



## Why does construction take so long?

By Amy Fowler

Tired of construction in San Francisco? You are not alone. With so many city projects and private developments raising dust across the city, our iconic skyline can more closely resemble a giant Erector set than a world-class city. Without these necessary upgrades, however, roads would crumble, traffic signals would be stymied by aging technology and century-old sewer and water pipes would be vulnerable to earthquakes and climate change.

There are many factors that can turn a seemingly simple project into an extraordinarily complex undertaking. Chief among them is that many SFMTA projects are done in the public right of way. Unlike private developments that are usually self-contained, our projects happen in areas where people need to walk, drive, bike and take transit.

Considerations like maintaining traffic flow, maneuvering around existing utilities, accommodating private

construction and maintaining access to properties all take a considerable amount of coordination. Support from PG&E may be required while working around electrical wires, or additional SFMTA staff to isolate the overhead contact system that powers our zero-emissions trolley buses.

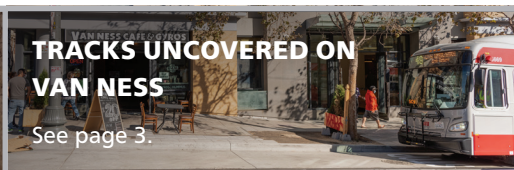
Every element of a project must be sequenced properly so that all the parts can move in sync. It's like tipping over a stack of dominoes: if one of those dominoes gets moved due to a conflict, schedules or crews may need to be reshuffled to keep the overall work from being delayed.

The SFMTA works closely with contractors, local businesses and residents to minimize construction impacts to the community. We know how difficult construction can be when it's right at your doorstep, and we're grateful for your patience as we work to build a better San Francisco.



**SUPPORTING  
VAN NESS BUSINESSES**

See page 2.



**TRACKS UNCOVERED ON  
VAN NESS**

See page 3.



**SCHEDULE  
UPDATE**

See page 3.



# City announces new plan to support small businesses

Small businesses throughout San Francisco continue to struggle as the pandemic surges in California and the city remains under a public health order. Businesses on Van Ness also contend with construction happening outside their front doors.

New relief plans for small businesses were recently announced by the mayor, with a \$62 million package of grants and very low and zero-interest loans for small businesses who need it most. This relief is in addition to state and

federal funding. Some Van Ness businesses are also eligible for direct payments as part of the Directed Business Support Program. Additional information about all of these resources can be found at [oewd.org](http://oewd.org).

We encourage you to safely patronize the businesses on the Van Ness corridor for your essential needs. By supporting our neighbors, we play an important role in keeping our neighborhood economy afloat.



## You Asked!

### How do you coordinate with other construction projects on the corridor?

There are many private development projects happening along Van Ness that are taken into consideration when planning construction activities for the Van Ness Improvement Project. The Van Ness thoroughfare is in the middle of an urban transformation, with several new housing units and neighborhood improvements on the way, as well as the opening of the Van Ness BRT in early 2022.

Coordination between the Van Ness Improvement Project and the many private development projects in the area is crucial, as lane closures, utility work and equipment needs can dictate construction schedules. I have to consider how the work impacts loading zones, sidewalk improvements and neighborhood amenities. I work closely with our construction team, the contractor and private developments to adjust as needed and ensure safety and progress for everyone. This coordination also ensures that transit can continue to run smoothly on the corridor. This construction, while frustrating at times, moves us closer to a vibrant and lively Van Ness.



*Keanway Kyi has more than 26 years of construction and design experience working for the City and County of San Francisco. A licensed Civil Engineer, Keanway holds a BS in Civil Engineering from San Jose State University. He has worked at San Francisco Public Works and the SFMTA, and currently works on the Van Ness Improvement Project as an Assistant Construction Manager solving day-to-day construction related issues.*

## VAN NESS

### IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

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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, 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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# Original tracks from California Street cable car line uncovered on Van Ness

While removing asphalt on Van Ness Avenue in October, workers found remnants of the California Street Cable Car tracks. These tracks had been buried since 1956, after much of the original route, from Presidio Avenue to Van Ness, was shut down in 1954.

Also excavated were the Belgian Blocks between the tracks. These rectangular cobblestones were the standard paving material for San Francisco streets at the turn of the century.

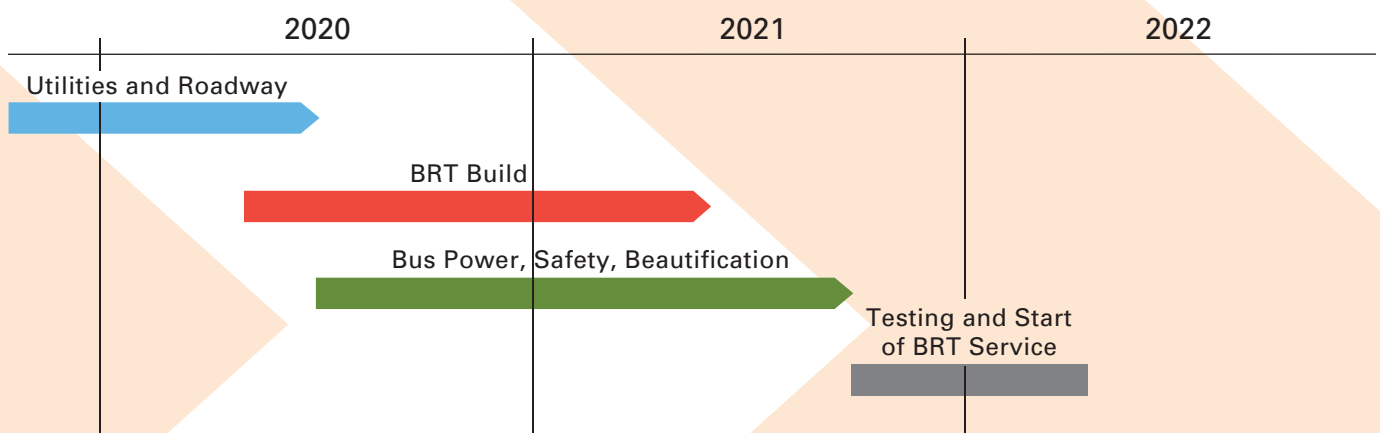
Originally, like all cable cars in the city, the California Street line was privately owned. The powerhouse and barn for this line was originally housed at Hyde and California, where Trader Joe's is now located. When the line was cut to its current iteration, running from the Embarcadero to Van Ness, the cable car slot was moved to the Washington-Mason powerhouse and barn, where it resides to this day with the city's two other remaining cable car lines.



When the California Street Cable Car was reduced to its current length, a new turnout was built for it at California and Van Ness in 1957 (photo 1), and trial runs were taken at the end of the year (photo 2). Rails and Belgian Blocks used for street paving were recently uncovered during excavations for the Van Ness Improvement Project (photos 3 and 4).

## Project schedule

At press time, construction on Van Ness Avenue is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2021. The graphic below shows additional details about the remaining phases of the project.



The Van Ness Improvement Project schedule above shows each phase of construction: Utilities include installing an electrical duct bank and replacing underground sewer and water systems, as well as a segment of the emergency firefighting water system to ensure reliable operation, new street and sidewalk lighting, sidewalk and roadway restoration; BRT Build includes building red center-running Bus Rapid Transit lanes, station platforms and medians; Bus Power includes building new sidewalk extensions, installing new overhead bus-power wires, painting crosswalks and training operators. Project staff is working to reduce delays in the schedule.





### Information Gladly Given

Van Ness Improvement Project staff may be contacted directly by calling 415.646.2310 or emailing [VanNessBRT@SFMTA.com](mailto:VanNessBRT@SFMTA.com). Due to the public health order, community drop-in office hours are temporarily suspended.

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

For questions or comments, contact us at [VanNessBRT@SFMTA.com](mailto:VanNessBRT@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 [VanNessBRT@SFMTA.com](mailto:VanNessBRT@SFMTA.com) 或致電415.646.2310。

Si tiene preguntas o para servicio gratis para el idioma, póngase en contacto con [VanNessBRT@SFMTA.com](mailto:VanNessBRT@SFMTA.com) o 415.646.2310.

**[SFMTA.com/VanNess](http://SFMTA.com/VanNess)**



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