



Digging up history under Van Ness

By Estefani Morales-Zanoletti

The Van Ness Improvement Project will feature many new upgrades to Van Ness Avenue. Some of the most important work and improvements to Van Ness are happening beneath the ground. The sewage system and water main dating back to the 1800's are being replaced, and other utility improvements are being made that should last the city for another hundred years.

When digging to make these improvements, unforeseen site conditions have slowed this phase of construction considerably. When crews find underground conditions aren't as they appear on drawings, they must stop work and deploy crews to work elsewhere on the corridor while the conflict is identified and addressed. Once the obstruction is identified, one of two things happen: either the item is removed from the site, or a redesign of the work plan must be done to find a way to work around the obstruction.

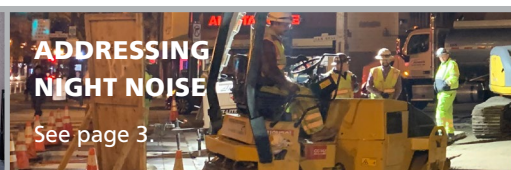
To address the high number of conflicts, teams use ground-penetrating radar to look for changes in density in the soil beneath before work begins. Teams also have used "potholing" to expedite this work, cutting a hole in the roadway to dig below and confirm whether conditions match site drawings. The remainder of the Van Ness corridor utility work is now continuing at an accelerated pace now that teams started using this proactive approach to address conflicts underground.

From the dot com boom to old buildings, buried sand dunes and even Ohlone artifacts, San Francisco's history has come alive as construction crews dig. While each finding causes some delay in construction of the Van Ness Improvement Project, resequencing work has allowed construction crews to jump to the next site to keep the project moving forward.

On Van Ness at both Hayes and Fell streets, old bricks, concrete and other materials were dug up including a brick wall structure. On Van Ness at Oak Street, a massive utility vault was encountered while replacing sewer. In this case, the obstruction required a redesign of the work plans. This resulted in a slight pause of construction on site while crews are deployed elsewhere on the corridor until the new plans are put into action.

Other findings beneath Van Ness Avenue come from more recent times in San Francisco's history. Several times crews have found fiber optics cables bunched together, a trace of the City's dot com boom. Some of these cables were found threaded through previously abandoned pipes others were found in large bunches, at one time they connected residents and businesses with the internet in its early days.

SEE HISTORY, PAGE 2





FROM PAGE 1

Unearthing history: Digging up the past

The project also employs an archaeologist who is called on to verify whether an item is of historic significance. Recently, between Market and Fell streets, Ohlone artifacts were found as construction crews conducted their work. This caused a temporary halt in work in the area as crews were sent to work in other areas so that the resident archaeologist could survey the findings. Once these artifacts were assessed by the archaeologist, contact was made with Ohlone tribe representatives so that they could be brought to the construction site to be present for artifact monitoring during construction and to make recommendations for proposed action.

Crews are nearly completed with the first half of utility work on the corridor and are expecting to shift traffic early this summer so that they may wrap up utility work by next spring (see the project schedule, p. 3). After addressing these delays during the utility phase, the project team is working to reduce the delays in the schedule as much as possible by making adjustments to procedures and increasing staff capacity. Bus Rapid Transit is projected to begin service on Van Ness Avenue mid-2021.

Does your business need support?

Businesses that are feeling the pinch due to the delays of the Van Ness Improvement Project are able to receive specialized one-on-one professional business counseling in marketing, finance, lease negotiations, accessing capital and more. After the business completes a simple form, OEWD helps identify the most appropriate technical support to provide directly to the business. Businesses interested in this program are encouraged to contact Jada Jackson with the Office of Economic and Workforce Development by phone at 415-554-6477 or email jada.jackson@sfgov.org.

You Asked!

How do I coordinate movers, loading or other activities for a special event with the construction team?

Do you have a big move coming up that needs curb space for loading within the construction zone? Does your business have a special event coming up and you are in need of loading space or other accommodations? Contact us as soon as possible in advance of your move or event with its date, duration and address. The construction team does our best to coordinate construction activities with our neighbors' needs whenever it is safe and feasible. Contact Margena Wade at VanNessBRT@SFMTA.com or 415.646.2310 to set it up.



Margena Wade is a Public Affairs Officer with Walsh Construction. She is an entrepreneur of over 10 years who facilitates community outreach to neighbors impacted by major transportation projects including the San Francisco Oakland Bay Bridge Project and the Van Ness Improvement Project.

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, and sewer, water and emergency firefighting water system replacement; and civic improvements, including streetlight replacement, new sidewalk lighting, landscaping and rain gardens.

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Addressing night noise during construction

While most Van Ness Improvement Project work is completed during daytime hours, work that reduces the roadway to one lane in a direction must be done during nighttime hours. When night work is required, teams take the following measures to reduce nighttime noise during construction, including:

- Coordinating loud activities to limit the period of disruptive noise
- Completing heavy noise work during daytime hours when possible
- Starting noisy work as early as possible to limit the inconvenience
- Using noise dampening equipment (pictured below) and hydraulic and electric hand tools

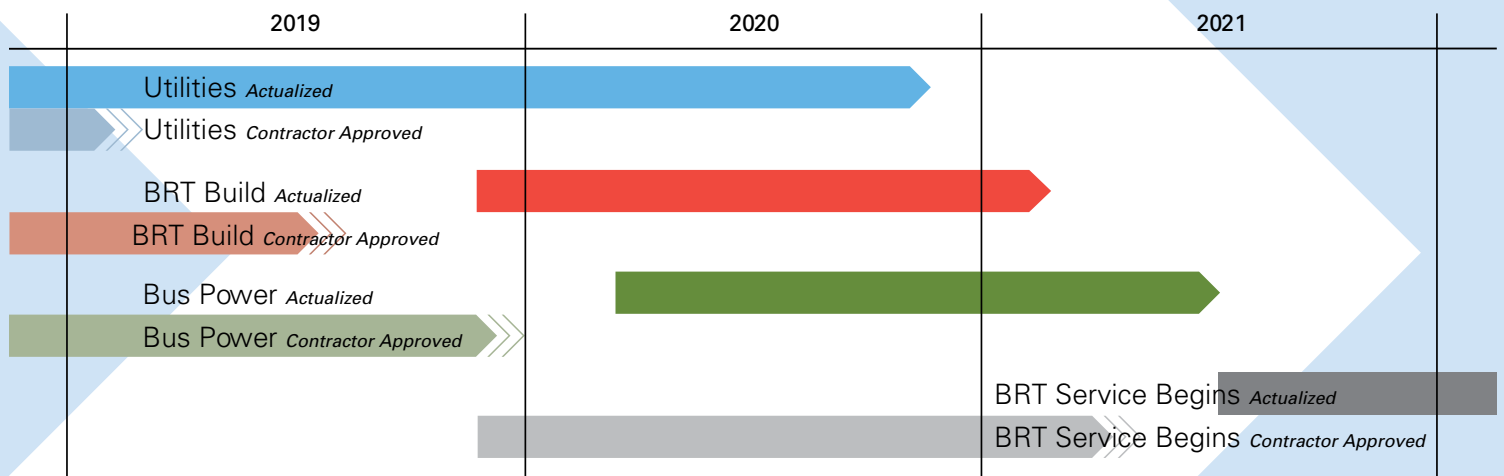
Door hangers are distributed 72 hours in advance of scheduled work to properties within 300-feet of night work. Neighbors may also sign up to receive weekly construction updates via email or text messages that include a two-week construction forecast that shows when night work is planned.

To sign up for weekly construction updates, go to SFMTA.com/VanNess and go to "Receive Updates" on the right sidebar or send an email to VanNessBRT@SFMTA.com.



Project Schedule

Construction is 31 percent complete. Originally planned to open in 2019, delays have set back the projected opening to mid-2021. Project staff continues to implement tactics to reduce the project's delay with consideration for San Francisco residents and businesses.



The Van Ness Improvement Project schedule above shows each phase of construction with the darker current projected schedule above the lighter approved baseline schedule. Project staff is working to reduce delays in the schedule.



Community Drop-In Office Hours

Tuesdays, 2:00-4:00 p.m.

Fridays, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

(Excluding holidays)

**180 Redwood Street, Suite 300
(near Van Ness and Golden Gate)**

Have a question about construction or the Van Ness Improvement Project? Stop by our Community Drop-In Office Hours at our Field Office to get assistance from project staff.

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 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 或致電415-646-2310。

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

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