

VAN NESS

IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

WINTER 2016 | ISSUE 1

Looking Forward to the Future

By Sean Cronin

Olivia Guthrie can't wait for the future of Van Ness Avenue to be realized through the Van Ness Improvement Project.

"Van Ness is going to be gorgeous when this project is completed," Olivia, a resident who lives near Van Ness and Pine and is pictured above, said. "It will be a beautiful boulevard instead of just a street."

Olivia's impression of today's Van Ness Avenue will sound familiar to most people who navigate the two-mile corridor: "It's rough and unpleasant." Traffic moves at a crawl. Public transit is unreliable. The sidewalks are poorly lit. But the SFMTA hopes to change all of that over the next three years.

The Van Ness Improvement Project will bring substantial improvements. Not only will it culminate in the City's first Bus Rapid Transit service—commonly referred to as BRT—an effective, globally proven system to improve transit and address traffic congestion, but also the project will replace aging water and sewer lines, install new street lighting, and improve safety and visibility for people walking along the street.

Another feature of the project is landscape beautification. And while aesthetics are a big part of the project, Olivia is most looking forward to the coming safety improvements.

"Crossing Van Ness right now can be an awesome problem," she said. "We [senior residents] don't necessarily

move as quickly and it can be difficult to cross the street in time. The pedestrian countdown signals and median refuges are vital improvements for allowing us to cross Van Ness safely."

This is a dramatic and beautiful project!

Other upgrades of the project include installing new sidewalk lighting and constructing bulb-outs, or sidewalk extensions at intersections, that reduce the time and distance required to cross the street. These upgrades will provide people walking on Van Ness with much-needed visibility.

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TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS

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PROJECT SCHEDULE

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A LOOK BACK AT VAN NESS

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Taking Care of Business as We Build a Better Van Ness

By Sean Cronin

The Van Ness Improvement Project team has brought together Van Ness business leaders and merchants to form the Van Ness Business Advisory Committee aimed at improving conditions and creating an atmosphere that keeps and attracts customers to the neighborhood during construction.

The Van Ness Business Advisory Committee, a first for a construction project with the SFMTA, will offer businesses direct access to project staff throughout each stage of the project. Members will act as the voice of the community and will provide input on how staff can best work with local businesses to bring out the character that has made this vital thoroughfare one of the city's grand avenues.

The Business Advisory Committee will operate independently from the existing Van Ness Bus Rapid Transit Community Advisory Committee and will focus on the impact the project will have on local business. Members will collaborate and develop strategies, such as customer incentive programs and marketing campaigns, to support businesses affected by the project's construction.

For more information about the Van Ness Business Advisory Committee, go to "Meetings" at sfmta.com/vanness.



With approximately 45,000 jobs and 25,000 housing units, Van Ness Avenue is one of the region's major commercial centers.

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BRT: The New Avenue

Van Ness Avenue is one of San Francisco's high-injury corridors. Only 12-percent of the City's streets have earned this designation, but they account for more than 70-percent of severe collisions in San Francisco. By focusing on improving the safety of those navigating the corridor, the SFMTA hopes to remove this designation.

"This is a dramatic and beautiful project," Olivia said. "It's going to transform Van Ness into the street it always should have been."

For more about the Van Ness Improvement Project, go to sfmta.com/vanness.

You Asked!

Why will Van Ness have center-running bus lanes?

The biggest advantage of center-running transit lanes is that they completely separate buses from all other traffic. Currently, traffic backups are caused by vehicles parking and turning, and when buses cannot pull into bus stops completely due to illegal parking. Center-running dedicated transit lanes separate transit from mixed traffic to reduce these sorts of conflicts, and many others, improving traffic circulation while helping ensure buses will remain on schedule even when the mixed traffic lanes become congested.



Bob Masys, Senior Engineer at the San Francisco County Transportation Authority, has 15 years of experience planning and building transportation infrastructure. Bob has been providing oversight and support on the Van Ness Improvement Project since the environmental clearance phase.

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.

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A Street with a Story

By *Kate McCarthy*

Van Ness Avenue has a rich history. When it was first surveyed in 1856, Van Ness Avenue was intended to function as the City's spine. Prominent families quickly populated the northern end while the southern end was characterized by dense working-class housing.

Van Ness Avenue soon became a local hero, serving as a firebreak that saved the western part of the city after the 1906 earthquake.

Many of the city's major department stores rebuilt on Van Ness after the earthquake. And by the 1920s, grand automobile showrooms peppered the corridor, making it the west coast's largest Auto Row at the time. Once the Golden Gate Bridge was built, Van Ness shifted toward regional auto travel with movie theaters, restaurants and motels.

Once Auto Row fell into decline, long-range transportation plans began identifying Van Ness as a top transit corridor in need of rapid service. Voters overwhelmingly agreed in 2003 when 75-percent voted "yes" on the Prop K sales tax that provided local funds to plan a rapid transit service on Van Ness Avenue.

In September 2013, the Board of Supervisors, acting as the San Francisco County Transportation Authority Board, unanimously approved the Van Ness Bus Rapid Transit project.



Located at 1699 Van Ness Avenue, the Paige (later Graham-Paige) luxury auto showroom was regarded as one of the finest when it was built in 1919.

Courtesy: SAN FRANCISCO HISTORY CENTER, SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY

Once the project received its federal environmental clearance, the SFMTA led an interagency project team consisting of nine agencies, coordinated the design and gathered the necessary approvals for the project to begin construction. Now the project is working with the community to prepare for construction, scheduled to begin in spring of 2016.

UTILITY AND CIVIC IMPROVEMENTS

Major upgrades are coming to Van Ness Avenue!



Water main dating back to the 1800s will be replaced to ensure high-quality drinking water is delivered to homes and businesses.



Brighter, more efficient street lights using the latest LED technology, and new sidewalk lighting, will light your way.

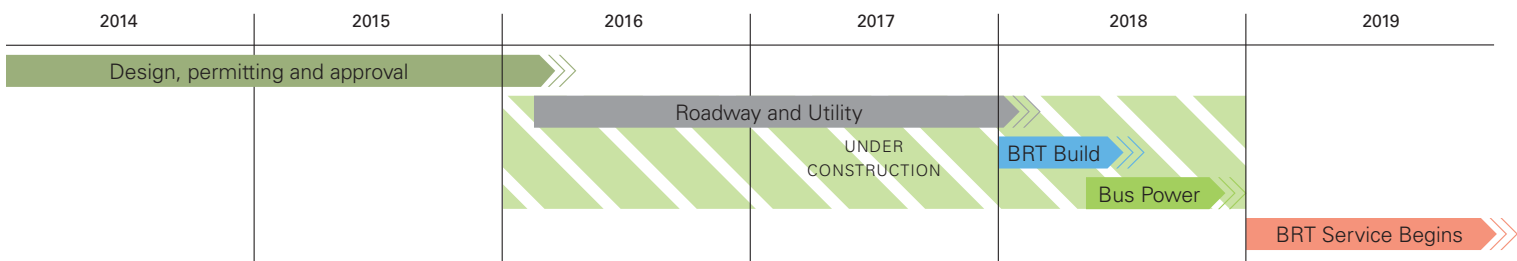


The emergency firefighting water system vital for fire protection that supplies 1,200+ fire hydrants will be overhauled with seismic and operational improvements.



The Van Ness Avenue roadway will be repaved for a smoother ride with a nearly one-foot base of solid concrete, topped with 2 to 3 inches of asphalt.

VAN NESS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT TIMELINE



VAN NESS

IMPROVEMENT PROJECT



MAINTAIN • RESTORE • MODERNIZE



EVENTS

Van Ness Improvement Project Overview Walking Tour

Wednesday, March 2 | 3:30-5:00 p.m.
**Meet in front of One South Van Ness Avenue,
San Francisco**

Join project staff for a fun and informative mile-long walking tour highlighting the changes you can expect to see once construction of the project is completed. Heavy rain cancels.

For questions or to RSVP, please contact vannessbrrt@sfmta.com.

Van Ness BRT Community Advisory Committee Meetings

Fourth Thursdays | Feb 25, Mar 24, Apr 28 | 6:00 p.m.

**One South Van Ness Avenue, 7th Floor,
Union Square Conference Room, San Francisco**

Van Ness Business Advisory Committee Meetings

Third Thursdays | Feb 18, Mar 17, Apr 21 | 3:00 p.m.

**One South Van Ness Avenue, 3rd Floor,
Civic Center Conference Room, San Francisco**

To find out more and sign up for updates about the Van Ness Improvement Project, go to sfmta.com/vanness.

For questions or comments, contact us at 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 或致電415-646-2310。

Si tiene preguntas o para servicio gratis para el idioma, póngase en contacto con vannessbrrt@sfmta.com o 415-646-2310.

