



Van Ness BRT Community Advisory Committee

Thursday, March 23, 2017

6:00-7:30 p.m.

One South Van Ness, 7th floor, Union Square Conference Room

MEETING MINUTES

1. Meeting was called to order at 6:08 p.m.
2. Public comment (see policy on reverse): Members of the public may address the Van Ness BRT Community Advisory Committee on matters that are within their jurisdiction and are not on today's calendar.
 - a. No public comment was heard.
3. Minutes from the February 23, 2017, meeting were approved by a voice vote.
4. Welcome and introductions.
 - a. Van Ness Improvement Project staff.
 - i. San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency.
 1. Peter Gabancho, Project Manager.
 2. Kate McCarthy, Public Information Officer.
 3. Sean Cronin, Public Relations Assistant.
 - b. Incumbent Van Ness BRT CAC members.
 - i. Returning committee members introduced themselves and discussed reasons for joining the Community Advisory Committee.
 - c. New Van Ness BRT CAC members.
 - i. New committee members introduced themselves and discussed motivations for applying.
 - d. Joanna Gubman announced that there may be times when she must recuse herself during discussions or debate due to her work at California Public Utilities Commission. Some topics where Joanna would recuse herself include issues involving PG&E, CleanPowerSF, and transportation network companies.
5. Van Ness Improvement Project overview.
 - a. The Van Ness Improvement Project includes the city's first bus rapid transit system, as well as comprehensive utility and civic improvements.
 - i. Some of the utility work includes replacing water and sewer lines from the 1800s, a portion of the emergency firefighting water system, the Overhead Contact System that powers the buses, and streetlights.
 - ii. Some of the civic improvements include installing new sidewalk lighting and safety improvements like curb extensions and pedestrian countdown signals.
 - iii. Joanna Gubman asked whether infrastructure for electric vehicles such as charging stations was ever considered to be part of the utility work for the project.
 1. This infrastructure was not considered during the environmental phase of the project.
 - iv. Bob Lockhart asked whether the existing water and sewer infrastructure was being removed. He also asked how the contractor would be maintaining access to garages that open onto Van Ness during the trenching phase of construction.
 1. Much of the existing infrastructure will be abandoned in place. Sewer lines will be filled with a mixture of sand and concrete to ensure stability.
 2. The contractor will plate over trenches to maintain access. They will work with neighbors and businesses on specific blocks as construction approaches.

- b. Van Ness Avenue is Highway 101 and one of the city's major north-south routes.
 - i. 16,000 people board Muni each day on Van Ness between Lombard and Mission streets.
 - ii. Buses average speeds of about 8 miles per hour, while other traffic averages about 9 miles per hour.
 - iii. One of the 12 percent of city streets where 70 percent of collisions resulting in serious injury or fatality occur.
- c. Staff is currently tracking 24 private developments on Van Ness between Lombard and Mission streets.
- d. Goals of the project include:
 - i. Improving travel times by 32 percent.
 - ii. Improving reliability by up to 50 percent.
 - iii. Increasing boarding by up to 35 percent.
 - iv. Saving daily operating costs on the route by up to 30 percent.
 - 1. By improving efficiency and reliability, buses are able to complete their routes faster and can increase the number of trips without increasing the number of vehicles or drivers.
- e. BRT features include a mountable physical separator for transit-only lanes, transit signal priority, low-floor vehicles, safety enhancements and furnished boarding platforms.
 - i. Safety enhancements include curb extensions, pedestrian countdown signals, median refuges and high-visibility crosswalks.
 - ii. Boarding platforms include shelters with seating and NextMuni predictions.
 - iii. Adam Mayer asked whether bus service beyond Van Ness Avenue would remain the same once construction was complete. He also asked whether the new vehicles procured through the project would be unique to the BRT zone.
 - 1. For the most part, the Muni service would remain the same. There may be changes to the northern route for the 47 route, just as there were recently changes to Mission Street that impacted the 49 route, but those plans have not yet been made final and would not affect service within the BRT corridor.
 - 2. Because the Muni bus fleet must be dynamic, the low-floor vehicles purchased for the project are compatible with Muni routes throughout the city.
- f. The project follows a new delivery method for the SFMTA called Construction Manager/General Contractor. This gets the contractor involved early to reduce change orders and interact with the community. The owner and the contractor also agree to a "guaranteed maximum price" for the project that shifts schedule and budget risks from the owner to the contractor.
- g. Outreach in the last year has included campaigns such as forming a Business Advisory Committee; launching a quarterly newsletter; deploying multilingual ambassadors with translated printed materials for bus stop consolidation; [releasing a three-part video series](#); hosting community office hours; and hosting an open house with the Polk Streetscape Project team.
- h. Ongoing regular outreach includes weekly construction forecasts distributed to digital subscribers and posted on the project website; a monthly speaker series; and a business engagement program.
- i. Bus stop consolidation, which happened June 4, 2016, was one of the earliest impactful events of the project and included an extensive outreach campaign.
 - i. Nine bus stops on Van Ness were eliminated (five inbound and four outbound).
 - ii. Outreach included updates on the project website; posts on social media and SFMTA blog; press releases; service alerts; notifications through email and text message; public meetings; direct outreach; and multilingual signs and ambassadors on the street.
- j. Construction is expected to last approximately 36 months. The first two years of construction will include preparing the roadway and utility replacements. Next, traffic will be moved toward the curb so construction can occur in the median to build the bus rapid transit system. The last six months of construction will include landscaping and pedestrian safety improvements.

- i. Staff showed [an animation on YouTube](#) that explained how construction is expected to progress over the next three years.
 - 1. Bob Bardell asked for clarification on the number of blocks that construction will impact at a time. He remembered at an earlier meeting that the contractor would only take up three to four blocks at a time for utility replacement.
 - a. The utility work will be done in specific sequences that follow one another.
 - i. Sewer will be done first, followed by water and paving. Once sewer work is complete on a given section, it will move south. At that point, water work will begin on that section. When that is complete, it will also move south. Paving will follow and cover sections as they are complete.
 - ii. While a given piece of the sequence may take up three to four blocks at a time, the active construction zone could grow to as long as 15 blocks.
 - 2. Bob Bardell also asked whether drivers will be rerouted around the protected median trees. He suggested outreach be done that targets a driving audience for these traffic changes.
 - k. Joanna Gubman asked whether bike infrastructure was included in the project. Although Van Ness is not an ideal street for cyclists, she said people would still use it on their routes. She felt it was especially used for short, local bicycle trips while Polk Street was better for longer, regional bicycle trips.
 - i. No bike lanes will be installed on Van Ness, but are included in the Polk Streetscape Project. Traffic calming measures on Van Ness such as landscaping are likely to have safety benefits for people biking, but no improvements specific to bicycling are planned.
6. Van Ness BRT Community Advisory Committee overview.
 - a. Committee purpose.
 - i. The Van Ness BRT CAC provides community members direct access to project staff throughout construction. Members act as the voice of the corridor and as a liaison to the community.
 - 1. Joanna Gubman asked clarification on the difference between a CAC member and a member of the public who attends a CAC meeting.
 - a. Members have the ability to offer guidance and advice throughout construction including committee directives. One example of this is how CAC and BAC members in November passed a motion directing project staff to track resources related to any alternative design for streetlights on Van Ness Avenue.
 - b. Roles and responsibilities of membership.
 - i. CAC members should attend each meeting and engage in constructive, respectful discussions. Agreement is not a requirement, but members should respect one another and feel comfortable expressing differing perspectives.
 - ii. CAC members are not expected to be experts on the project and can direct members of the public directly to project staff.
 - c. Committee logistics.
 - i. Members should add sfmta@public.govdelivery.com to their email address book.
 - ii. Meeting agendas are posted on the project website and emailed to members one week before each meeting.
 - 1. A reminder email will be sent out the Tuesday before each meeting.
 - iii. Meeting minutes are posted on the project website and emailed to members one week after each meeting.
7. SFMTA staff updates.
 - a. Project schedule.
 - i. Construction crews continue preparing Van Ness for impactful construction through April. Curbside utility work is expected to begin in May.

- b. Construction update.
 - i. Construction currently includes the removal of the median and Overhead Contact System that powers the electric buses on Van Ness.
 - 1. Removal of the median includes saw-cutting and off-hauling concrete curbs and contaminated soil.
- c. Lighting on Van Ness Avenue.
 - i. Staff is currently finalizing approvals of an alternate pole design per a resolution passed by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in September 2016.
 - 1. An alternative design would include design elements from existing poles such as teardrop lighting fixtures, decorative bases, finials and curved mast arms.
 - a. Since February, the design team has had to make some adjustments to the alternative design.
 - i. The pendant lighting fixture would not fit with the square mast arm initially selected for this alternative design. A different arm has been selected that can accommodate the pendant fixture. The newer arm is slightly shorter and does not allow for a finial element above the pendant fixture.
 - b. Adam Mayer asked why the previous mast arm would not fit with the pendant fixture.
 - i. The connections for the pendant fixture and previous mast arm were not compatible. The mast arm was square in shape, but the connection in the pendant fixture was round. A different pole that better fit the connection was required for safety reasons.
 - c. Bob Bardell asked whether the shorter mast arm would impact the lighting itself on Van Ness.
 - i. The pendant would still have LED lighting that could be angled and would meet illumination standards for the roadway.
 - d. Alex Wilson asked for an estimated cost of the new alternative design.
 - i. The additional estimated cost is nearly \$4 million.
- d. Double parking update.
 - i. Staff has been working with the enforcement department to address double parking on Van Ness. More information would help allocate appropriate resources to problem areas.
 - 1. If there are hot spots or areas along Van Ness where regular double parking is occurring, please report to staff the block(s), side of street, time(s) of day and day(s) of week.
 - a. Joanna Gubman reported Corridor Café as a hot spot for double parking. This is on northbound Van Ness between Hayes and Fell streets.
 - ii. The Business Advisory Committee is working with staff to develop a campaign targeted at people who hail rides on Van Ness. Materials under consideration include posters for businesses, table tents for casual bars and restaurants, and palm cards for hotels.
 - 1. Joanna Gubman asked whether any infrastructure for transportation network companies like Lyft and Uber were included in the project such as TNC-specific loading zones.
 - a. This is not currently planned for Van Ness Avenue.
- e. Update on neighboring projects.
 - i. Polk Streetscape Project.
 - 1. Emergency repair work has been completed on Polk Street between Post and Hemlock and between Broadway and Pacific streets.
 - 2. Project continues on its original schedule including streetlight retrofitting and foundation work.

8. Outreach update.
 - a. Recent public engagement activities.
 - i. Groundbreaking Ceremony.
 1. Staff hosted a groundbreaking ceremony Wednesday, March 1, at San Francisco War Memorial Court. Between 150 and 200 people were in attendance to celebrate the start of construction.
 - ii. Historic Preservation Commission hearing on public art.
 1. The San Francisco Arts Commission presented an informational item on the conceptual drawings for the public art installation proposed for McAllister Street boarding platforms.
 - a. Because the boarding platforms are located within the Civic Center Historic Landmark District, the San Francisco Arts Commission must obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness for the installation from the Historic Preservation Commission.
 - b. Commissioners did not issue a decision at the hearing, but did ask for more information related to the artist's vision.
 - c. Commissioners also suggested boarding platforms on Van Ness at Market may be a more ideal location for the installation that would not require Commission approval.
 - b. Outreach Calendar.
 - i. Office hours.
 1. Anyone with questions for project staff is welcome to come to community drop-in office hours at the Van Ness Improvement Project Construction Field Office, 180 Redwood Street, Suite 300.
 - a. Tuesdays, 2:00-4:00 p.m.
 - b. Fridays, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
 - c. Excluding holidays.
 - ii. Cathedral Hill Neighbors Association. A meeting with the Cathedral Hill Neighbors Association scheduled for the evening of March 30 was canceled by the organization.
 - iii. Union Street Association. Staff will meet with Union Street Association, Supervisor Farrell's office, and staff from Invest in Neighborhoods to discuss longterm solutions to promote shopping along the corridor in light of the removal of most left turns from Van Ness.
 - iv. Meet the Expert event. April speaker series will be held April 5, 6:00-7:30 p.m., at Ho's Bootleg Tavern (Van Ness at Green).
9. Member comment. Members of the Community Advisory Committee may address the Van Ness BRT project staff on matters not on today's calendar.
 - a. Bob Bardell asked project staff to continue looking at traffic data, particularly related to diversions from Lombard Street.
 - b. Joanna Gubman said staff has focused heavily on issues related to parking. She felt that the concerns she had heard from drivers were related to traffic and circulation, not parking availability.
 - c. Alex Wilson said Polk Street has become very congested. His commute on the 19 Polk has tripled, taking about an hour and 15 minutes to go from Broadway to Market. He said the amount of time between buses has also lengthened to a bus every 15 minutes. Alex was also interested in information about the impact of construction on travel times for the various road users who use different modes of transportation.
10. Next meeting — Thursday, April 27, 6:00-7:30 p.m.
 - a. May 25, 6:00-7:30 p.m.
 - b. June 22, 6:00-7:30 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Every agenda shall provide an opportunity for members of the public to address the Committee on items of interest to the public that are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Committee.

Public comment will be taken for each agenda item after discussion of the item by the Van Ness BRT CAC.

Privilege of Floor and Public Participation. The privilege of the floor shall be granted to any member of the public or officers of the City and County of San Francisco, or their duly authorized representatives for the purpose of commenting on any question before the Committee. Each person wishing to speak on an item at a regular or special meeting shall be permitted to be heard once per item for up to three minutes. The presiding officer shall be the judge of the pertinence of such comments, and have the power to limit this privilege if in the presiding officer's opinion the comments are not pertinent to the question before the Committee or the comments are merely reiterative of points made by previous speakers.

Presentations. After a presentation, the Van Ness BRT CAC Chair will ask committee members if they have any questions and then will open the meeting to public comment. When members of the public ask a question of the presenter, presenters should not respond, nor engage in any conversation. First, the commenter should finish their commentary. After which, if the Van Ness BRT CAC Chair or any committee member wants the presenter to respond to that question, the presenter will then respond to the Committee and not to the public.

MEMBER COMMENT

Every agenda shall provide an opportunity for members of the Committee to address project staff on items of interest to the public that are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Committee.

Privilege of Floor and Public Participation. The privilege of the floor shall be granted to any member of the Committee. Each person wishing to speak shall be permitted to be heard for up to three minutes. The presiding officer shall be the judge of the pertinence of such comments, and have the power to limit this privilege if in the presiding officer's opinion the comments are not pertinent to the question before the Committee or the comments are merely reiterative of points made by previous speakers.