



Geary Community Advisory Committee

Wednesday, July 12, 2017

6:00 pm - 8:00 pm

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

Minutes

1. Welcome and introductions
 - a. Geary Rapid and Geary Boulevard Improvement project team introductions
 - i. The meeting was facilitated by Liz Brisson, project manager for the Geary Rapid project, and Kate McCarthy, the public outreach and engagement manager for both Geary projects.
 - ii. Also in attendance were SFMTA planners Kim Le and Alex Snyder, Geary Rapid project engineer Dan Mackowski, public relations officer Phillip Pierce, and Geary Boulevard Improvement acting project manager Peter Gabancho.
 - iii. Colin Dentel-Post, senior transportation planner at the San Francisco County Transportation Authority and SFCTA Geary BRT project manager, was also in attendance. The SFCTA has led the planning and environmental review work while SFMTA leads on design and implementation.
 - b. Geary Community Advisory Committee (Geary CAC) members
 - i. 11 of 15 CAC members were in attendance.
 - c. Kate McCarthy guided an ice breaker activity called "What would you...?"
2. Geary Rapid and Geary Boulevard Improvement Project overview
 - a. Project background
 - i. Liz Brisson provided the project overview. Powerpoint slides from the presentation is available at this link:
<https://www.sfmta.com/calendar/meetings/geary-community-advisory-committee-meeting-%E2%80%93-july-12-2017>
 - b. Member questions and comments
 - i. Lou Grosso asked how information regarding the CAC would be distributed moving forward.
 1. Kate McCarthy explained that materials relating to CAC meetings, including agenda and hand-outs will be made

- available online about a week before the meeting and emailed to CAC members, and minutes will be made available about a week after the meeting.
2. Members of the public may reach the Geary CAC by emailing GearyRapid@sfmta.com and addressing their email to the Geary CAC.
- ii. Lou Grosso asked how information will be communicated in ways that are not visual and requested that documents be sent in text form to him.
 1. Liz Brisson said SFMTA can adapt materials to a format that will best meet Lou's needs and share in advance.
 2. Dan Mackowski asked a follow up question regarding the best ways to communicate project information for visually impaired people more generally. Lou Grosso responded that there is a spectrum of visual ability. He does not communicate in Braille, therefore digital information in text form is helpful.
 - iii. Lou Grosso asked if traffic signals would be retimed to provide more time for people crossing, and if accessible pedestrian signals would be added. For example, at Webster, pedestrians are given 26 seconds to cross 9 lanes of traffic including on-street parking.
 1. Dan Mackowski indicated that new pedestrian crossings across Geary would be added at this intersection, along with accessible pedestrian signals (yellow boxes). All crossings within the project limits would be timed in order to provide enough time for people of all abilities to cross safely.
 - iv. Annie Lee suggested that the project team coordinate with the SF Housing Authority about outreach channels to reach residents of several public housing developments within close proximity to the corridor.
 1. Liz Brisson thanked Annie for the suggestion and said SFMTA will follow up with the SF Housing Authority.
 - v. Charley Obermeyer commented that youth ridership is high on the corridor. In his experience, the best avenues for outreach to reach SF youth are through youth-serving community organizations, including the Department of Youth, Children, and Families or Youth Empowerment Fund. Social media can play a role but it shouldn't be the only method of outreach to young people.
 1. Annie Lee followed up by suggesting that schools are another important stakeholder to involve in the planning process. Charlie said that so much information is shared with students via school that it often is not a very effective technique to get youth input.

- vi. Claude Imbault asked why environmental review took so long to complete.
 - 1. Liz Brisson said that one of the challenges that affected the timeframe was determining what the best design for the corridor was. A lot of analysis and community consultation was needed given the length of the corridor, how many stakeholders are affected by the design, and some of the unique physical challenges such as the Fillmore and Masonic underpasses.
 - 2. Colin Dentel-Post of SFCTA added that whenever the project design is refined during environmental review, it means a host of technical analyses of different resource areas are needed to also be refined. He also added that the process included NEPA, which is a federal process, and also adds schedule complexity.
- vii. Claude Imbault asked if pedestrian-scale lighting will be a part of Geary Rapid improvements. In the Union Square area, street lights are not sufficient and low lighting contributes to the perception of the area as not safe.
 - 1. Liz Brisson said it was not exactly what he was asking about, but mentioned the new bus stop signs have a beacon light at the top of them. Dan Mackowski said pedestrian scale lighting is not within the scope of Geary Rapid project. The team can follow up with other agencies or projects who may be able to help.
- viii. A committee member asked if the environmental report would be published online.
 - 1. Liz Brisson indicated that it is available at [SFCTA.org/geary](https://www.sfcta.org/geary)
- ix. Daniel Calamuci asked if timed transfers at major intersections had been considered.
 - 1. Liz Brisson and Colin Dentel-Post explained that on a high-frequency corridor like Geary, timed transfers are not considered necessary with some exceptions specific to late night/OWL services.
- x. Fay Fua asked what the role of the CAC would be.
 - 1. The group discussed the "decision space" for the CAC. Liz Brisson explained that some decisions, like the configuration of the bus-only lanes, have already largely been decided via actions taken by the SF Board of Supervisors acting as the SFCTA Board. Further input from CAC members is needed for more design decisions at a block by block level. Kate McCarthy made an analogy to building a house. You need to decide how many rooms will be in the house and what

function each room will play before you decide on carpeting vs. wood floors or what furniture is needed. Liz Brisson added that CAC members' input is also needed during the construction and implementation phase to advise on how to minimize disruption to everyone who uses the corridor.

- xi. Fay Fua asked if one of the decisions that has already been made was that the median along Geary Boulevard would be rebuilt with bus lanes.
 - 1. Liz Brisson responded that center-running bus lane configuration between Stanyan and 28th is part of the preferred design that was approved by the SFCTA Board in January.
- xii. Alison Cantor asked if the purpose of the CAC was to help let people know about decisions that have already been made or to get input on decisions that are still being made.
 - 1. Liz Brisson explained that during Fall outreach for Geary Rapid, project proposals should be considered "draft final" proposals. CAC members are encouraged to help get the word out to stakeholders they represent and use local knowledge to give input on design questions and comments. Everyone who travels the corridor regularly brings their own lived experience and will have unique ways that these proposals might affect their daily travel. Some of the input the project team receives may reveal that some of the designs can be improved to better meet stakeholder needs. SFMTA will consider all input received and provide a response on whether changes will be made or why they can't be made. In addition, Geary Boulevard Improvement Project will have a longer design process and more opportunity for input.
- xiii. Paul Epstein asked about the funding plan for both projects.
 - 1. Liz Brisson said that all funding sources for Geary Rapid have been committed, at a cost of ~\$35 million for transportation improvements. The work is coordinated with another \$30 million of work sponsored by other city agencies in coordination with Geary Rapid, including water and sewer upgrades. The Geary Boulevard Improvement Project is estimated to cost \$235 million.
 - 2. Colin Dentel-Post said the funding strategy included in the environmental documentation assumed a \$100 million federal Small Starts grant and \$30-\$40 million is committed from Prop K.

3. Andrei Svensson asked if the budget for Phase II includes utility work.
 - a. Liz Brisson said that the \$235 million estimate only includes utility re-location costs that would be required due to the construction of the new center-running lanes. SFMTA will coordinate with SFPUC on whether there is additional scope that SFPUC would wish to coordinate and sponsor. SFPUC would be responsible for the costs of any utility upgrade work they wish to coordinate with the transportation project. Because some utilities would need to be re-located due to construction of the new bus lanes, only that utility re-location cost would be the responsibility of the Geary Boulevard Improvement Project to cover.
- xiv. Alison Cantor asked when each project is expected to complete construction.
 1. Liz Brisson explained that large projects like these have a heightened degree of uncertainty, making timelines difficult to predict. Once the Geary Rapid project is legislated by the SFMTA Board, likely early next year, implementation would proceed in phases. Some work can be done by SFMTA's in-house paint, sign, and signal shops and could happen very shortly after legislation. Most of the work requires a contractor. Geary Rapid is currently being packaged in two contracts, one between Van Ness and Stanyan, and a second one between Market and Van Ness. This contracted work would take about two years to construct.
 2. Peter Gabancho added that for the Geary Boulevard Improvement Project, it can be expected that there will be about 2 years of design and about 2 years of construction.
- c. Public comments
 - i. Deetje Boler said she felt uncomfortable using bulb-outs and that it would be better to have the bus schedules shifted to allow more time for pedestrians to cross safely. She said that in terms of public good, safety is more important than speed.
 - ii. Tom Barton asked whether the exact location where bus lanes will merge to the center lane is at Arguello.
 1. Liz Brisson said that the buses would transition just west of Stanyan between Jordan and Palm avenues.
 - iii. Corey Urban said that he applied to join the CAC and was not selected. He said the red lanes will harm his gas station, possibly putting him and his brother out of business. He said he didn't

understand the need for road diets to slow cars down when the project seeks to speed up buses.

- iv. Peter Strauss with the SF Transit Riders said that it was unfortunate that Phases I and II were linked. He said we should have had Geary Rapid project years ago. He said these improvements are needed as soon as possible. He also said he had some reservations about the second phase, but encouraged CAC members to support Phase I being implemented as soon as possible.
- v. Anuradha Munshi said video of the introductory presentation and a map should be made available online. She said technology and renewable energy should be incorporated into the projects.
- vi. A community member said that when Muni speeds are greater than 35 miles per hour, then we can stop talking about the need for bus improvements. He said that he welcomes and appreciates this project.

3. Geary CAC structure

- a. Review of charter: purpose, roles, expectations, and schedule
 - i. Kate McCarthy provided an overview about the Geary CAC structure. The presentation slides are available on the same project overview PowerPoint.
 - ii. An orientation will be held in the fall, date TBD, to orient members of City and County of San Francisco community advisory committees. A helpful resource for those interested is the [City Attorney's Good Government Guide](#) that provides guidelines on passive meeting bodies such as the Geary CAC. It is available at this link: <https://www.sfcityattorney.org/good-government/good-government-guide/>
 - iii. In terms of logistics, SFMTA staff will oversee and attend all CAC meetings. Agendas will be posted online and emailed to CAC members one week in advance of the meeting, and meeting minutes will be emailed about one week after the meeting.
- b. Chair and vice-chair selection procedure
 - i. Kate McCarthy explained that a chair and vice chair will be elected at the next meeting from CAC members. Members can self-nominate or nominate other CAC members for these positions, and a paper ballot election will be held.
- c. Member questions
 - i. Claude Imbault asked if it is appropriate to reach out to staff outside of meetings.
 - 1. Kate McCarthy said that Geary CAC members as well as members of the public can contact staff at any time.

- ii. Charley Obermeyer asked in which month the orientation will be held.
 - 1. Kate McCarthy said it will likely be in September or October.
 - iii. Daniel Calamuci asked if this committee is governed under the Brown Act and if meeting minutes will be sent out.
 - 1. Kate McCarthy said that the orientation will go further into rules about sharing information. Meeting minutes will be made available online about one week after the meeting.
 - iv. Paul Epstein asked if a list of staff contacts and their responsibilities can be provided.
 - 1. Kate McCarthy said a staff roster will be provided at the next meeting. CAC members can use the project email (gearyrapid@sfmta.com) to contact project staff.
 - v. A CAC member asked if tonight's meeting location is the normal room for meetings.
 - 1. Kate said that the meetings are likely to always be held at SFMTA offices at 1 S Van Ness, but the room might change. The location will always be in the agenda posted online and emailed to CAC members.
- d. Public questions
- i. Question: A member of the public asked whether the list of staff contacts can be made available to the public.
 - 1. Kate McCarthy said that it will be available at the next meeting and online.
 - ii. Corey Urban said CAC members don't have any power to do anything. The benefits of the project are exaggerated. There has been no mention of bus stop removal.
 - iii. Peter Straus said that reliability is a key benefit that will come from this project.
 - iv. Deetje Boler asked how members of the public can get the same information as the CAC.
 - 1. Kate McCarthy said that the public can get all the same information about this project via the website or by signing up for email updates. People that do not have regular access to the internet can call 311 to get information that is posted online.
 - v. Question: A member of the public asked whether the public can contact the CAC or other attendees of the meeting.
 - 1. Kate McCarthy said that for a member of the public to contact Geary CAC members, correspondence may be sent to GearyRapid@sfmta.com requesting the correspondence be forwarded to the entire CAC. SFMTA can provide names of CAC members, but their contact information will be

redacted. Members of the public are free to exchange contact information at any time, including before or after the meetings.

- vi. Anuradha Munshi suggested creating a Facebook or LinkedIn group for this purpose.

4. Public comment

- a. Comment: A member of the public said he is a Richmond resident and is concerned that travel times will slow in the Outer Richmond. Also, Vision Zero needs a pedestrian education component.
- b. Tom Barton said he has spoken with Muni operators and is concerned about the bus only lanes. He wonders if a bus breaks, how will the other buses get around it.
 - i. Liz Brisson said she would go over this one-on-one after the meeting in the interest of saving time.
- c. Winston Parsons, former SFCTA Geary BRT CAC member and chair of Go Geary said he also applied to the CAC and was not selected. He said CAC input does matter and the CAC has power. An example where the former SFCTA-led Geary BRT CAC provided input that led to a change is that the Geary BRT CAC did not support center-running lanes at Masonic due to concerns about safety of a station in the underpass. Many CAC members and members of the public did not support this proposal which led to the change seen in the preferred design that has the buses in the side-running configuration through this part of the corridor.
- d. Tom Barton asked whether all meetings be held at SFMTA and said it is a long way to go from the Outer Richmond to SFMTA.
 - i. Liz Brisson said that CAC meetings will be held at SFMTA, but these meetings are not the only way SFMTA conducts outreach. In general, during major rounds of public outreach, SFMTA conducts most outreach within the corridor limits such as holding meetings in multiple locations throughout the corridor limits, posting signs, and doing outreach at bus stops.

5. Next steps

- a. Next meeting – not yet scheduled. The next meeting will be on a Wednesday evening in mid-to-late September. The draft agenda for the next meeting includes the election of chair and vice chair, a review of Geary Rapid fall outreach plan and materials, and discussion of a roadmap of future meetings/agenda items.

6. Adjourned at 8:00 p.m.