



COLUMBUS AVENUE NEIGHBORHOOD TRANSPORTATION STUDY

Public Workshop Summary

Date: September 20, 2007
Time: 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
Location: Jean Parker Elementary School

Purpose of the Workshop

The Columbus Avenue Neighborhood Transportation Study includes workshops with the community to share information and obtain input at key points in the process, including identifying transportation priorities and developing solutions.

The first Public Workshop was held on September 20th. At this first meeting, community members were invited to share and exchange views on the top transportation priorities for Columbus Avenue, and issues that should be included in the study. The meeting complements the first stakeholder meeting held on June 27, 2007 that also asked leaders from neighborhood organizations to prioritize transportation issues. Based on the priorities identified, the study team will analyze the community's top priority problems and develop potential improvements.

Meeting Publicity

The Workshop was publicized through existing neighborhood organizations, outreach to the community at large, and through the media. The Study Team contacted members of the study mailing list a month before the event, followed by a reminder email sent two weeks prior to the event. Fliers were posted on the bus shelters in the study area, and in the windows of participating merchants. Meeting information was also posted on the project's website. RENEW SF followed up with community members on the mailing list with phone calls and emails with help from the Mayor's office. The Study Team published a media advisory to local newspapers, including the Chinese language press on September 17. A Chinese language press conference was held on September 18, 2007.

Workshop Structure and Materials

Agenda

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|--------|----|---------------------------------|
| 6:30pm | 1. | Sign In and Open House |
| 6:45pm | 2. | Welcome and Introduction |
| 6:55pm | 3. | Large Group Q&A |

7:00pm	4.	Transportation Issues Presentation
7:25pm	5.	Introduction of Small Group Sessions
7:30pm	6.	Small Group Sessions

Presentation and Exercise Boards

RENEW SF welcomed the evening's participants and described the study background and objectives. Rachel Hiatt of SFCTA and Jeff Tumlin of Nelson\Nygaard Consulting Associates presented the outreach findings to date and a synopsis of key pedestrian, transit, and streetscape issues identified through preliminary analysis and outreach. The presentation included ideas that San Francisco as well as other cities in the Bay Area have implemented to improve pedestrian conditions and commercial enterprise along corridors with some of the same issues facing Columbus Avenue. Examples of treatments mentioned in the presentation include situating trees in the parking lane, allowing merchants to rent parking spaces to place outdoor seating, landscaped medians and pedestrian amenities.

After the presentation, participants split into five groups including a Chinese speaking group to rotate through five stations. The stations were designed to obtain participant input on 1) transportation issues in the study area, 2) where transportation problems exist along Columbus Avenue, and 3) community preferences for the tradeoffs between different approaches to transportation improvements. A description of the stations is given below:

- **Station #1 – Top Transportation Priorities**

Each participant listed their top two or three transportation concerns, which were recorded on butcher paper by the station facilitator.

- **Station #2 and #3 – Tradeoffs Sets 1 and 2**

Participants placed dots on a continuum expressing their preference for addressing often conflicting issues or problems.

- **Station #4 and #5 – Mapping Exercise, North and South Columbus Avenue**

Six boards, each with an aerial section of Columbus Avenue, gave opportunity for the participants to place dots on locations that they considered to be problematic.

Findings

This section summarizes the comments received from the Workshop participants. The concluding part of this section lists the top transportation concerns and priorities of the Workshop participants.

The Participants

Workshop participants represented community members living and working in the study area. Two dozen community members and members of neighborhood groups attended, plus seven representatives of city agencies. A relatively large number of Chinese language speakers attended the event.

Station #1 – Top Transportation Priorities

The participants ranked their top three priorities for the study area, the highest being better pedestrian safety and circulation, though differences within the priority also emerged. Specifically, many participants suggested widening sidewalks and retiming signals so that the maximum wait time for a pedestrian is 30 seconds. Some participants also identified parking issues as a top priority, suggesting pricing parking to meet demand, or providing easier access to parking for merchants, shoppers and deliveries. Another top priority listed by participants was providing bike lanes in the study area and specifically along Columbus. Pedestrian and parking issues emerged as more urgent priorities than addressing transit service. Other priorities listed include:

- Conrad Square traffic calming
- Public toilets
- Sense of place/identity to Columbus Avenue and North Beach
- Preserve all streets to vehicular traffic for better traffic circulation, emergency response and public transit
- Noise abatement

Other issues mentioned as second priority include:

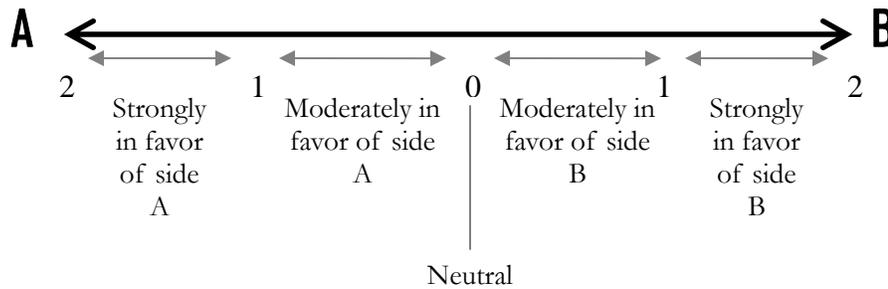
- Truck delivery times
- Public transit effectiveness
- Crosswalks
- Trees
- Clutter on sidewalks – remove meter stubs

Cafe seating and wider sidewalks in the Conrad Square area took third priority. Additionally, several notes and comments were written on the priority sheets:

- Does valet parking help or hinder?
- Build the central subway transit station in the Pagoda Theater
- Mason Street should not be closed to traffic as it would divert traffic onto Columbus
- Streets like Stockton Street should be closed to traffic
- Administer double parking fines
- Neighborhood permits should not be oversold

Station #2 and #3 – Tradeoffs Set 1 and 2

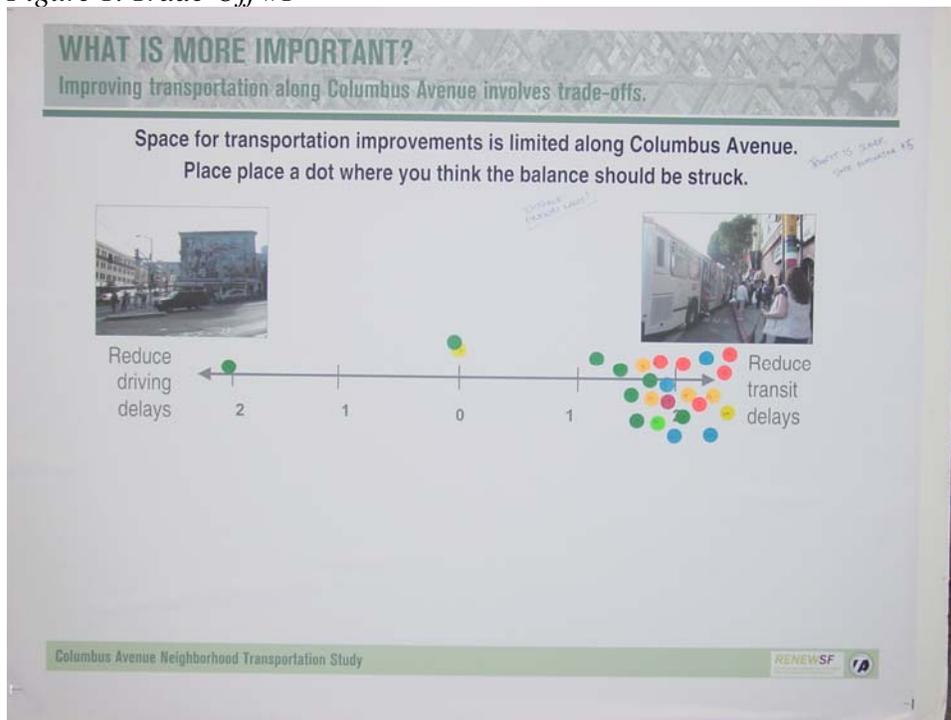
Since the available street and sidewalk space – as well as funding - for transportation along Columbus Avenue is limited, the trade-off exercise was designed to help understand where the Columbus community would strike a balance among competing priorities. Transportation priorities that are often in conflict, in dense urban areas such as Columbus Avenue, were placed on either side of a continuum, with numerical values along the continuum being 2, 1, 0, 1, 2, from left to right. A generic continuum is diagramed below:



Trade-Off #1: Reduce Driving Delays vs. Reduce Transit Delays

Participants overwhelmingly favored reducing transit delays over driving delays. Close to 90 percent strongly favored reducing transit delays, with one participant commenting that transit service has been slower since the discontinuation of the 15-Third line. Another comment alluded to double parking as being problematic for transit service. Two participants remained neutral between the two priorities and one strongly favored reducing driving delays.

Figure 1. Trade-Off #1



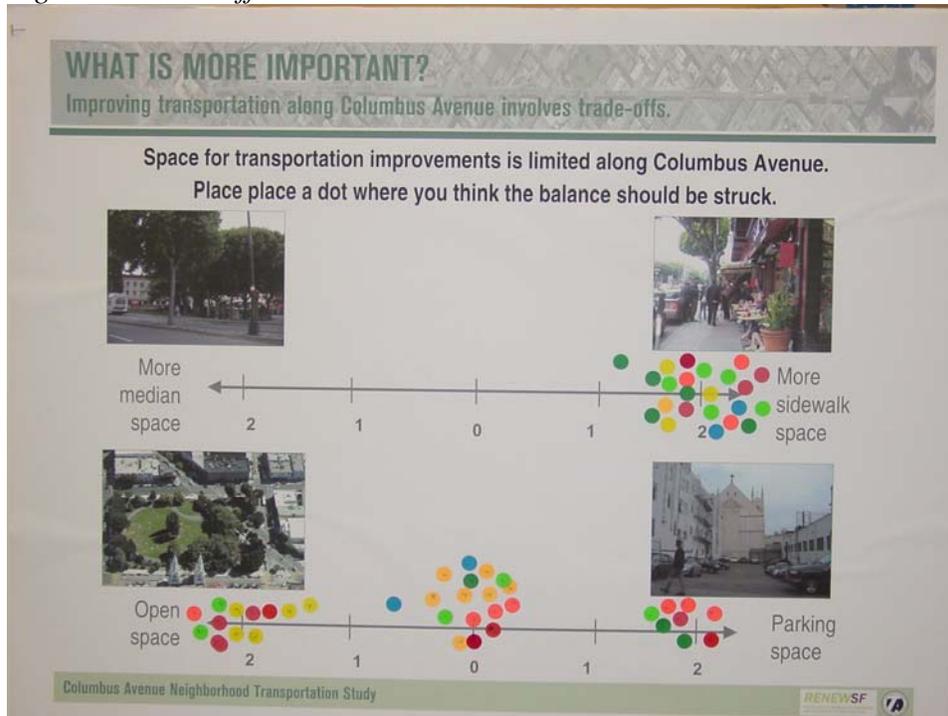
Trade-Off #2: More Median Space vs. More Sidewalk Space

With the majority of stakeholders expressing concern about pedestrian circulation and safety, it is not surprising that everyone was **strongly in favor of more sidewalk space** as more important than more space in the landscaped median of Columbus Avenue.

Trade-Off #3: Open Space vs. Parking Space

The results of this trade-off were mixed – when deciding how to use available space along Columbus, many workshop participants did not have a strong desire to see that space used to provide more open space versus more parking. The majority, 42 percent, did not see open space or parking space as the most important use, and remained neutral on the issue. Another 34 percent of participants favored open space over parking, while more parking space was strongly favored for 21 percent of respondents.

Figure 2. Trade-Offs #2 and #3



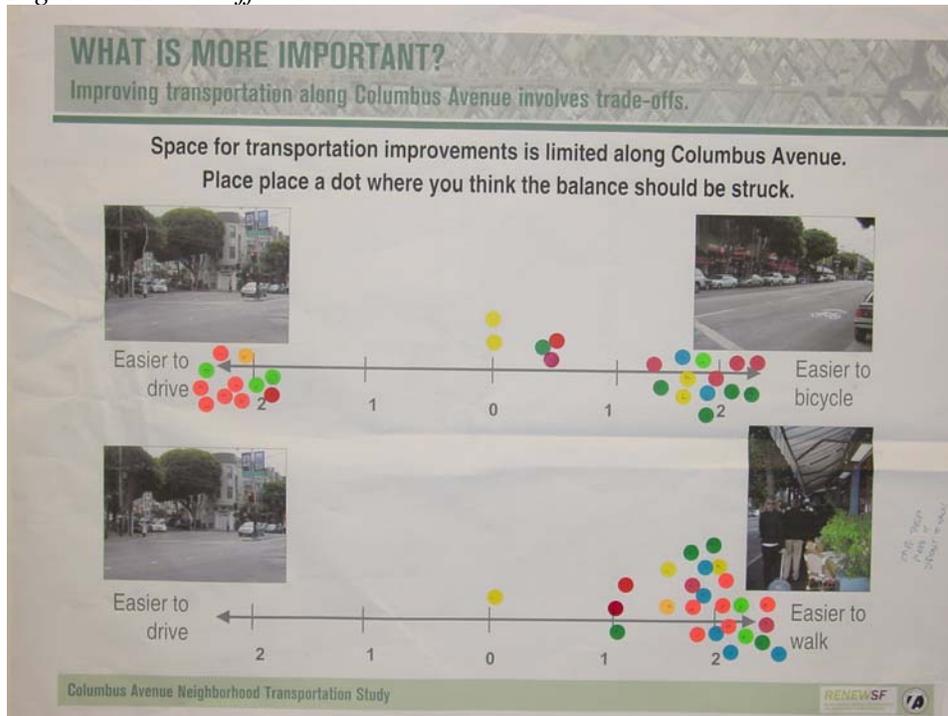
Trade-Off #4: Easier to Drive vs. Easier to Bicycle

Workshop participants' views on whether to improve driving or to improve bicycling were highly polarized. Participants' views were evenly split, either strongly in favor of improving driving, or for improving bicycle access. Only two remained neutral between the two modes and an additional three were moderately in favor of improvements to bicycling.

Trade-Off #5: Easier to Drive vs. Easier to Walk

Again, workshop participants identified improving pedestrian access and circulation as a greater priority than improving driving. Asked to weigh improvements for pedestrians versus improvements for drivers, participants overwhelmingly chose **improvements to walking over driving**. Only one participant indicated neutrality on the subject.

Figure 3. Trade-Offs #4 and #5



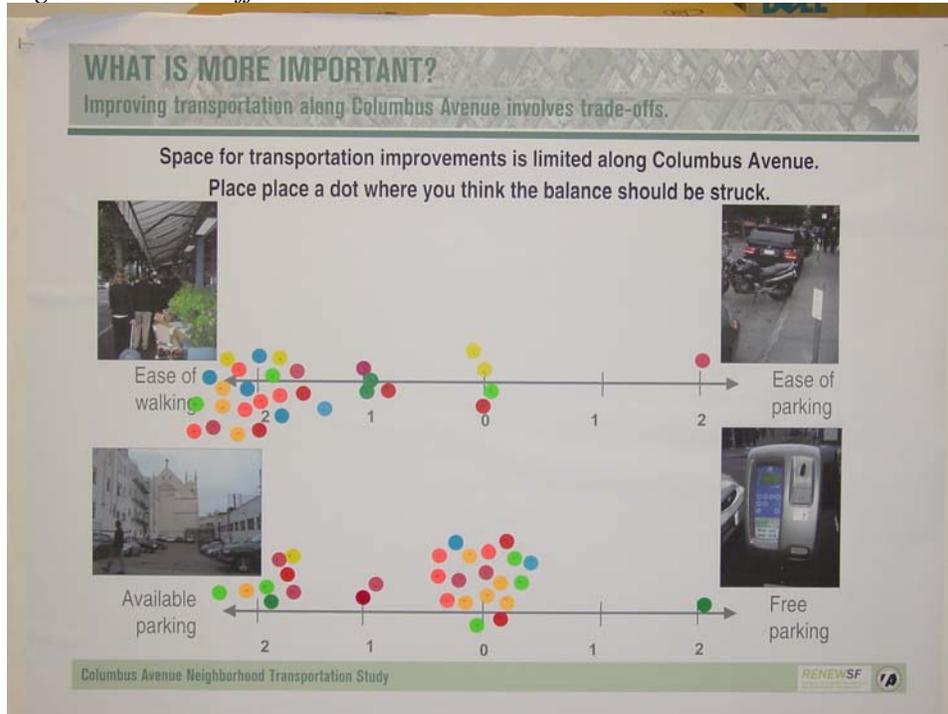
Trade-Off #6: Ease of Walking vs. Ease of Parking

Though Workshop participants clearly indicated favor for pedestrian improvements, parking still emerged an important concern, as shown by the placement of dots along the trade-off bar. Just over **80 percent favored better walking conditions while thirteen percent remained neutral on whether space for walking or space for parking is more important.** Only one participant was strongly in favor of improving parking conditions.

Trade-Off #7: Available Parking vs. Free Parking

Workshop participants prefer to make parking available on Columbus, rather than providing free parking. Just over half of the participants remained neutral between the two options, while another third were in favor of available parking. Only one participant indicated strong preference for free parking.

Figure 4. Trade-Offs #6 and #7



Station #4 and #5 – Mapping Exercise, North and South Columbus Avenue

These stations involved a set of aerial photographs stitched together to form the entire corridor. The boards included three key bits of information: 1) Muni routes intersecting the area, 2) intersections identified through previous outreach as problematic, and 3) intersections sustaining severe or fatal pedestrian-vehicular injuries as gathered from the Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS) database. Participants were asked to place green dots on favorite spots along Columbus – places along Columbus that work well or have positive street features. Red dots indicate areas considered to be problematic. Since some areas were marked with both red and green dots, participants were asked to write comments on the maps to explain why they designated the area one way or the other. The results are presented below.

Segment 1: Columbus Avenue from the Transamerica Pyramid to Kearny Street

At the base of the Transamerica Pyramid is the Jackson Square Historic District. Participants indicated that they liked the area but were concerned with the lack of pedestrian activity and ill-defined intersections for pedestrians. Participants placed ten red dots on the intersection of Washington Street, Montgomery Street and Columbus Avenue. Comments regarding the intersection included:

- Chaotic intersection and lacks clarity for buses, cars and pedestrians
- Very poor pedestrian crossing with high speed cars merging and poorly marked crosswalks. Important intersection with the Transamerica Pyramid and historic buildings but needs drama at street level. Street trees are inadequate and spotty

The Jackson Street and Columbus Avenue intersection received one red dot with a comment stating that the right-turn lane from Jackson posed a hazard to pedestrians. Two red dots were placed on the intersection of Kearny Street and Columbus Avenue but no comments were written to elaborate on the problems. However, one comment did concern traffic movement on Kearny, between Market and Columbus, stating that the movement is “always stop and go.”

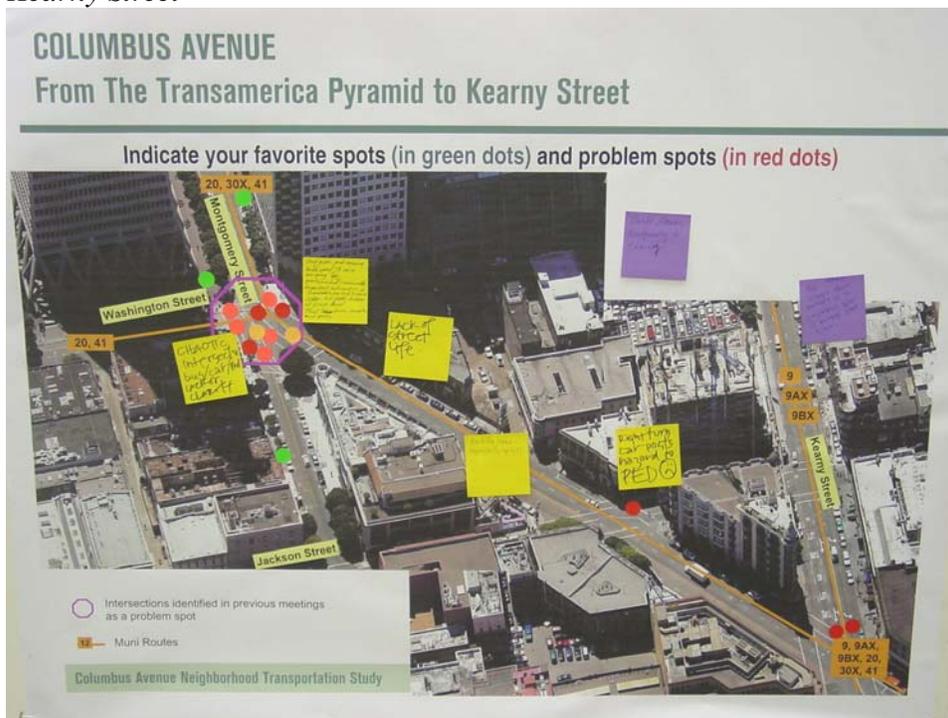
An additional three comments were written on the board that spoke generally to the area between Montgomery and Kearny:

- Lacks of street life
- Three lanes from Montgomery to Kearny
- No bike lane, especially uphill

Intersection dot summary:

- Washington Street, Montgomery Street and Columbus Avenue – 10 red dots
- Jackson Street and Columbus Avenue – 1 red dot
- Kearny Street, Pacific Street and Columbus Avenue – 2 red dots

Figure 6. Mapping Exercise, Columbus Avenue from the Transamerica Pyramid to Kearny Street



Segment 2: From Kearny Street to Stockton Street

The stretch between Kearny Street and Stockton Street is where the majority of the commercial and historical uses that define North Beach are located. These uses attract high volumes of pedestrians as well as cars which raise safety concerns, especially at the intersections of Broadway, Grant Avenue and Columbus as well as Green Street, Stockton Street and Columbus.

Participants were highly concerned with the intersection of Grant Avenue and Broadway and the movement of pedestrians from Grant onto Columbus. Thirteen red dots were placed on this intersection with comments stating:

- Complicated intersection that is difficult to cross
- Chaotic
- One of the ugliest and dangerous intersections
- Green light too short for pedestrians, bad traffic light
- East-west movement of cars is too fast – like a freeway

One participant drew an “artistic gateway” at Grant and Broadway and another one at upper Grant Avenue to symbolize Chinatown and North Beach respectively. Between the two gateways, he drew a pedestrian link across Columbus.

Though the intersection of Broadway and Columbus is problematic, as indicated by the number of collisions between pedestrians and vehicles in the SWITRS database, it received only one red dot. The comments received for the intersection included:

- Eliminate the southbound right turn lane from Broadway onto Columbus – square the right-turn
- Cars turning right from Broadway onto Columbus often do not see pedestrians

All other intersections along this segment received red dots as well. The Pacific Avenue, Kearny Street and Columbus intersection had two red dots and a comment reading “ugly and dangerous intersection.” Vallejo Street and Columbus received three red dots with comments stating:

- Dangerous intersections for pedestrians and drivers
- Should not allow turn on red
- Pedestrian safety concern

The intersection of Green Street, Stockton Street and Columbus received two red dots and comments stating (see the following segment summary for additional comments on this intersection):

- Dangerous and unnatural intersection
- Need [signal] lights like financial district, auto green and pedestrian green should not be at the same time. Ticket pedestrians who cross against lights. All traffic lights timed WAY TOO LONG, especially at Green. The result is that pedestrians ignore red lights (so do cars). Max wait: 30 seconds!

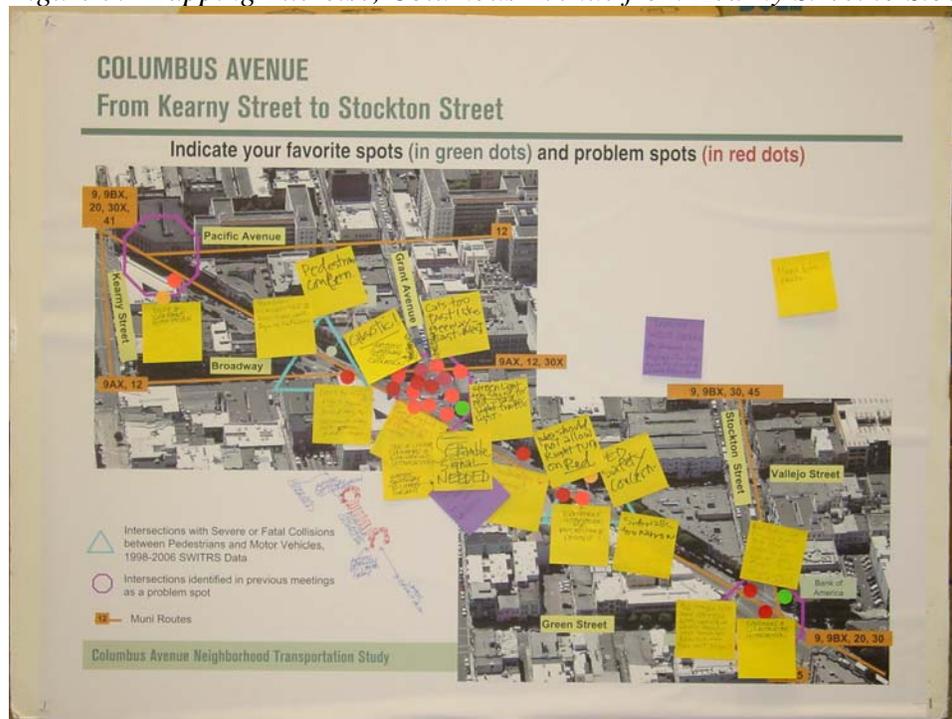
Besides the intersections, comments received for the stretch of Columbus between Kearny and Stockton highlighted the narrow sidewalks and the need for more bike racks. One participant commented: “trade-off: wider sidewalks and remove the median (the trees make the sidewalk and street really dark).”

Intersection dot summary:

- Pacific Avenue, Kearny Street and Columbus Avenue – 2 red dots
- Broadway and Columbus Avenue – 1 red dot
- Grant Avenue, Broadway and Columbus Avenue – 13 red dots

- Vallejo Street and Columbus Avenue – 3 red dots
- Green Street, Stockton Street and Columbus Avenue – 2 red dots (more red dots in following segment)

Figure 7. Mapping Exercise, Columbus Avenue from Kearny Street to Stockton Street



Segment 3: From Stockton Street to Filbert Street

This two block stretch contains Washington Square Park (labeled a “public park” by a participant), numerous outdoor cafes and the Saints Peter and Paul Church. Participants placed green dots on the park and indicated which trees they favored (poplars). Other areas indicated in green were Saints Peter and Paul Church (“a symbol of the community”) and the small park across from Washington Square (“peaceful and beautiful”). Other recommendations and comments received for the segment included:

- Remove individual meters and replace with multiple space meters
- Bus and intersection bulb-outs – Yes!
- Narrow sidewalks (comment received twice)
- 21 newsracks take up sidewalk space at the intersection of Union and Columbus (southwest corner), plus 10 more at Filbert, half a block away

As the Green Street, Stockton Street and Columbus intersection was also shown in this segment, additional comments were posted regarding its pedestrian safety issues. Six more red dots were placed on the intersections with comments stating:

- Poor layout of crosswalks
- Chaotic intersection for pedestrian safety. Bad traffic light
- Scramble signal needed
- Difficult to cross street

Segment 4: From Filbert Street to Chestnut Street

Between Filbert Street and Chestnut Street lies Joe DiMaggio Playground, a branch of the San Francisco Public Library and low income housing developments. Mason Street between Columbus and Lombard Street received six red dots and comments mainly recommending to close the street:

- North Beach needs more recreational activity space. Put the library on the triangle with housing above. Best close Mason Street and make intersection a real public space (x2)
- Mason Street is critical to emergency response vehicles, do not close the street to traffic (x2)

The Mason Street and Columbus intersection did receive a red dot, with a comment stating “buses drive through crosswalk to approach bus stop.” This comment is referring to the 30-Stockton route in the northbound direction. Bus drivers tend to drive through the t-intersection while the signal is red, creating a hazard for crossing pedestrians, especially children.

The intersection of Lombard Street and Columbus received three red dots with one comment stating “ugly intersection” and other recommending to “keep Lombard Street between the Crooked Street and Coit Tower free flowing.”

An additional three comments concerned the interaction between the cable cars and pedestrians. The cable car route seems problematic for pedestrian and bicyclist safety:

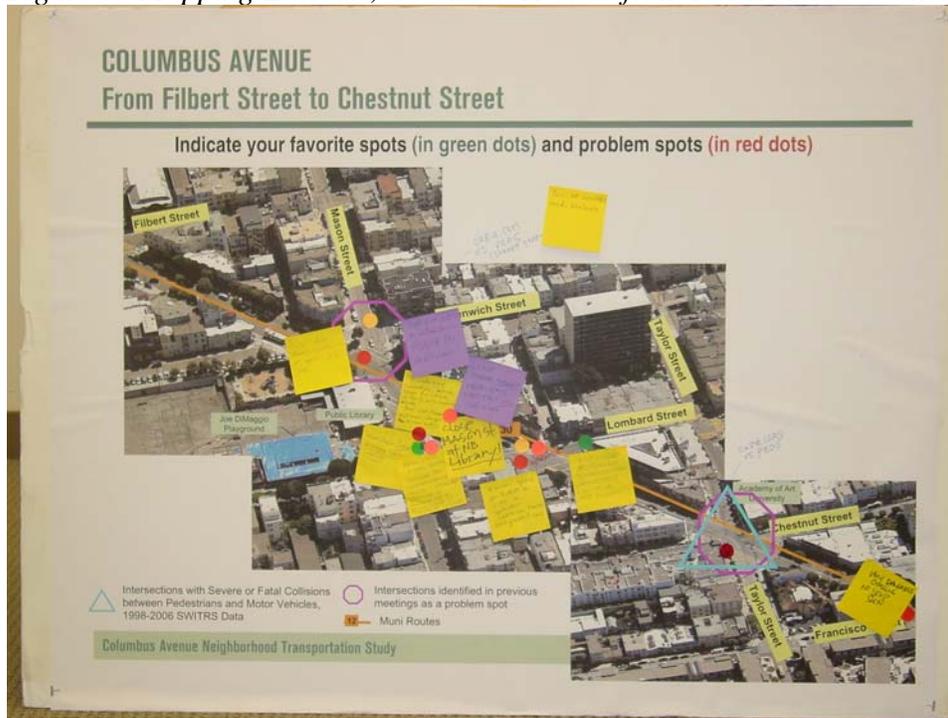
- For two blocks on Columbus, honor the cable cars!
- Narrow space for bikes to ride in between cable car tracks and parked cars
- Cable cars vs. pedestrians at the intersections of Taylor Street and Columbus and Mason Street and Greenwich Street. The signals are confusing and not enforced for cable car operations

The general comment received in this segment that also applies for the entire length of Columbus is that bike lanes need to be added for safety.

Intersection dot summary:

- Mason Street between Columbus and Lombard Street – 6 red dots
- Mason Street and Columbus Avenue – 1 red dot
- Lombard Street and Columbus Avenue – 3 red dots

Figure 9. Mapping Exercise, Columbus Avenue from Filbert Street to Chestnut Street



Segment 5: From Chestnut Street to Beach Street

In this segment, the Francisco Street and Columbus intersection received the most comments. A total of nine red dots were placed on the intersection and comments highlighted the pedestrian safety issues at the intersection:

- No signal
- Very dangerous crossing with no stop sign
- North-south traffic is too fast and dangerous for the pedestrian. Pedestrians often have to dodge cars
- Cars and buses do not yield to pedestrians

The Taylor Street, Chestnut Street and Columbus intersection received three red dots and a comment stating “very dangerous intersection.” The intersection of Bay Street and Columbus received two red dots with a comment highlighting the tendency of cars to run red light proceeding northbound on Columbus or westbound on Bay.

Joseph Conrad Square received two red dots with a lengthy comment: “needs traffic calming, more pedestrian, café crowd, another Belden Place, a soft place to land! We have horse and carriages (stand up scooters), t-shirts stands and bicyclists taking up space. Car, truck and tour bus traffic make it a noisy place. Ripe for the homeless. Help adopt historic Conrad Square” (Additional comments are contained in the following segment).

Other general comments received include:

- Indonesian consulate: nice atmosphere
- Price street parking to match demand, all of North Beach, stop giving it away

Intersection dot summary:

- Taylor Street, Chestnut Street and Columbus Avenue – 3 red dots
- Francisco Street and Columbus Avenue – 9 red dots
- Bay Street and Columbus Avenue – 2 red dots

Figure 10. Mapping Exercise, Columbus Avenue from Chestnut Street to Beach Street**Segment 6: From Beach Street to the Waterfront**

Participants indicated that the waterfront especially Aquatic Park and its attractions were some of their favorite spaces along the northern stretch of the corridor. North Point Street was highlighted in this segment with two red dots as its intersections are “ugly and dangerous,” and its “triangular intersections are unwelcoming to pedestrians. Use pavers to increase safety.”

Joseph Conrad Square received two additional red dots in this segment with a comment reading “homeless and trash are problems, threatening at night.” The intersection of Hyde Street and Jefferson Street received one red dot and a comment highlighting the conflicts between bicyclists and vehicular traffic. Another red dot was placed on the crossing of Beach Street from the end of Columbus to the Cannery with a comment highlighting the safety issues of the pedestrian crossing.

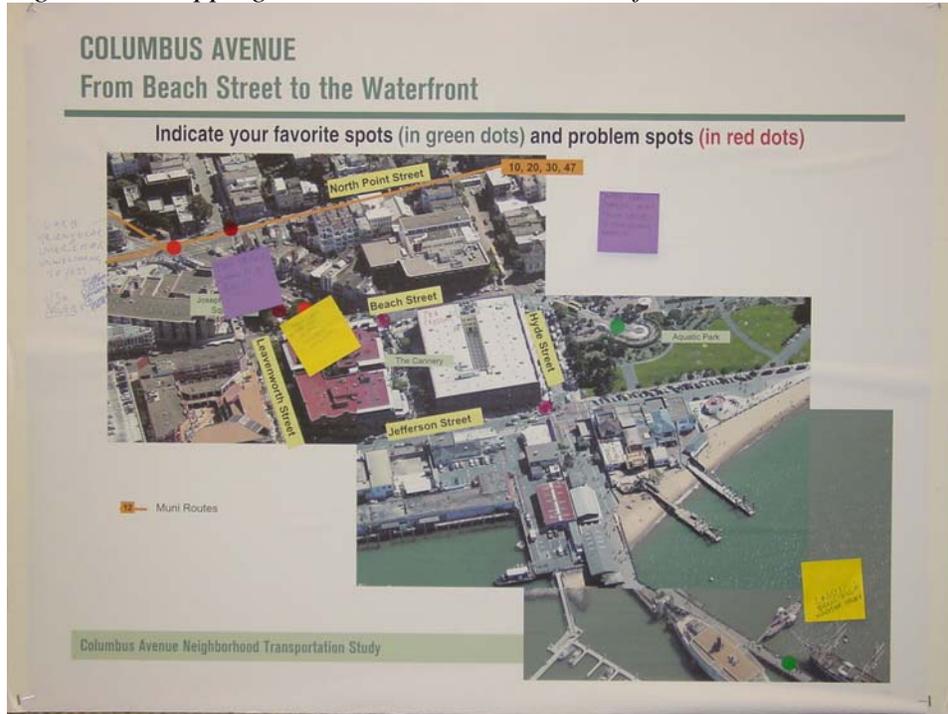
Other general comments for the segment included:

- Less car parking and more truck parking to stop double parking
- Two traffic lanes north of Bay Street
- Waterfront has unique Maritime history

Intersection dot summary:

- North Point Street and Columbus Avenue – 2 red dots
- Hyde Street and Jefferson Street – 1 red dot
- Crossing of Beach Street from the end of Columbus to the Cannery – 1 red dot

Figure 11. Mapping Exercise, Columbus Avenue from Beach Street to the Waterfront

**Guidance for Development of Improvements**

The feedback received from participants helps the study team identify the types of transportation improvements for Columbus as well as locations for improvements. The participants at the public workshop all stressed the need for improvements to the pedestrian realm in the study area and especially along Columbus Avenue.

Types of Improvements (in priority order based on workshop feedback):

- Pedestrian safety and circulation
- Parking availability
- Bicycle amenities, including lanes and racks
- Reduction of transit delays
- Intersection treatments to manage the flow and speed of vehicles

Potential Locations of Improvements (in order of number of red dots received above three):

- Grant Avenue, Broadway and Columbus Avenue (13 red dots)
- Washington Street, Montgomery Street and Columbus Avenue (10 red dots)
- Francisco Street and Columbus Avenue (9 red dots)

- Green Street, Stockton Street and Columbus Avenue (8 red dots)
- Mason Street between Columbus and Lombard Street (6 red dots)
- Union Street and Columbus Avenue (3 red dots)
- Lombard Street and Columbus Avenue (3 red dots)
- Taylor Street, Chestnut Street and Columbus Avenue (3 red dots)

Some of the types and locations of improvements overlap with those identified through previous outreach, including the Neighborhood Stakeholder meeting held in July (the ones that overlap are in **bold**):

Types of Improvements (Stakeholder Meeting results):

- **Pedestrian safety, circulation and culture**
- Transit improvements:
 - Short term - Muni access, quality and connectivity
 - Long term - Inclusion of Central Subway into the planning of Columbus Avenue
- **Intersection management and enhancement**
- Streetscape improvements: use transportation improvements to enhance neighborhood characteristics and ambience

Potential Locations of Improvements (Stakeholder Meeting results):

- **Green Street, Stockton Street and Columbus Avenue intersection (12 red dots)**
- **Grant Avenue, Broadway and Columbus Avenue intersection (including pedestrian continuity along Grant Avenue from Chinatown to North Beach) (7 red dots)**
- **Mason Street, Greenwich Street and Columbus Avenue intersection (6 red dots)**
- **Chestnut Street, Taylor Street and Columbus Avenue intersection (6 red dots)**
- **Francisco Street and Columbus Avenue intersection (6 red dots)**
- Jones Street, Bay Street and Columbus Avenue intersection (6 red dots)
- **Washington Street, Montgomery Street and Columbus Avenue intersection (5 red dots)**
- **Union Street and Columbus Avenue (4 red dots)**
- Kearny Street, Pacific Street and Columbus Avenue intersection (3 red dots)

All the intersections listed as having safety issues by the public workshop participants are included in the list compiled by the stakeholders, with the exception of Lombard Street and Columbus Avenue which did not receive as many red dots by the stakeholders. From these two lists, the top five intersections are therefore (parenthesis denotes the number of red dots received from both meetings):

1. Grant Avenue, Broadway and Columbus Avenue intersection (20 red dots)
2. Green Street, Stockton Street and Columbus Avenue intersection (20 red dots)
3. Washington Street, Montgomery Street and Columbus Avenue (15 red dots)
4. Francisco Street and Columbus Avenue (15 red dots)
5. Mason Street, Greenwich Street and Columbus Avenue intersection (12 red dots)

Next Steps

The priorities identified by the community members and stakeholders will be documented to determine the type of analysis and technical data needed to develop potential solutions in the next phase of the study. Since the merchants were not well represented at either meeting, the study team will meet with them at their monthly meetings or may engage in door-to-door interviews to receive their input.