

## *Utilities Uncovered*

**By Meghan Daniels**

When construction of the Van Ness Improvement Project is complete, Van Ness Avenue will become one of the most efficient and reliable transit corridors in San Francisco. The activity below the street will be equally transformative.

Beneath Van Ness, a network of water lines and sewer mains work 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to deliver water to residents and convey sewage and stormwater to the city's treatment facilities. Much of this infrastructure is more than 100 years old and near the end of its lifecycle.

The utility replacements included in the Van Ness Improvement Project are critical for the neighborhood and anyone who uses Van Ness. As these systems continue to age, their repairs become

more expensive. Failures of these networks include extended service interruptions and sinkholes in the roadway that have significant impact on the community.

Understanding this urgency, the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission has partnered with the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency to take advantage of the Van Ness Improvement Project's upcoming construction to replace and repair some of the oldest water and sewer infrastructure in San Francisco.

Between Mission and Lombard streets, more than 11,000 feet of water lines and 20,200 feet of sewer lines will be installed. After these new networks are installed, they will reduce vulnerability to damage from earthquakes and minimize potential service outages.

"The utility work included in the Van Ness Improvement Project will make it easier to conduct routine maintenance in the future," said Manfred Wong, senior project manager at the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission. "Relocating the sewers outside of the Bus Rapid Transit lanes means any future repairs will have minimal impact to traffic flow and transit reliability on Van Ness."

Portions of the emergency firefighting water system, which supplies more than 1,200 fire hydrants throughout San Francisco, will also be overhauled.

In addition to these pipe networks, Van Ness Avenue is going greener. In the Civic Center Historic District, new sidewalk features will naturally manage stormwater. These features, known

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### RESPONDING TO NEIGHBORS

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### UNDERGROUND NETWORKS

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### HISTORY BENEATH

See page 3.

# Van Ness is Open for Business

By Sean Cronin

When the Van Ness Business Advisory Committee held its inaugural meeting earlier this year, members were clear about what they saw as the biggest obstacle for the Van Ness Improvement Project and maintaining traffic flow on Van Ness Avenue: double parking.

When construction begins on Van Ness, traffic will be reduced to two lanes in each direction to accommodate parking needs and construction safety zones. When construction ends, the third lane in each direction will be reserved for Muni, Golden Gate Transit and emergency vehicles. Illegally double parking during or after construction will, in effect, reduce one of the city's major north-south arterials to a single lane. Enforcement will be critical to keep traffic flowing.

Enforcement, though, is only part of the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency's strategy.

After speaking with merchants about their concerns, the SFMTA found an immediate opportunity to create temporary commercial loading zones at most of the discontinued Muni stop locations, in addition to plans already in place to relocate some loading zones off Van Ness during construction.

Although these old stop locations have been legislated to become metered parking, it would be costly and ineffective to



The Van Ness Improvement Project is working with corridor businesses to minimize the adverse effects of construction.

convert them before the end of construction. For example, parking meters may need to be removed when utility and roadway work is being done at the curb.

This refined plan will give businesses additional access on Van Ness while providing flexibility and cost-savings for the project. After construction, residents will see parking restored in these locations.

The Van Ness Improvement Project team is committed to collaborative solutions such as this. If you have other ideas or suggestions, you can share them with staff by sending an email to [vannessbrt@sfmta.com](mailto:vannessbrt@sfmta.com).

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## Utilities: Working Beneath the Surface

as rain gardens, use a natural process through plants and soils to treat water and relieve strain on stormwater systems. These will serve as a catalyst for sustainable urban development in the city.

Furthermore, new lights along the corridor will include energy-efficient LED street and sidewalk lighting, increasing safety and visibility for everyone using Van Ness.

When construction of the Van Ness Improvement Project is complete, this package of improvements will better meet the needs of the community today and for future generations.

### You Asked!

Who do I contact about disruptions?

311 is San Francisco's easy-to-remember customer service phone number, app and website that will connect you to customer service representatives who are ready to help with information and services. Customers who contact 311 about the Van Ness Improvement Project will be connected to project staff.

Though it is not as easy to remember as 311, you may also reach the Van Ness Improvement Project staff directly, by calling our hotline at 415-646-2310 or sending an email to [vannessbrt@sfmta.com](mailto:vannessbrt@sfmta.com).

**Lulu Feliciano is the Outreach Manager for the SFMTA, ensuring we communicate and engage with the public as we deliver improvement projects.**



VAN NESS

IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

NEWSLETTER IS PRODUCED BY  
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This civic improvement project on Van Ness Avenue from Aquatic Park to Mission Street provides transportation upgrades, including San Francisco's first Bus Rapid Transit system, a globally proven solution to improve transit service and address traffic congestion; utility maintenance, including street repaving, and sewer, water and emergency firefighting water system replacement; and civic improvements, including streetlight replacement, new sidewalk lighting, landscaping and rain gardens.

All images by SFMTA unless otherwise noted.

**311 Free language assistance** / 免費語言協助 / Ayuda gratis con el idioma / Бесплатная помощь переводчиков / Trợ giúp Thông dịch Miễn phí / Assistance linguistique gratuite / 無料の言語支援 / 무료 언어 지원 / Libreng tulong para sa wikang Filipino / การช่วยเหลือทาง ด้านภาษาโดยไม่เสียค่าใช้จ่าย / خط المساعدة المجاني على الرقم

## Below the Surface



*San Francisco's utility network is complex. Here's a closer look at some of the networks we're working on through the Van Ness Improvement Project.*



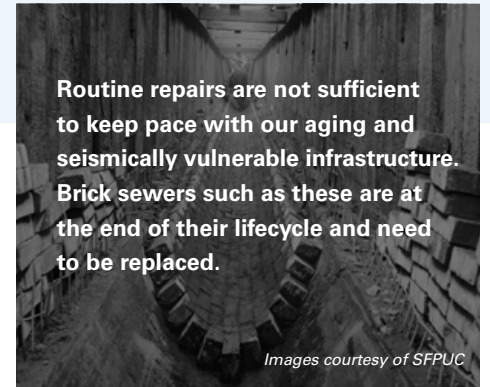
*Images courtesy of SFPUC.*

**More than 30 percent of sewers in the city are over 100 years old, including the pipes beneath Van Ness. This system was not built to withstand a major earthquake or the impacts of climate change such as intense rainstorms.**

**Large fire hydrants with colored caps are part of the city's emergency firefighting water system, referred to as the auxiliary water supply system. Upgrades will provide an added layer of fire protection in the event of a major earthquake.**

**On a non-rainy day, more than 80 million gallons of wastewater is collected and transported in our sewer system. Rain gardens, like the one above, provide much-needed relief during wet weather.**

## Digging Into the History Beneath Van Ness



**Routine repairs are not sufficient to keep pace with our aging and seismically vulnerable infrastructure. Brick sewers such as these are at the end of their lifecycle and need to be replaced.**

*Images courtesy of SFPUC*

**By Meghan Daniels**

Van Ness Avenue, sometimes referred to as San Francisco's spine, has deep roots in San Francisco history. Today, it is a vital north-south transportation corridor and serves as a major utilities vein for the heart of the city.

In San Francisco's earliest days, though, much of the area was composed of sand dunes and marshes, with Hayes Creek sending stormwater into Mission Bay. In the late 1800s, as sand dunes made way for urban development, the city had to find a way to deliver clean water, convey sewage and stormwater, and protect its residents from diseases like cholera. To do this, a combined sewer system of masonry brick and mortar was constructed.

When the 1906 earthquake ripped through the city, many water lines and sewer mains were shattered. Fires erupted and, without water to fight them, the city burned for three days. More than 25,000 buildings and 490 city blocks were destroyed before crews dynamited buildings on Van Ness to contain the blaze. This vital firebreak is credited with saving the western part of the city.

Rebuild efforts after the earthquake focused on the destroyed water and sewer lines. In 1908, the city sought water and reservoir rights, which was the first step in the creation of the Hetch Hetchy system. This network of water pipelines continues to carry water from storage reservoirs via gravity, following the

topographic layout of San Francisco, today. It also still includes the high-quality drinking water you're used to, as well as firefighting water that supplies the auxiliary water supply system.

Today's utility system is always working beneath your feet to deliver clean water, provide fire protection and convey sewage and stormwater, ensuring the community's health and safety. The investments being made to the area through the Van Ness Improvement Project will continue to provide reliable water and wastewater services on a sustainable basis, make them more resilient to earthquakes, and improve their lifecycle so future generations of San Franciscans can enjoy their benefits.

# VAN NESS

# IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

MAINTAIN • RESTORE • MODERNIZE



## EVENTS

### Meet the Expert: Bus Rapid Transit

**Wednesday, September 7 | 6:00-7:30 p.m.**

**Visit [sfmta.com/vanness#meetings](https://sfmta.com/vanness#meetings) for more info.**

Meet the Expert is a fun and informal monthly talk series hosted by a different Van Ness-corridor business each month. Presenters provide their expertise on a variety of Van Ness-related topics, from construction to Muni service to history. In September, Paul Bignardi will tell us about Bus Rapid Transit, what it is and why it is used on every continent (except Antarctica) to improve transit and address traffic congestion.

Join the conversation, ask questions, or just kick back and listen — all while enjoying the best of Van Ness. Each event is free to attend, but attendees are responsible for purchasing their own food and beverages.

For RSVP information, contact us at [vannessbrrt@sfmta.com](mailto:vannessbrrt@sfmta.com).

To find out more and sign up for updates about the Van Ness Improvement Project, go to [sfmta.com/vanness](https://sfmta.com/vanness).

For questions or comments, contact us at [vannessbrrt@sfmta.com](mailto:vannessbrrt@sfmta.com) or 415.646.2310.

如有疑問或需要免費語言協助，請發電子郵件至 [vannessbrrt@sfmta.com](mailto:vannessbrrt@sfmta.com) 或致電415-646-2310。

Si tiene preguntas o para servicio gratis para el idioma, póngase en contacto con [vannessbrrt@sfmta.com](mailto:vannessbrrt@sfmta.com) o 415-646-2310.

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