

Q: What is the purpose of this project?

The goal of the pilot project is to slow speeds on Northbound San Jose Avenue between the I-280 off-ramp and Randall Street. Since the off-ramp was configured to two lanes after the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake to feed detoured Central Freeway traffic onto San Jose Avenue, this city street has been dominated by freeway-like traffic. As a first step towards a more livable corridor as envisioned in the Glen Park Community Plan, the pilot project adjusted the striping of the road – removing a travel lane on San Jose Avenue, merging the two off-ramp lanes into one, and adding a buffer to the existing bicycle lane – to encourage slower speeds that could increase safety for all road users.

Q: Why not just lower the speed limit?

California state law requires that the speed limit on a given street is set based on a survey of actual speeds. Normally, the limit is set at the “85th percentile speed,” which means that 85 percent of those surveyed were travelling at that speed or slower. The logic behind this rule is that the majority of drivers behave rationally, so limits should be set that conform to observed behavior. However, we also know that high speeds on city streets are deadly; in practice, this means that we must re-engineer our streets so that drivers go slower. The pilot project on Northbound San Jose Avenue is designed to make a lower, safer speed the rational choice.

Q: Why did a bike lane go in the place of a driving lane?

The scope of the pilot project is constrained to using lower-cost, quickly-implementable materials in the existing right-of-way. Our toolbox included adding paint and signage to the road, but not changing sidewalks, curbs, MUNI tracks, etc. One proven, paintable strategy for reducing speeds on a roadway is a “road diet,” or narrowing available travel lane space in order to calm traffic. Extra space gained from removing travel space is then repurposed for other uses such as turning lanes, buffers, and cycling lanes. On this stretch of Northbound San Jose Avenue, the best use for the ‘extra’ space was to create a buffer for the existing bike lane to provide a more comfortable facility.

Q: When does the pilot project end?

We anticipate concluding the pilot in early 2016, in coordination with the scheduled repaving of San Jose Avenue. SFMTA will make a final recommendation for a permanent configuration in late 2015.

Q: Who decides what the final configuration of San Jose Avenue and the I-280 off-ramp will be?

SFMTA will evaluate the data collected from the pilot project, which includes traffic volumes and speeds, travel time surveys, and community feedback. Based on this data, the final recommended configuration for Northbound San Jose Avenue will be determined by SFMTA, and Caltrans will determine the striping for the I-280 off-ramp based on similar and coordinated data collection efforts.

Q: How did you decide to create the merge on the I-280 off-ramp?

Much of the fast-moving traffic on San Jose Avenue was fed by two lanes of exiting traffic from I-280 looking to use the street as a freeway extension to points north and east. The merge (which happens on a State right-of-way) was designed by Caltrans engineers to help slow off-ramp traffic before it touches down on San Jose Avenue. SFMTA and Caltrans worked together to design the configuration while taking into account all applicable standards and guidelines.

Q: Is there a safety problem on San Jose Avenue? What is the collision history?

San Jose Avenue north of St. Marys Avenue was identified as a High Injury Corridor for vehicles under the City's Vision Zero goal to eliminate traffic fatalities in San Francisco by 2024. Between 2010 and 2014, 14 collisions were reported on Northbound San Jose Avenue between the I-280 off-ramp and Randall, injuring 22 people. In over half those incidents, unsafe speed was the primary factor. The road diet pilot project aims to enhance safety and work towards a more livable corridor by slowing vehicle speeds.

Q: What is being done about the traffic slowdown?

On a major street like San Jose Avenue, drivers may need time to adjust to a new configuration. We are taking travel time studies to quantify any significant delay during rush hour. These results will help influence our final recommendation at the end of the pilot project.

Q: Was there an environmental process for the road diet?

The pilot project is designed to help SFMTA collect data in advance of a final recommendation for striping before the schedule repaving of San Jose Avenue in 2016. Using findings from the pilot, the final recommendation will undergo environmental clearance to determine any significant impacts under CEQA.



Q: What data are you collecting on whether the road diet is working?

SFMTA is gathering a variety of different data to help evaluate the road diet. This includes:

- Traffic speeds and volumes at several points along the pilot corridor and on the side streets, taken at various phases of the pilot project as well as during higher and lower traffic seasons
- Travel time surveys conducted at peak periods during high and low traffic seasons
- Historic collision data prior to implementation of the pilot project
- Any applicable collision data collected during the pilot period, requested from the California Highway Patrol and the San Francisco Police Department
- Substantial community feedback through engagements with several communities near the project area throughout the pilot project planning and implementation phases

Q: What is the city doing to enforce traffic rules in this area?

SFPD will continue to enforce traffic laws on San Jose Avenue. Enforcement on the I-280 off-ramp falls under the jurisdiction of the California Highway Patrol, which is working with Caltrans to enforce traffic laws on state facilities in San Francisco.