

THIS PRINT COVERS CALENDAR ITEM NO: 11

**SAN FRANCISCO
MUNICIPAL TRANSPORTATION AGENCY**

DIVISION: Streets

BRIEF DESCRIPTION:

Approving parking and traffic modifications at the intersection of Judah Street with La Playa Street and Lower Great Highway to reduce conflicts between N Judah trains and other vehicles and to improve pedestrian safety and approving parking modifications on Lower Great Highway between Lincoln Way and Kirkham Street.



SUMMARY:

- The N Judah Terminal Safety Improvements and Lower Great Highway Parking Changes Project proposes a series of parking and traffic modifications at the N Judah train terminal at the intersection of Judah Street with La Playa Street and Lower Great Highway to address conflicts between trains and other vehicles, and to improve pedestrian safety.
- The proposed project includes conversion of parallel parking to angled parking, and parking, through traffic, and turn restrictions.
- The SFMTA Board of Directors has authority to adopt parking and traffic regulations changes.
- The Planning Department has determined that the Project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).
- The proposed action is the Approval Action for Items A-K as defined by S.F. Administrative Code Chapter 31.
- Certain items listed below with a “#” are Final SFMTA Decisions as defined by Ordinance 127-18. Final SFMTA Decisions can be reviewed by the Board of Supervisors. Information about the review process can be found at https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/SFMTA_Action_Review_Info_Sheet.pdf

ENCLOSURES:

1. SFMTAB Resolution
2. CPUC Letter to SFMTA

APPROVALS:

DIRECTOR 
SECRETARY 

DATE

January 11, 2024

January 11, 2024

ASSIGNED SFMTAB CALENDAR DATE: January 16, 2024

PURPOSE

Approving parking and traffic modifications at the intersection of Judah Street with La Playa Street and Lower Great Highway to reduce conflicts between N Judah trains and other vehicles and to improve pedestrian safety and approving parking modifications on Lower Great Highway between Lincoln Way and Kirkham Street.

STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS AND TRANSIT FIRST POLICY PRINCIPLES:

4. Make streets safer for everyone.
5. Deliver reliable and equitable transportation services.
6. Eliminate pollution and greenhouse gas emissions by increasing use of transit, walking, and bicycling.

This action supports the following SFMTA Transit First Policy Principles:

1. To ensure quality of life and economic health in San Francisco, the primary objective of the transportation system must be the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.
2. Public transit, including taxis and vanpools, is an economically and environmentally sound alternative to transportation by individual automobiles. Within San Francisco, travel by public transit, by bicycle and on foot must be an attractive alternative to travel by private automobile.
3. Decisions regarding the use of limited public street and sidewalk space shall encourage the use of public rights of way by pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit, and shall strive to reduce traffic and improve public health and safety.

DESCRIPTION

Background

On November 30, 2022 the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) notified the SFMTA that changes to the N Judah terminal were required due to a pattern of collisions involving motorists and trains, with 15 incidents reported during a period of approximately 3 years. The terminal is located at the intersection of Judah Street, La Playa Street, and Lower Great Highway (LGH) as shown in the Figure 1. When a train is at the terminal there is limited space for opposing directions of traffic on La Playa Street to pass and pedestrian visibility at the north and south crossings of La Playa Street are limited.

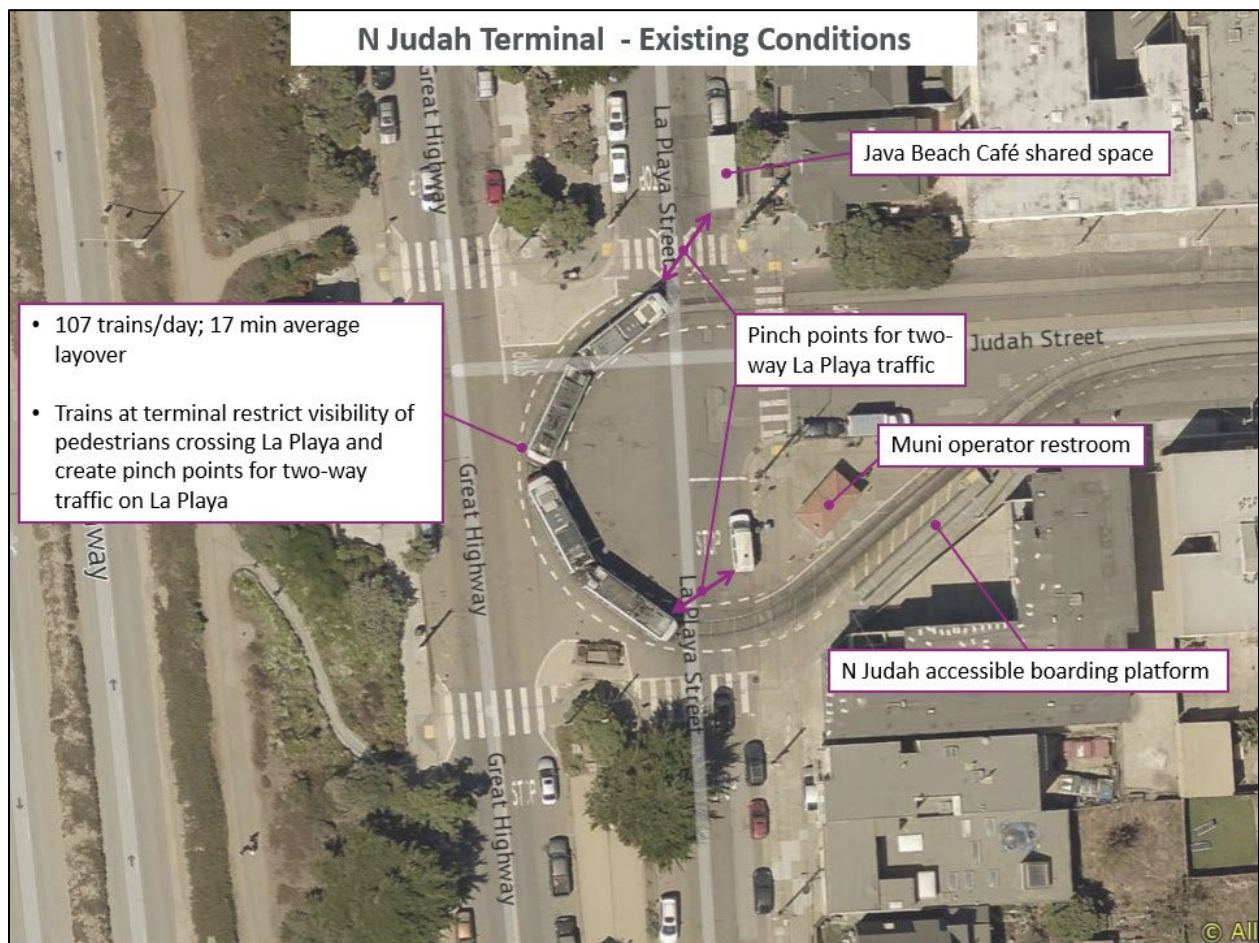


Figure 1 – Aerial View of Existing Conditions at N Judah Terminal

Proposed Project

N Judah Muni Terminal (Judah Street/La Playa Street/Lower Great Highway Intersection)

The project would implement design changes to address the pattern of collisions and safety issues noted above.

All vehicle movements that cross the N Judah terminal area would be restricted and additional motor vehicle movements would be restricted to improve pedestrian safety. Left turns and through movements would be restricted on northbound La Playa Street at Judah Street and on westbound Judah Street at La Playa Street (excepting Muni transit vehicles); through movements would be restricted on southbound La Playa Street at Judah Street; right turns would be restricted on northbound Lower Great Highway at Judah Street; left turns would be restricted on southbound Lower Great Highway at Judah Street.

Parking would be restricted on the east side of La Playa Street from Judah Street to 130 feet southerly to accommodate realigned travel lanes designed to keep motor vehicles separated from the N Judah terminal area. Safe-hit posts would be installed around the N Judah terminal area to further prevent motorists from crossing over the facility. A previously approved bikeshare station would be installed on the west side of La Playa Street north of Judah Street.

Lower Great Highway (Lincoln Way to Kirkham Street)

The project would also make the following changes to on-street parking on Lower Great Highway between Lincoln Way and Kirkham Street as requested by area residents and the District 4 Board of Supervisors' office. Parallel parking would be restricted on the east side of Lower Great Highway between Lincoln Way and Kirkham Street. Existing parallel parking would be converted to angled parking on the west side of Lower Great Highway between Lincoln Way and Kirkham Street, except within the stem of intersections at Irving Street and at Judah Street and immediately south of Judah Street. Three blue zones for accessible parking would be included on the west side of Lower Great Highway adjacent to existing curb ramps – one angled space south of Lincoln Way, one angled space south of Irving Street, and one parallel space south of Judah Street. A parallel passenger loading zone would be lengthened from approximately 20 feet to 50 feet on the west side of Lower Great Highway within the stem of the intersection at Judah Street.

The primary components of the current proposal are summarized in Figure 2 below.

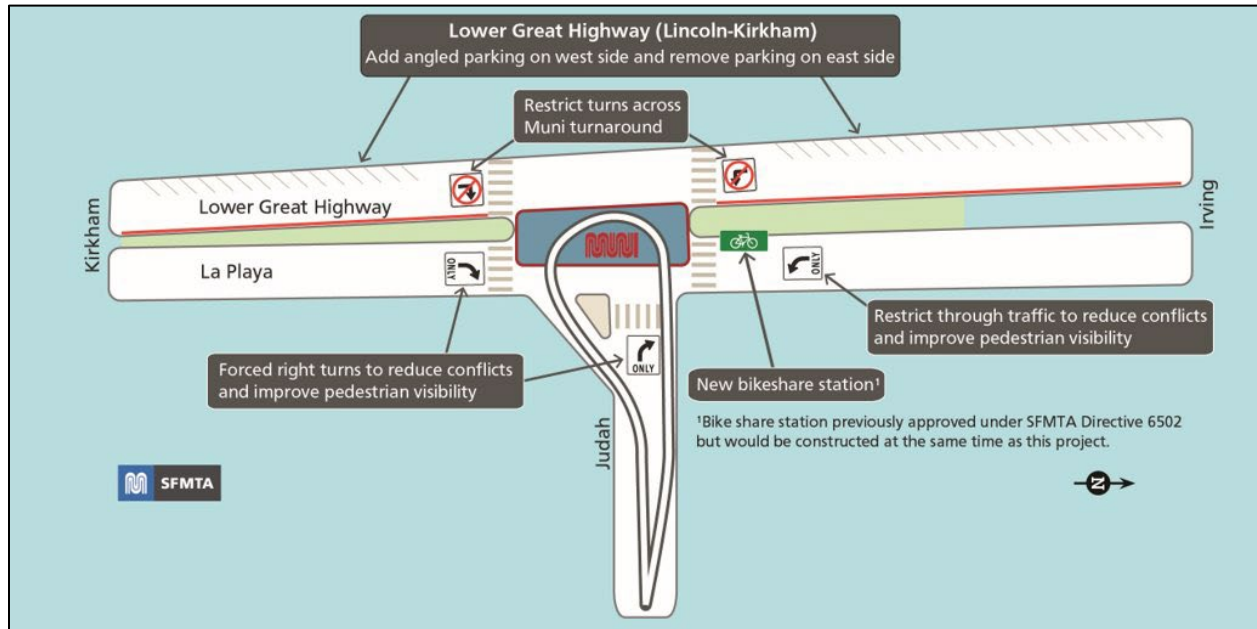


Figure 2 – Summary of Proposed Project

Related Modifications

Some of the proposed traffic modifications are consistent with proposals previously developed in 2016-17 by a project led by the San Francisco Planning Department’s Groundplay Program. At that time a series of placemaking improvements and pedestrian safety measures were designed in collaboration with the community, including turn restrictions and parking removal for daylighting and parklets. This project was put on hold in 2017 due to community concerns with parking removal and traffic circulation changes, but between 2018-22 numerous incremental changes to improve safety have been implemented, including:

- Painted safety zones at crosswalks across Lower Great Highway.
- Raised crosswalk across La Playa Street (north leg).
- Speed humps on Lower Great Highway and La Playa Street between Kirkham and Irving streets.
- “No right turn” restriction on southbound La Playa Street at Judah Street.
- Vertical delineators to deter illegal parking adjacent to the N Judah train terminal.
- Mural on Muni operator restroom building.
- Shared space at Java Beach Café.

Proposed Project Parking and Traffic Modifications

The SFMTA recommends the SFMTA Board of Directors Board approve the following parking and traffic modifications to implement project:

The following items were considered at public hearing on November 5, 2023

- A. ESTABLISH – NO RIGHT TURN - Lower Great Highway, northbound, at Judah Street.

- B. ESTABLISH – NO LEFT TURN - Lower Great Highway, southbound, at Judah Street.
- C. ESTABLISH – RIGHT TURN ONLY - La Playa Street, northbound, at Judah Street.
- D. ESTABLISH – RIGHT TURN ONLY, EXCEPT MUNI - Judah Street, westbound, at La Playa Street.
- E. ESTABLISH – TOW-AWAY NO STOPPING ANYTIME - La Playa Street, east side, from Judah Street to 130 feet southerly.
- F. ESTABLISH – 45 DEGREE ANGLE PARKING - Lower Great Highway, west side, from Lincoln Way to Irving Street, Lower Great Highway, west side, from 40 feet north of Judah Street to Irving Street, Lower Great Highway, west side, from Kirkham Street to 463 feet northerly.
- G. ESTABLISH – TOW-AWAY NO STOPPING ANYTIME - Lower Great Highway, east side, from Lincoln Way to Kirkham Street.
- H. ESTABLISH – RED ZONE - Lower Great Highway, west side, from Lincoln Way to 34 feet southerly, Lower Great Highway, west side, from Irving Street to 33 feet northerly, Lower Great Highway, west side, from Irving Street to 26 feet southerly, Lower Great Highway, west side, from Judah Street to 40 feet northerly, Lower Great Highway, west side, from 60 feet south of Judah Street north crosswalk to Judah Street south crosswalk.
- I. # ESTABLISH – WHITE ZONE, PASSENGER LOADING, AT ALL TIMES - Lower Great Highway, west side, from 10 feet to 60 feet south of Judah Street north crosswalk.
- J. # ESTABLISH – BLUE ZONE - Lower Great Highway, west side, from 34 feet to 46 feet south of Lincoln Way, Lower Great Highway, west side, from 26 feet to 38 feet south of Irving Street, Lower Great Highway, west side, from 92 feet to 116 feet south of Judah Street.

The following items were developed based on public feedback after a public hearing on November 5, 2023 (**this MTAB meeting will serve as the public hearing forum**)

- K. ESTABLISH – LEFT TURN ONLY - La Playa Street, southbound, at Judah Street.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

In response to the CPUC's concerns, SFMTA staff met with CPUC staff onsite to review potential mitigations in January 2023, including restricting motor vehicle access to/from Lower Great Highway at this intersection to prevent motorists from sideswiping trains or parking illegally and being sideswiped as a train enters or leaves the terminal, as well as modifying the design of La Playa Street to reduce conflicts between two-way traffic through the intersection

and improve the visibility of pedestrians.

Staff developed a proposal that was reviewed with the CPUC and other City agencies before being shared publicly at an open house event in June 2023 held onsite. Key themes of community feedback gathered during and after the open house included:

- Concerns about impacts of turn restrictions and a proposal to convert La Playa Street to one-way northbound on local traffic circulation.
- Requests for additional measures to improve pedestrian safety, particularly at the north leg crosswalk crossing La Playa Street at Judah Street. Several community members suggested restricting northbound through traffic on La Playa Street at Judah Street.
- Requests that angled parking be added on Lower Great Highway between Lincoln and Kirkham streets to discourage long-term oversize vehicle parking and improve parking access for residents and visitors.

Based on community feedback and input from the District 4 Board of Supervisor's Office, a revised proposal was shared at a public hearing on November 5, 2023 that included modified turn restrictions, a dead-end on southbound La Playa Street at Judah Street, and angled parking changes on Lower Great Highway between Lincoln and Kirkham streets including removal of all parking on the east side of the street and angled parking on most portions of the west side of the street.

In coordination with the District 4 Board of Supervisor's Office and based on additional community feedback, the proposal has been further modified to allow traffic to make a left turn from southbound La Playa Street onto eastbound Judah Street, rather than the previous staff proposal which included a dead-end for southbound La Playa Street at Judah Street.

ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

Several iterations of design modifications have been developed and reviewed with community members and other stakeholders including the CPUC and San Francisco Fire Department.

In their November 2022 letter to the SFMTA (enclosure 2), the CPUC suggested relocating the N Judah terminal. Staff have investigated options but have not found any feasible alternative locations for the terminal that do not involve extensive capital expenditures. In response to track noise complaints within the existing turnaround the SFMTA is piloting a program to layover N Judah trains on Judah Street between 48th Avenue and La Playa streets during early morning and late evening hours when service frequency is lower. However, this is not a feasible solution throughout the day and does not allow trains to access the accessible boarding platform located at the terminal. Staff have met with the CPUC several times to review the current proposal for turn restrictions and the addition of safe-hit posts around the terminal to address the collision history.

A proposal shared at an open house event in June 2023 is summarized in Figure 3 below that

included converting La Playa Street to one-way northbound between Kirkham and Irving streets and adding angled parking along the west side of La Playa Street. Residents expressed concerns with traffic circulation impacts and the proposed angled parking on La Playa Street and suggested additional measures to mitigate conflicts between pedestrians and motorists, as well as adding angled parking along Lower Great Highway between Lincoln and Kirkham streets to discourage long-term oversize vehicle parking and improve parking access for residents and visitors.

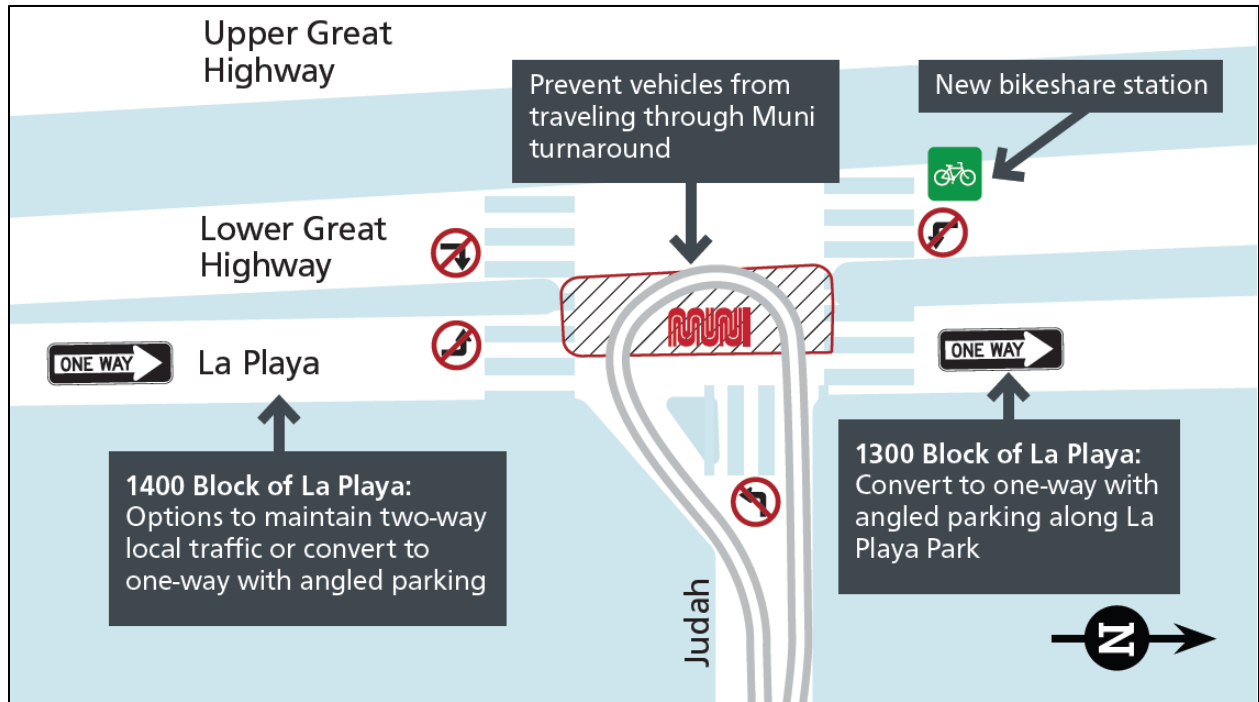


Figure 3 – June 2023 Open House Design Proposal

Staff developed a revised proposal presented at public hearing in November 2023, summarized in Figure 4 below that included angled parking on Lower Great Highway between Lincoln and Kirkham streets, maintained two-way traffic flow on La Playa Street with a forced right turn for northbound La Playa Street at Judah Street and a dead-end for southbound La Playa Street at Judah Street to reduce conflicts at the intersection with N Judah trains and pedestrians. This proposal was supported by many community members but there were continued concerns about the proposed dead-end on southbound La Playa Street at Judah Street.

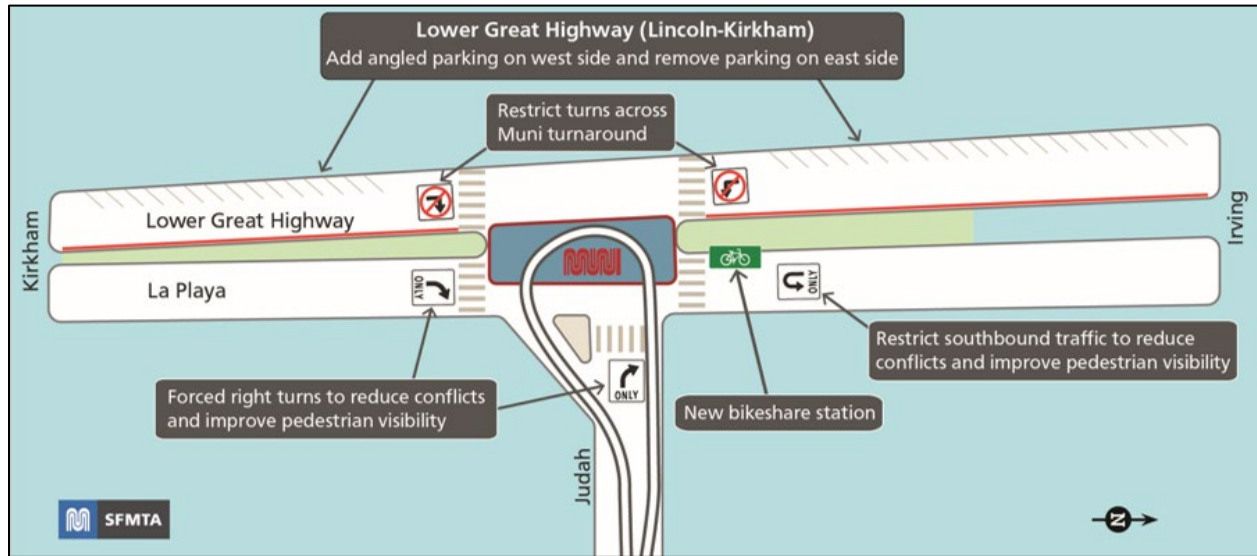


Figure 4 – November 2023 Design Proposal

FUNDING IMPACT

Funding for planning, environmental review, and preliminary engineering has been provided by the SFMTA operating budget. Construction will be funded by Transit Collision Reduction Spot Improvements Project.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The proposed traffic and parking modifications are subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). CEQA provides a categorical exemption from environmental review for operation, repair, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities pursuant to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations Section 15301.

On December 22, 2023, the San Francisco Planning Department determined that the N Judah Terminal Safety Improvements and Lower Great Highway Parking Changes Project (Items A-K, Case No. 2023-005756ENV) is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations Section 15301.

The proposed action is the Approval Action for Items A-K as defined by San Francisco Administrative Code Chapter 31.

A copy of the CEQA determination is on file with the Secretary to the SFMTA Board of Directors, and may be found in the records of the Planning Department at <https://sfplanninggis.org/pim/?tab=Planning+Applications&search=2023-005756ENV> and 49 South Van Ness Avenue, Suite 1400 in San Francisco, and is incorporated herein by reference.

OTHER APPROVALS RECEIVED OR STILL REQUIRED

The CPUC, under General Order 88-B, must review and approve components of this project related to the N Judah terminal.

Given the project's location within the Coastal Zone, additional approvals may be necessary.

Final SFMTA decisions, whether made by the City Traffic Engineer or the SFMTA Board, can be reviewed by the Board of Supervisors pursuant to Ordinance 127-18. Information about the review process can be found at:

https://sfbos.org/sites/default/files/SFMTA_Action_Review_Info_Sheet.pdf

A public hearing for items A-J was held on November 5, 2023. The public hearing for item K is taking place at the January 16, 2024 SFMTA Board of Directors Meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the SFMTA Board of Directors approves parking and traffic modifications, as set forth in items A-K above, at the intersection of Judah Street with La Playa Street and Lower Great Highway, and on Lower Great Highway between Lincoln Way and Kirkham Street, associated with the N Judah Terminal Safety Improvements and Lower Great Highway Parking Changes Project.

SAN FRANCISCO
MUNICIPAL TRANSPORTATION AGENCY
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

RESOLUTION No. _____

WHEREAS, The N Judah terminal at the intersection of Judah Street, La Playa Street, and the Lower Great Highway has experienced a pattern of collisions involving motorists and trains over a period of approximately three years; and

WHEREAS, The California Public Utilities Commission has notified the SFMTA regarding these incidents; and

WHEREAS, To reduce conflicts between N Judah trains and other vehicles and to improve pedestrian safety, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency proposes various parking and traffic modifications as follows:

- A. ESTABLISH – NO RIGHT TURN - Lower Great Highway, northbound, at Judah Street.
- B. ESTABLISH – NO LEFT TURN - Lower Great Highway, southbound, at Judah Street.
- C. ESTABLISH – RIGHT TURN ONLY - La Playa Street, northbound, at Judah Street.
- D. ESTABLISH – RIGHT TURN ONLY, EXCEPT MUNI - Judah Street, westbound, at La Playa Street.
- E. ESTABLISH – TOW-AWAY NO STOPPING ANYTIME - La Playa Street, east side, from Judah Street to 130 feet southerly.
- F. ESTABLISH – 45 DEGREE ANGLE PARKING - Lower Great Highway, west side, from Lincoln Way to Irving Street, Lower Great Highway, west side, from 40 feet north of Judah Street to Irving Street, Lower Great Highway, west side, from Kirkham Street to 463 feet northerly.
- G. ESTABLISH – TOW-AWAY NO STOPPING ANYTIME - Lower Great Highway, east side, from Lincoln Way to Kirkham Street.
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- I. ESTABLISH – WHITE ZONE, PASSENGER LOADING, AT ALL TIMES - Lower Great Highway, west side, from 10 feet to 60 feet south of Judah Street north crosswalk.
- J. ESTABLISH – BLUE ZONE - Lower Great Highway, west side, from 34 feet to 46 feet south of Lincoln Way, Lower Great Highway, west side, from 26 feet to 38 feet south of Irving Street, Lower Great Highway, west side, from 92 feet to 116 feet south of Judah Street.
- K. ESTABLISH – LEFT TURN ONLY - La Playa Street, southbound, at Judah Street, and,

WHEREAS, The proposed traffic and parking modifications are subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); CEQA provides a categorical exemption from environmental review for operation, repair, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing

highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities pursuant to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations Section 15301; and,

WHEREAS, On December 22, 2023, the San Francisco Planning Department determined that the N Judah Terminal Safety Improvements and Lower Great Highway Parking Changes Project (Items A-K, Case No. 2023-005756ENV,) is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to Title 14 of the California Code of Regulations Section 15301.

WHEREAS, The proposed action is the Approval Action for Items A-K as defined by San Francisco Administrative Code Chapter 31; and,

WHEREAS, A copy of the CEQA determination is on file with the Secretary to the SFMTA Board of Directors, and may be found in the records of the Planning Department by Case Number at <https://sfplanninggis.org/pim/> or 49 South Van Ness Avenue, Suite 1400 in San Francisco, and are incorporated herein by reference; and,

WHEREAS, The public has been notified about the proposed modifications and has been given the opportunity to comment on those modifications through the public hearing process; and

WHEREAS, Final SFMTA decisions, whether made by the City Traffic Engineer or the SFMTA Board of Directors, can be reviewed by the Board of Supervisors pursuant to Ordinance 127-18. Items I and J are Final SFMTA Decisions as defined by Ordinance 127-18; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors approves parking and traffic modifications, as set forth in items A-K above, at the intersection of Judah Street with La Playa Street and Lower Great Highway, and on Lower Great Highway between Lincoln Way and Kirkham Street, associated with the N Judah Terminal Safety Improvements and Lower Great Highway Parking Changes Project.

I certify that the foregoing resolution was adopted by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Board of Directors at its meeting of January 16, 2024.

Secretary to the Board of Directors
San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency

PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION

505 Van Ness Ave
San Francisco, CA 94102



November 30, 2022

File Number: COR2022100003

La Playa and Judah Street

City of San Francisco, County of San Francisco

Melvyn Henry
Chief Safety Officer
San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency
1 South Van Ness Ave, 6th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94103

SENT VIA EMAIL

Re: Safety Concerns on La Playa and Judah Street At-Grade Highway-Light Rail Transit Crossing, Identified as CPUC No. 125N-13.58 in the City of San Francisco, County of San Francisco.

Dear Mr. Henry:

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) has regulatory and safety oversight over all Highway-Light Rail Transit crossings in California. During a recent review of incidents at the La Playa and Judah Street Highway-Light Rail Transit crossing (crossing), identified above, staff from the CPUC's Rail Transit Safety Branch (RTSB) and Rail Crossings and Engineering Branch (RCEB) has noticed an unusually high number of incidents at this crossing within the last three years. Below is a table summarizing those incidents.

Date of Incident	Description of Incident
11/16/2022	South Bound Motorist with trailer Made a U-turn on Great Highway
7/4/2022	Left turn into Judah
3/25/2022	West bound driver turning left on Great Highway
3/18/2022	Parked Vehicle near the tracks
2/11/2022	Right turn while going south bound on La Playa
1/14/2022	Parked Garbage Truck Near the Tracks
10/20/2021	City's Parks and Recs Vehicle attempting to squeeze past the train from Judah St
9/27/2021	Ambulance parked next to the tracks to give medical attention to a citizen and was hit after the train began to move
8/05/2021	West bound driver attempting to turn right onto the Great Highway
8/23/2020	South bound motorist on La Playa attempting to turn right onto Great Highway
2/9/2020	South bound motorist on La Playa attempting to turn right onto Great Highway
2/8/2020	South bound motorist on La Playa attempting to turn right onto Great Highway
5/19/2019	Vehicle parked within the dynamic envelope

Currently 114 trains per day travel through the crossing. Per our last conversation with San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) staff, the crossing is routinely occupied by parked two-car trains for extended periods of time. **The CPUC staff considers storing a 2 car consist in an active four-way intersection a hazardous condition.**

- Utilizing an intersection as a temporary storage facility for trains confuses motorists who are both familiar and unfamiliar with the crossing. Several of the incidents involved vehicles owned and operated by the City of San Francisco as well as rental vehicles.
- When a train is occupying the crossing, the Light Rail Vehicle's (LRV) block the path of vehicles traveling south bound on La Playa Street, forcing the automobiles into the opposing lane in order to continue forward or turn left to Judah. The parked LRV's force motorists to make this dangerous maneuver which can lead to head on vehicle-to-vehicle collisions.
- Autonomous vehicles may have a difficult time navigating this corridor.
- A LRV blocking the intersection will confuse motorists whose GPS navigation systems have directed them to use the intersection.
- On September of 2021, an emergency response vehicle parked in proximity of a two-car LRV to perform their duties. The two-car LRV left the scene and struck the ambulance as it moved through the turn around. This hazardous condition was created by a two-car, parked LRV blocking a four-way intersection.
- A LRV parked in the middle of the intersection may increase the time necessary for emergency responders to reach the scene of an incident, reducing public safety in the area.

The CPUC recommends SFMTA find an alternative location to park their trains to create a safer environment for San Francisco residents and visitors and increase the level of service for motorists at the intersection. The current satellite view shows the storage of trains in between the Avenues on Judah.



Please reply to CPUC staff in writing by January 31, 2023 with the City of San Francisco's plan to address the safety concerns at the crossing. For crossing safety questions, please contact Sia Mozaffari at (415) 471-4129 or siavash.mozaffari@cpuc.ca.gov. For SFMTA incident questions, please contact Jimmy Xia at (415) 517-7052 or jimmy.xia@cpuc.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Felix Ko'.

Felix Ko, P.E.
Senior Utilities Engineer
Rail Crossings and Engineering Branch
Rail Safety Division