



Van Ness BRT Community Advisory Committee

Thursday, January 22, 2015

6:00-7:30pm

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

Minutes

1. Approval of November minutes with a voice vote
2. SFMTA staff updates
 - a. Request for Proposals (RFP) for Construction Manager/General Contractor (CM/GC) to be released 1/23.

This is a new project delivery method for the SFMTA that Public Works has been using for some facilities construction projects.

Typically the agency finishes the design on a project and advertises an RFP. The contract is then awarded to the lowest, responsive, responsible bidder.

With the CM/GC delivery method, the Construction Manager is selected based on qualification, past experience, best-value, and other criteria included outlined by the City in the RFP. The awarded Contractor then begins working on the project during the design phase. The Contractor can offer feedback on design options with consideration for costs, scheduling and design challenges, and can identify risks, before the design is finalized.

Once the City considers the design completed the Contractor and the City then negotiate a guaranteed maximum price for the project. This incentivizes the contractor to keep costs low.

This project is the first time the SFMTA is using the CM/GC is using this new delivery method.

- b. Early implementation of project features for Vision Zero and project adjustments in advance of construction.

Legislation was approved for these changes November 18, 2014.

SFMTA is looking at whether or not to implement some project features in advance of construction with consideration for Vision Zero policy goals (to eliminate traffic-related fatalities by 2024), if they won't have a negative impact on congestion, and/or if early implementation will help with mitigating project challenges during construction.

- i. “Daylighting” intersections by removing parking at corners—increases visibility for both pedestrians and drivers so that they can see each other at intersections.

Pedestrian bulb-outs are included at the project plan, but wouldn’t be part of the early implementation of daylighting because bulb-outs require curb construction. Not every intersection is being considered for early implementation as there is consideration for the impacts the changes would have on parking and congestion during construction.

- ii. “Lead Pedestrian Interval” (LPI) to give pedestrians the crossing signal in advance of traffic—implemented on streets like Market Street, after the cross traffic light turns red, the pedestrian crossing signal illuminates in advance of the traffic signal turning green. Pedestrians therefore enter the crosswalk in advance of cars making turns and are more visible. This treatment would need to be implemented in tandem with left turn prohibitions because the traffic signal time now given for left turns would be instead given to pedestrians.
- iii. Left turn prohibitions (except Lombard and Broadway)—one of the Van Ness BRT project features is limiting left turns from Van Ness Avenue onto cross streets at all intersections except northbound at Lombard and southbound at Broadway. Left turns are responsible for 28% of pedestrian collisions in San Francisco. However, left turns may need to be maintained for construction detours. Since left turns require re-striping and road reconfiguration, it may not make sense to make the changes early. Left turn prohibitions before implementing the other project benefits could also cause congestion.

The CAC discussed the traffic impacts to neighboring streets once the limits to left turns are introduced. Staff discussed models that show that traffic is dispersed across the city as drivers adjust to new routes. CAC expressed interest to have traffic models presented at future CAC meeting. CAC member expressed need for traffic congestion on Laguna Street to be addressed.

- iv. Bus stop consolidation from 15 current stops to 9 BRT station locations—during construction displaced bus stops will have to be relocated. If bus stops are consolidated before construction, fewer displaced stops will require relocation and customers will be able to adjust to the Van Ness BRT bus stop locations in advance of construction.

c. Project Outreach

- i. Utility Location Excavation (Potholing) outreach: Potholing is a term that describes excavating a hole or trench to positively identify locations of utility conflicts. Potholing will occur at 30 locations.

1. Utility owners are required to move conflicting utilities before City construction projects begin at their own expense
 2. Utilities include gas, electric, water, high powered water, cable, telephone, etc.
 3. Potholing outreach scheduled January 26-February 20 including canvassing to impacted neighbors, particularly with regard to noise impacts
 4. Excavation work scheduled February 2-20
 5. Community member expressed satisfaction that project work could create jobs, and encouraged the use of local labor
 6. Community member related that trench cover place on 3rd Street during utility work had eroded during a storm causing damage to car. Could be concern for potholing work on Van Ness Avenue.
- ii. Utility box replacement and installation: Utility box is one term for several types of boxes for different systems including the transit priority signals, battery back-ups, and communications network enclosures. Utility boxes will be replaced at all project intersections and staff is working to consolidate utilities into as few boxes as possible at each location. Utility boxes have to be placed with a sightline to the intersection for safety reasons. Depending on the utility, the size of the box varies.
1. Community outreach scheduled January 30; New legislation was passed in June that pertains to community outreach in advance of installation of DPW utility boxes, and SFMTA is in the process of adapting their community outreach process with consideration for this new legislation. Staff will post notices for 20 days 100' from the location of the installation location. If a location is challenged by a community member, a walk will be coordinated with the community member and project engineer to look at alternate placement. If an agreement cannot be made on the location of the utility box, the issue will be brought to a hearing to be resolved.
 2. Hearing (if needed) by February 27
- iii. Other community outreach—staff has been reaching out to community groups to do presentations. Since last CAC, staff presented to the Yerba Buena Alliance. CAC encouraged to make suggestions of groups. CAC member encouraged outreach to Aquatic Park Senior Center.
- d. Arts Commission (SFAC) informal review update: Arts Commission gives approval of the full project, not project elements. Expressed project concern boarding island railing aesthetics and tree selection.
- i. Boarding island railing—Caltrans would not approve the original laser cut railing that SFAC preferred initially, project staff will recommend “screen” treatment for railings at Arts Commission Formal Review. CAC viewed renderings of different rail treatments proposed to Caltrans and SFAC.

- ii. Tree selection—Urban Forestry Council recommended Lemon-scented Gum tree species for median, SFAC prefers Ginkgo.
 - iii. Public can attend SFAC formal review February 9, 2-5 p.m. at 25 Van Ness Avenue on the ground floor.
- 3. Tree Selection Update
 - a. Open House Thursday, January 29, 4-7 p.m., SFMTA, 1 S. Van Ness Ave. Union Square Conference Room, 7th Fl.
 - b. Staff presented exhibits for Open House and discussed selection process. Horticultural scientists assembled an initial list of 21 species. A group including arborists and landscape architects added a few species to the list and evaluated each of the trees based on a set of criteria including scale, form, urban survivability, wind and fog tolerance, OCS (overhead wires) guidelines and maintenance. Scores were combined and urban survivability was double-weighted.

The group then looked at the top 10 species and eliminated palms. The remaining six species were divided into two tiers: Secondary and Primary, based on their characteristics. Finally, the Urban Forestry Council narrowed the candidates to two species, the Lemon-scented gum and the Ginkgo.

The Ginkgo is a strong, beautiful tree that takes 25-years to mature in size. Its leaves turn a bright yellow in Fall, and it is deciduous, so the leaves fall leaving the branches bare in winter.

The Lemon-scented gum is a large tree that grows quickly, has a statuesque trunk, and would create an airy ribbon-like canopy over Van Ness Avenue. It has to be pruned into shape. Availability can be limited but since the selected species will be “contract grown” and won’t be planted until construction is done in several years, it shouldn’t be an issue.

Tree selection is Public Works decision. Comments about tree selection can be made at Open House January 29.

- c. Open House flyers distributed to CAC.
- 4. Discussion about CAC monthly calls to action—Chair asked members if they’d like to have a monthly call to action for members such as distributing project flyers in advance of the November 18 legislation hearing or Tree Selection Open House, or writing letters to the SFAC. With a hand raise vote, members agreed to put a monthly call to action on the agenda. This month’s call to action is distributing the Tree Selection Open House or promoting the event on social media.
- 5. Next meeting - February 26, 2015