, parking spots on Frida Kahlo Way are free, meaning that a higher share of people driving to City College would have to pay to park.

This was the key theme of opposition to the Project: every comment in opposition referenced parking removal as the key concern, and some comments that did not explicitly support or oppose the Project also referenced concern about parking removal.

- **Concern about impacts to parking in the Sunnyside neighborhood:** Residents of the neighborhood to the north of City College expressed concern that the reduction of parking at City College would displace student and faculty parking onto the neighborhood streets, limiting their ability to park in front of their houses. SFMTA staff identified this neighborhood as a candidate for Residential Permit Parking (RPP), which would institute a 2-hour parking limit except for residents who have purchased a parking permit.
- **Concern about traffic congestion and traffic signal synchronization on Frida Kahlo Way:** Some community members expressed displeasure related to existing traffic congestion on Frida Kahlo Way and concern that the Project would exacerbate these issues. In particular, congestion around the Frida Kahlo Way / Judson Avenue intersection during pick-up and drop-off for Archbishop Riordan High School can cause bottlenecks along the corridor. Another concern, which community members have expressed to SFMTA previously, is the poor synchronization of traffic signals approaching Ocean Avenue in the southbound direction. Some people are worried that the Balboa Reservoir development will only exacerbate traffic congestion. Others expressed displeasure that the proposed transit boarding islands on Frida Kahlo Way would force motorists to wait behind buses stopped in-lane.
- **Concern about transportation costs for students and neighbors:** City College Students expressed that transportation costs were generally too high. Students feel the burden of paying for parking and paying for transit. Students expressed frustration that Muni passes were not subsidized by the college or by the SFMTA. Neighbors additionally expressed frustration about transportation costs when RPP expansion was proposed by staff, citing the annual fee which they do not currently pay.
- **Concern about lack of demand for bike facilities on Frida Kahlo Way and lack of documented collision history:** Two themes among comments received in opposition to the Project were the low existing bike volumes within the Project area and the lack of documented traffic collisions involving people biking. Opponents of the Project questioned the need for protected bikeways along Frida Kahlo Way and Judson Avenue based on these facts.
- **Need for traffic calming on Judson Avenue:** Community members expressed concerns about traffic speeds on Judson Avenue, citing collisions and near misses due to unsafe speeds. Respondents expressed support for speed humps or other traffic calming to address unsafe speeds.
- **Preference for removal of existing southbound unprotected bikeway:** Since the project will create a new two-way protected bikeway on the east (northbound) side of

the street, some people have expressed a preference that the existing southbound bikeway be removed (early project plans showed maintaining this element), especially if it would entail retention of existing vehicle parking spaces.

- **Need for better bike facilities on Ocean Avenue:** Some community members communicated the need for better bike facilities on Ocean Avenue, connecting to Balboa Park BART to the east and the Ocean Avenue commercial corridor to the west. Safer east-west bike routes are seen as key bike network connections that would lead to the success of the Project. Some respondents cited the lack of a safe bicycle connection on Ocean Avenue as a reason for the lack of bike trip demand on Frida Kahlo Way.
- **Concern about the public engagement process:** An overarching theme of comments in opposition to the Project was frustration with the public outreach process. Some community members felt left out of the process because they heard about the Project from their neighbors, rather than SFMTA itself. Others felt that more outreach events should be held. Some people expressed that they felt that the project outcomes had already decided regardless of their input. College students are concerned that the Project team did not engage directly with the student body. However, other comments expressed support for the outreach done to date.
- **Need for holistic project evaluation:** Related to concerns about the lack of existing bike volumes within the project area, some community members requested that project team identify metrics by which to evaluate the “success” of the project. They requested metrics to inform project next steps, including potential removal of the two-way bikeway, based on post-implementation bike volumes.

### Summary of share of comments in opposition to and support of project:

At the December 5<sup>th</sup> open house event, twenty-four people left comment cards for consideration. The following is a summary of these comments:

- Fourteen comments in support of the project. The majority of these comments cited the need for bicycle, pedestrian, and or vehicle safety improvements.
- Seven comments in opposition to the project. All of these comments cited concerns about vehicle parking removal.
- Three comments with mixed or no position.

Staff received emails to the project email, [FridaQB@SFMTA.com](mailto:FridaQB@SFMTA.com), from 43 different individuals. The following is a summary of these emails:

- Twenty-eight people expressed support for the project.
- Six people expressed opposition to the project.
- Nine people expressed no or mixed position on the project. These comments included suggestions for specific design elements, requests for data, and anecdotes of near-miss collisions and specific safety issues.

## Next Steps:

In early 2024, the project team will continue public outreach while refining the proposed design to respond to feedback received in 2023. In particular, the team will engage directly with the City College student body to better understand concerns expressed by student body leadership at the December 5<sup>th</sup> open house.

Design work will be focused on finding creative solutions for preserving as much on-street parking as possible while prioritizing safety for people walking and biking. The team will additionally continue coordination with City College around construction phasing to determine near-term design impacts on the Project.

Following design changes and additional public engagement, the project team intends to advance the project through the legislative process. A revised project proposal will be made available for review online and the team will provide an email update to the project contact list. A virtual engineering public hearing will provide another opportunity for the general public to express their opinions on the Project. The Project will then be subject to approval by the SFMTA Board of Directors, who will take final public comment before considering project approval and other next steps.