

**THIS PRINT COVERS CALENDAR ITEM NO: 11**

**SAN FRANCISCO  
MUNICIPAL TRANSPORTATION AGENCY**

**DIVISION:** Streets

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION:**

Amending the Transportation Code, Division II, Section 702 to reduce the speed limit from 25 miles per hour to 20 miles per hour on portions of seventeen streets in the Tenderloin district.

**SUMMARY:**

- State law provides that the City may reduce the speed limit on certain streets if the City Traffic Engineer conducts engineering and traffic surveys to support reducing the speed limit subject to approval by the SFMTA Board of Directors.
- An amendment to the Transportation Code is being proposed to codify the proposed speed limit reduction on portions of seventeen streets in the Tenderloin district.
- The SFMTA has determined that the proposed speed limit modifications are categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
- The proposed action is the Approval Action as defined by S.F. Administrative Code Chapter 31.

**ENCLOSURES:**

1. SFMTAB Resolution
2. Transportation Code amendment

**APPROVALS:**

DIRECTOR   
SECRETARY Caroline Celaya

**DATE**

March 8, 2021

March 8, 2021

**ASSIGNED SFMTAB CALENDAR DATE:** March 16, 2021

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**PURPOSE**

Amending the Transportation Code, Division II, Section 702 to reduce the speed limit from 25 miles per hour to 20 miles per hour on portions of seventeen streets in the Tenderloin district.

**STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS AND TRANSIT FIRST POLICY PRINCIPLES:**

The proposed amendment to the Transportation Code to reduce the speed limit at specific locations supports the City's Vision Zero Policy in addition to the SFMTA Strategic Plan Goal and Objective below:

- Goal 1: Create a safer transportation experience for everyone
  - Objective 1.3: Improve the safety of the transportation system

The proposed amendment to the Transportation Code also supports the SFMTA Transit-First Policy principle indicated below:

Principle 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.

**DESCRIPTION**

A look at the City's Vision Zero High Injury network shows that the streets in the Tenderloin neighborhood of San Francisco have one of the City's highest concentration of vehicle collisions, despite ongoing efforts to counteract these collisions. Every street in the neighborhood is on the High Injury Network and there have been over 1,000 collisions that have resulted in injury since 2015. The majority of victims in crashes that resulted in a severe injury or fatality have been pedestrians or bicyclists. As a dense neighborhood, the Tenderloin bustles with pedestrian activity with a closely spaced, grid network of streets carrying vehicular traffic through and within the neighborhood. Residents, however, are less likely to drive a car than other San Francisco neighborhoods, and the Tenderloin has a disproportionately large share of older adults, children, people with disabilities, and those in which English is a second language. Because of these and other factors, the entire neighborhood has been designated a Community of Concern by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission.

As the severity of a traffic collision is directly related to the kinetic energy transmitted during the collision, the speed at the time of the collision can be a direct factor about the survivability of the collision. The exponential relationship between kinetic energy and speed also exists between collision severity and speed. A person struck at 20 mph is twice as likely to survive the collision as someone struck at 25 mph. As speed increases, a driver's field of vision also decreases, which inhibits being able to react to unexpected peripheral activity.

California Vehicle Code § 22358.4(a) provides that the City may reduce the speed limit on certain streets in residential or business districts if the City Traffic Engineer conducts engineering and traffic surveys concluding that 25 mph is more than safe or reasonable to support reducing the speed limit subject to approval by the SFMTA Board of Directors. These engineering and traffic surveys require the collection of vehicle speeds and a review of any conditions not readily apparent to motorists. Per California state guidance on speed limit setting, “non-apparent conditions” include those high-volume traffic generators (e.g., vehicular, bicycle or pedestrian) not visible and access points that are not visible to the motorist. As described further below, these findings support the establishment of 20 mph as a reasonable and safe speed limit on the proposed streets.

The customary method of setting speed limits involves the collection of actual driver speeds. These speeds are tabulated and analyzed by distribution with a general principle that most drivers behave reasonably and act responsibly. The upper limit of the safe and reasonable behavior is at the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile of the distribution. In other words, the presumption is that 85 percent of the drivers are driving safely and no more than 15 percent should be cited for speeding. At first glance; therefore, an appropriate speed limit is normally considered to be the nearest 5 mph increment closest to the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed. However, the principles involved in setting speed limits also recognize that there may be a special condition that should be considered that may not be readily apparent to the general populace. If such a special condition exists, such as a high collision rate, the speed limit can be reduced, within prescribed limits.

The following table shows the list of streets, along with their 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speeds, where a 20-mph speed limit is being recommended. As can be seen, rounding the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed would result in a 25-mph speed limit for most of these streets and a 20-mph speed limit for some. However, with the special conditions of these streets being on the City’s High Injury Network, staff believes that the 5 mph special conditions reduction is warranted for those streets that would normally be recommended for a 25-mph speed limit. For some of the streets, with an 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed closer to 20 mph, it could be argued that a 15-mph speed limit should be established. However, the data shows that this would put about 80% of drivers into non-compliance and would also detract from a clear, standard understanding about the speed limit in the neighborhood.

| <b>Street</b>      | <b>Cross Street</b> | <b>Cross Street</b> | <b>Percentile Speed</b> |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Grove Street       | Van Ness Avenue     | Market Street       | 20                      |
| McAllister Street  | Van Ness Avenue     | Market Street       | 23.5                    |
| Golden Gate Avenue | Van Ness Avenue     | Market Street       | 24                      |
| Turk Street        | Van Ness Avenue     | Market Street       | 24.6                    |
| Eddy Street        | Van Ness Avenue     | Mason Street        | 23                      |
| Ellis Street       | Van Ness Avenue     | Mason Street        | 23.9                    |
| O’Farrell Street   | Van Ness Avenue     | Mason Street        | 25                      |
| Geary Street       | Van Ness Avenue     | Mason Street        | 25.3                    |
| Post Street        | Van Ness Avenue     | Mason Street        | 26.3                    |

| Street             | Cross Street    | Cross Street  | Percentile Speed |
|--------------------|-----------------|---------------|------------------|
| Sutter Street      | Van Ness Avenue | Mason Street  | 22.7             |
| Polk Street        | Sutter Street   | Grove Street  | 20.6             |
| Larkin Street      | Sutter Street   | Grove Street  | 24.3             |
| Hyde Street        | Sutter Street   | Market Street | 23.7             |
| Leavenworth Street | Sutter Street   | Market Street | 24.3             |
| Jones Street       | Sutter Street   | Market Street | 24.1             |
| Taylor Street      | Sutter Street   | Market Street | 24.6             |
| Mason Street       | Sutter Street   | Market Street | 20.3             |
|                    |                 | Average:      | 23.54            |

Accordingly, the following streets are being recommended to have their official speed limit lowered from 25 to 20 mph:

- A. REDUCE - FROM 25 MPH TO 20 MPH SPEED LIMIT – Grove Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Market Street; McAllister Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Market Street; Golden Gate Avenue, between Van Ness Avenue and Market Street; Turk Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Market Street; Eddy Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street; Ellis Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street; O’Farrell Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street; Geary Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street; Post Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street; Sutter Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street; Polk Street, between Sutter Street and Grove Street; Larkin Street, between Sutter Street and Grove Street; Hyde Street, between Sutter Street and Market Street; Leavenworth Street, between Sutter Street and Market Street; Jones Street, between Sutter Street and Market Street; Taylor Street, between Sutter Street and Market Street; Mason Street, between Sutter Street and Market Street

**STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

SFMTA staff performed extensive outreach in the Tenderloin to inform the community about the proposed changes, as well as to receive feedback on staff’s outreach plan. Staff attended the Tenderloin Traffic Safety Task Force meeting in November 2020 to present the speed limit setting process and identify the proposed corridors. Staff attended a follow up meeting with the Task Force co-chairs on in January 2021 to provide follow up information. Staff continued to keep the community informed by attending the February 2021 Task Force meeting. Task Force members have supported the effort to increase traffic safety in the neighborhood.

In addition to attending meetings, staff created multi-lingual resources, that were physically posted across the entire neighborhood. These resources included a Public Hearing poster and informational handouts that were translated to English, Arabic, Chinese, Filipino, Russian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. In addition to physical postings, these resources were shared digitally with nearly 50 community organizations, over 1,000 residents via the SFMTA’s Quick Build

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program's outreach list, as well as posted to the SFMTA website. Additional digital outreach included a blog post for the SFMTA website and posts on the Agency's social media channels.

SFMTA will not be posting new speed limit signs until at least 30 days after approval by the SFMTA Board given that the Transportation Code legislation will not go into effect until that date. This means signs will not be erected until mid-April at the earliest. Staff plans to continue outreach during this time and into the implementation phase via the use of variable and changeable message signs in and around the Tenderloin. The signs will alert drivers of the impending speed limit change.

This proposal has already generated a considerable amount of general publicity. The San Francisco Examiner posted an article entitled "SFMTA wants Tenderloin speed limits lowered to 20mph" on December 16, 2020. On December 17<sup>th</sup>, The San Francisco Chronicle posted "The city may impose 20 mph limit across entire SF neighborhood" and SFist posted "SFMTA Mulling a 20-MPH Speed Limit for the Entire Tenderloin Neighborhood."

An on-line public hearing was conducted to consider the proposed changes on February 19, 2021. An official document indicating the public hearing date, time, location, and purpose was posted in the areas affected by the change 10 days in advance of the hearing date. We also notified all the affected District Supervisors and their aides via our standard email notification process when these public hearings were held. The public comments received were in support of the proposed changes and no objections were raised.

## **ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED**

The speed limit could be left at 25 mph and more robust 25 mph signing could be installed; however, given the ongoing safety issues and direct correlation between severity of collision and speed, reducing the speed limit would be expected to advance Vision Zero goals. The data, however, does support lowering the speed limit using standard protocols. Using signage to address speeding issues is also a less costly measure than speed humps or other infrastructure changes. It is the recommendation of the City Traffic Engineer to proceed with these traffic modifications.

## **FUNDING IMPACT**

The cost to install the signage is estimated to be \$78,821 for materials and labor and \$3,995.63 for outreach and would be paid for by the San Francisco Transportation Authority using Neighborhood Transportation Improvement Program (NTIP) funds.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The proposed speed limit modifications are subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). CEQA provides a categorical exemption from environmental review for operation, repair, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters,

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bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities as defined in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations Section 15301.

On February 5, 2021, the SFMTA, under authority delegated by the San Francisco Planning Department, determined that the proposed speed limit modifications described above are categorically exempt (Case No. 2021-001354ENV) from CEQA pursuant to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations Section 15301.

The proposed action is the Approval Action as defined by San Francisco Administrative Code Chapter 31.

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 <https://sfplanning.org/> and 49 South Van Ness Avenue, Suite 1400 in San Francisco, and is incorporated herein by reference.

**OTHER APPROVALS RECEIVED OR STILL REQUIRED**

The City Attorney's Office has reviewed this calendar item.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the SFMTA Board of Directors approve the traffic changes, as set forth in Item A above, associated with reducing the speed limit from 25 miles per hour to 20 miles per hour on portions of seventeen streets in the Tenderloin district, and amend Transportation Code, Division II, Section 702 to reduce the speed limit from 25 miles per hour to 20 miles per hour on these seventeen street in the Tenderloin district.

SAN FRANCISCO  
MUNICIPAL TRANSPORTATION AGENCY  
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RESOLUTION No. \_\_\_\_\_

WHEREAS, The City Traffic Engineer is authorized to conduct engineering and traffic surveys to modify speed limits on City streets subject to approval by the SFMTA Board of Directors; and,

WHEREAS, Based on these surveys, the City Traffic Engineer recommends the following speed limit modifications:

- A. REDUCE - FROM 25 MPH TO 20 MPH SPEED LIMIT – Grove Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Market Street; McAllister Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Market Street; Golden Gate Avenue, between Van Ness Avenue and Market Street; Turk Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Market Street; Eddy Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street; Ellis Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street; O’Farrell Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street; Geary Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street; Post Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street; Sutter Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street; Polk Street, between Sutter Street and Grove Street; Larkin Street, between Sutter Street and Grove Street; Hyde Street, between Sutter Street and Market Street; Leavenworth Street, between Sutter Street and Market Street; Jones Street, between Sutter Street and Market Street; Taylor Street, between Sutter Street and Market Street; and Mason Street, between Sutter Street and Market Street; and,

WHEREAS, The public has been notified about the proposed modifications and has been given the opportunity to comment on these modifications through the public hearing process; and,

WHEREAS, The proposed changes advance Vision Zero goals; and,

WHEREAS, The proposed speed limit modifications are subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); CEQA provides a categorical exemption from environmental review for operation, repair, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities as defined in Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations Section 15301; and,

WHEREAS, On February 5, 2021, the SFMTA, under authority delegated by the San Francisco Planning Department, determined that the proposed speed limit modifications are categorically exempt (Case No. 2021-001354ENV) from CEQA pursuant to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations Section 15301; and,

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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 <https://sfplanning.org/> and 49 South Van Ness Avenue, Suite 1400 in San Francisco, and is incorporated herein by reference; and,

WHEREAS, The proposed action is the Approval Action as defined by S. F. Administrative Code Chapter 31; now, therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors amends the Transportation Code, Division II, Section 702 to modify speed limits as set forth in Item A above.

I certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors at its meeting of March 16, 2021.

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Secretary to the Board of Directors  
San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency



RESOLUTION

[Transportation Code – Reduced Speed Limits on Various Streets]

**Resolution amending the Transportation Code to reduce the speed limits on various streets in the Tenderloin neighborhood from 25 miles per hour to 20 miles per hour.**

NOTE: Additions are single-underline Times New Roman;  
deletions are ~~strike through Times New Roman~~.

The Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors of the City and County of San Francisco enacts the following regulations:

Section 1. Article 700 of Division II of the Transportation Code is hereby amended by revising Section 702, to read as follows:

**SEC. 702. DESIGNATED SPEED LIMITS.**

(a) **20 Miles Per Hour.** A prima facie speed limit of 20 miles per hour is established in the following locations:

- (1) Eddy Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street.
- (2) Ellis Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street.
- (3) Geary Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street.
- (4) Golden Gate Avenue, between Van Ness Avenue and Market Street.
- (5) Grove Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Hyde Street.
- (6) Hyde Street, between Sutter Street and Market Street.
- (7) Jones Street, between Sutter Street and Market Street.
- (8) Larkin Street, between Sutter Street and Market Street.
- (9) Leavenworth Street, between Sutter Street and Market Street.
- (10) Market Street between Franklin Street and Steuart Street.

- (11) Mason Street, between Sutter Street and Market Street.
- (12) McAllister Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Market Street.
- (13) O'Farrell Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street.
- (14) Polk Street, between Sutter Street and Grove Street.
- (15) Post Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street.
- (16) Sutter Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street.
- (17) Taylor Street, between Sutter Street and Market Street.
- (18) Turk Street, between Van Ness Avenue and Mason Street.

\* \* \* \*

Section 2. Effective Date. This ordinance shall become effective 31 days after enactment. Enactment occurs when the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors approves this ordinance.

Section 3. Scope of Ordinance. In enacting this ordinance, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors intends to amend only those words, phrases, paragraphs, subsections, sections, articles, numbers, letters, punctuation marks, charts, diagrams, or any other constituent parts of the Transportation Code that are explicitly shown in this ordinance as additions or deletions in accordance with the "Note" that appears under the official title of the ordinance.

APPROVED AS TO FORM:  
DENNIS J. HERRERA, City Attorney

By: \_\_\_\_\_  
JOHN I. KENNEDY  
Deputy City Attorney

I certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors at its meeting of March 16, 2021.

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Secretary to the Board of Directors  
San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency