

Organization Comment
Letters and Responses
on the Draft EIS/EIR
for the
Van Ness Avenue
Bus Rapid Transit Project

Appendices I (contd')

APPENDIX I

Organization Comment Letters and Responses

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PACIFIC HEIGHTS RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

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TELEPHONE: (415) 922-3572

19 December 2011

Van Ness BRT EIS/EIR
Attn: Mr. Michael Schwartz
San Francisco County Transportation Authority
100 Van Ness Avenue, 26th floor
San Francisco, CA 94102

RECEIVED DEC 27 2011

Dear Mr. Schwartz:

Thank you for providing the opportunity for the Pacific Heights Residents' Association to comment on the draft Van Ness EIS/EIR. While in general we view the project and the document as creditable, we have some major general concerns with the scope of the project and the commitment of the City to address the major traffic impacts of the project if one of the build alternatives is adopted.

First, regarding scope of the project, we do not understand why the northern terminus of the project ends at Lombard instead of Bay. The justification for Lombard over Bay as the northern terminus is not addressed in the draft EIR.

O-1-1

Second, the report emphasizes that implementation of any of the build alternatives would result in significant and unavoidable impacts in one environmental category: traffic circulation. Traffic circulation impacts would occur by 2035 at 6 to 11 intersections in the corridor, depending on the build alternative selected, primarily along Franklin and Gough streets. If implemented, mitigation measures could reduce traffic impacts of the build alternatives to less than significant levels. However, the report also makes clear that the City may also choose not to mitigate traffic impacts at these locations for other policy and planning reasons.

O-1-2

Third, the standard traffic metric – Level of Service at Peak Period (am and/or pm) – is inadequate to assess impacts on the residential streets that surround the arterials. It does not appear that traffic diversion west of Gough or east of Hyde has been assessed or modeled. Yet our members know from personal experience that diversions to Octavia, Laguna and Webster occur when Van Ness and the bordering arterials are congested. It also is unclear how the DEIS/DEIR treats such foreseeable traffic impacts as CPMC- Cathedral Hill's afternoon shift changes, or the interaction with emergency vehicles in the Geary/Van Ness area. Absent this assessment, it is unclear that appropriate mitigations have been evaluated.

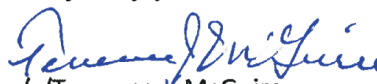
O-1-3

O-1-4

Our board would likely oppose any of the build alternatives unless the Bay street northern terminus is considered and if there is no commitment by the City to implement some of the measures necessary to mitigate the traffic congestion impacts of the build alternatives.

O-1-5

Very truly yours,



/s/Terrence V. McGuire

Board Member,
Pacific Heights Residents Association

Organization Comments on the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project Draft EIS/EIR

Reviewer: Pacific Heights Residents Association

Reviewer's Comment Number	Response
O-I-1	<p>Please see Master Response #1 on the definition of project limits. The northern terminus of the project limits was defined as Lombard Street in the Draft EIS/EIR due to the fact that there is a significant decrease in traffic in the PM peak from the block between Greenwich and Lombard to the block between Lombard and Chestnut, as described in more detail in Master Response #1.</p> <p>The BRT routes (47 and 49) will continue to North Point Street. In addition, the Transit Effectiveness Project (TEP) is looking at transit improvements north of Lombard Street on Van Ness Avenue, including the potential for dedicated lanes and signal priority, as part of its environmental review.</p>
O-I-2	<p>Please see Master Response #9, which discusses traffic mitigation measures and feasibility issues associated with the measures. It explains that while traditional measures such as tow away zones and roadway widening (see Chapter 3.3) are possible engineering solutions to mitigate traffic impacts, the measures may ultimately be determined infeasible by the SFCTA Board. Feasibility Issues associated with these measures are discussed in Master Response #9 and in the EIS/EIR in Section 3.3.4. A finding regarding feasibility will be made by the SFCTA Board at the time the project is considered for approval. Besides these traditional measures, coordinated implementation with the BRT project of such measures as traffic calming and pedestrian improvements may be desirable from an overall transportation system management perspective. However, such measures would not be effective mitigations because they would not reduce the traffic delays shown in the EIS/EIR.</p>
O-I-3	<p>Please see Master Response #8 for a summary of traffic modeling, including diversions. The SF-CHAMP travel demand forecasting model predicted how traffic on Van Ness would be diverted off Van Ness as a result of the project. The SF-CHAMP model analysis is not confined to the parallel arterial streets within the study area, such as Franklin, Gough, Hyde and Larkin, but is a countywide model. It predicted the volume of traffic that would be diverted to all north-south streets east of Van Ness to The Embarcadero and west of Van Ness to the Great Highway. (Vehicular Traffic Analysis Technical Memorandum, CHS 2013, Appendix 5). The modeling showed that streets outside of the corridor (i.e., west of Gough and east of Hyde), may see a small increase in traffic volumes (i.e., approximately 200 vehicles in each direction with no street experiencing more than a 50 vehicles per hour increase in each direction) with the implementation of BRT. This increase represents a relatively small percentage of the overall volumes in these corridors, and therefore was not further analyzed using the Synchro model since this smaller volume change would not constitute a significant impact.</p>
O-I-4	<p>Please see Master Response #8, which explains that ABAG 2007 projections for employment and population growth for 2015 and 2035 are incorporated in the SF-CHAMP model. Planning distributes the ABAG employment and population growth projections within the City based on anticipated development. Additionally, for the 2035 SYNCHRO model analysis, as explained in the Technical Memorandum, traffic volumes for intersections in the vicinity of the proposed CPMC Cathedral Hill Hospital and Medical Office Building project were modified to reflect the projected vehicle trip generation for these two buildings as identified in the CPMC EIR. (EIS/EIR at 3-37.) Thus, the traffic modeling assumes the increase in employment from the CPMC project, and resulting traffic patterns. The traffic impacts, therefore, reflect traffic from the Cathedral Hill project.</p>

O-I-5 See Master Response #1 on the project limits. The northern terminus of the project limits was defined as Lombard Street in the Draft EIS/EIR due to the fact that there is a significant decrease in traffic in the PM peak from the block between Greenwich and Lombard to the block between Lombard and Chestnut (70% decrease northbound; 52% decrease southbound, based on 2007 traffic counts). The block north of Lombard Street has less than 600 vehicles per hour northbound and less than 425 vehicles southbound during the PM peak hour. These lower volumes of mixed traffic result in significantly less frequent and severe delays compared to the project area. Thus, full BRT treatments were not proposed for the corridor north of Lombard Street.

The BRT routes (47 and 49) will continue to North Point Street. While improvements north of Lombard Street are not part of this project, the Transit Effectiveness Project (TEP) is looking at transit improvements north of Lombard Street on Van Ness Avenue, including the potential for dedicated lanes and signal priority, as part of its environmental review.

Regarding whether traffic mitigation measures are feasible, please see Response to Comment O-I-2.



December 19th, 2011

Michael Schwartz, Project Manager
Van Ness BRT Project
San Francisco County Transportation Authority
100 Van Ness Avenue
26th Floor, SF CA 94102

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San Francisco Board of Supervisors/ SFCTA Board: Scott.Wiener@sfgov.org;
Jane.Kim@sfgov.org; Mark.Farrell@sfgov.org; David.Campos@sfgov.org; John.Avalos@sfgov.org

Mayor Ed Lee: mayoredwinlee@sfgov.org

RE: Comments on DEIS/EIR for Van Ness Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Project

Dear Michael

The Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association (HVNA) has reviewed the Draft EIS/EIR for the Van Ness Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Project and it is with great pleasure that I report to you that HVNA finds the draft EIS/EIR complete and thorough. We urge swift certification in order to move this critical transit first project forward. We also encourage you to **select option 3B or, with reservation, option 4B as the locally preferred alternative**. In addition we ask that, as part of environmental mitigation, dedicated funding stream be directed towards preserving livability in adjacent areas of the Van Ness corridor. The following letter provides details of HVNA's support, analysis, and ideas about mitigation.

O-2-1

O-2-2

Background of HVNA Support

HVNA has long-supported bus rapid transit on Van Ness Avenue. HVNA promoted Van Ness BRT during the late 1990's, when San Francisco voters decided to remove part of the Central Freeway and build Octavia Boulevard. Van Ness BRT is crucial for providing optimal north-south transit in the central city since freeway removal. Between 2000 and 2008 HVNA consistently advocated for the adoption of the Market and Octavia Better Neighborhood Plan, which includes Van Ness Bus Rapid Transit. HVNA, along with a 75% majority of San Francisco voters, also approved the Prop K sales tax extension which explicitly called for Van Ness BRT. From 2006 to 2009 HVNA advocated for bus rapid transit multiple times during the MTA's Transit Effectiveness Project public input process. Since 2008 HVNA engaged in the environmental review process for Van Ness BRT, including active participation on the Van Ness BRT Community Advisory Committee, and the Market and Octavia Better Neighborhoods Plan Community Advisory Committee.

O-2-3

Our neighborhood is poised to add thousands of new housing units and residents in the next two decades, and it is imperative that transit, walking, and bicycling infrastructure be capable of absorbing this new growth. Options 3B and 4B in the Van Ness Bus Rapid Transit Draft EIS/EIR are both a step in that direction. Options 3B and 4B are especially warranted given that they are both multi-modal improvements with considerable time savings for transit passengers, significant reductions in Muni operating costs in the corridor, offer dramatic improvements for pedestrian safety, and will smooth the flow of automobile traffic on Van Ness because buses will no longer shift in-and-out of traffic. HVNA also recognizes that Van Ness BRT is not just a local concern but, rather, the benefits of BRT will ripple throughout the city's transit network.

O-2-4

HVNA support of findings for Alternatives 3B or 4B

The Van Ness Corridor is poised to be an exemplary transit first model for San Francisco, the Bay Area, and the nation. Yet today, although 46% of households in the corridor are car free, transit service is deplorable. Buses operate at 5.2 mile per hour, crawling along in mixed-traffic, and spending half of any given bus run in long dwell times at stops or at traffic signals.

Under options 3B and 4B buses would speed-up and each bus would complete runs in less time, saving up to 30% in operating resources compared to doing nothing. Fewer buses could provide the same service frequency and 1-2 more buses per hour could be added on both the 47 and 49 routes (4 buses) at no additional operating costs in 2015. Center BRT with restricted left turns is by far the most optimal, transit first solution analyzed in this Draft EIS/EIR. BRT in center lanes, with restricted left turns would carry 36% more people than each mixed traffic lane while offering an almost 30% savings in operating costs. The reduction of lanes from three to two can also smooth traffic flow for cars and trucks, because buses would no longer be shifting in-and-out of mixed traffic in the third outside lane.

O-2-5

If BRT is not built, transit (as a percentage of all trips) will decline in the corridor because automobile congestion will further erode transit travel times, thus taking San Francisco further from achieving transit first goals and the city's other environmental goals.

O-2-6

We urge careful consideration between option 3B and 4B with respect to the cost of maintaining a new kind of transit vehicle proposed in option 4B (double-sided boarding). If there is no economy-of-scale in acquiring and maintaining a new kind of bus, option 3B is superior. That said, option 3B should have a thoughtful and safe buffer between passenger waiting areas and Van Ness traffic.

O-2-7

HVNA suggestions for mitigations and preserving livability

One of the expected impacts of Van Ness BRT is diversion of automobile traffic to other streets within the corridor. The traffic study results for Options 3B and 4B predict 50 to 100 cars per hour diverted to Franklin and Gough streets. This is *somewhat acceptable* given the benefits of BRT in the corridor. However, rather than accepting these diversions, we see BRT as an opportunity to get more people to choose transit over driving. 48% of car trips occur within the corridor and the mitigations for potential diversions should focus more on diverting these car trips to transit, walking, and bicycling within the dense, mixed-use, two-mile corridor. Moreover the regional transportation agency, MTC, should proactively pursue shifting regional car trips to transit by improving the Golden Gate Transit service in the corridor and improving transit access to jobs outside of the corridor.

O-2-8

The Draft EIS/EIR identified four intersections in 2015, and up to eleven intersections in 2035 that are considered “significantly” impacted in terms of delay. We point out that even with a no-build option, many of these intersections experience increased delay, and so the burden of delay is not on transit, but on increased automobile traffic. The Draft EIS/EIR discusses intersection Level of Service in excruciating detail and then correctly concludes that the minor level of delay at only a small handful of intersections (out of 139 intersections) is a significant but unavoidable impact. **We concur with this finding**, and agree with the language stating that intersection delay should not trump other city policies such as transit first and reducing greenhouse gases through reducing driving. As stated in the Draft EIS/EIR, the city should not consider removing parking or adding turn pockets at the very small handful of intersections identified as problematic. Rather, we urge that mitigations at these intersections focus on improving livability, including traffic calming, pedestrian enhancements, bicycle improvements, and transit priority treatments.

O-2-9

Specifically, we urge that the Van Ness BRT project include adequate funding to do the following mitigations:

O-2-10
continued

- Improve pedestrian crosswalks and prioritize pedestrian signals for crossing at the intersection of Franklin/Market/Page Streets, which is identified as significantly impacted.
- Ensure that Page Street remains suitable as a future bicycle boulevard and allowing for safe high-capacity bicycle crossings at the intersection of Franklin/Market/Page Streets.
- Ensure that Market Street between Larkin Street and Octavia Boulevard remains a transit first street, and minimizing the ‘jog’ of automobile traffic across Market Street between Valencia, Gough, and Franklin Streets. Reduce the jog by one lane.

- Ensure that the Market Street right of way is preserved for a cycletrack, or separated bike lane, the full-length of Market Street including between Larkin and Octavia Boulevard.
- Reconfigure Grove Street, between Octavia and Hyde Streets, as a bicycle boulevard and pedestrian priority street linking the Civic Center BART Station to the Performing Arts venues, Hayes Valley, and the Western Addition, and increasing the attraction of BART, thus reducing the need for driving in this section of the Van Ness Corridor.
- Planning for the realigning of the Hayes 21 Bus to bi-directional service on Hayes Street, re-introducing inbound transit service to Hayes and removing it from Grove Street, and ensuring a high-quality transfer between the Hayes 21 Bus and Van Ness BRT.
- Making the intersection of Mission/ Van Ness/ and Otis into a significant gateway transit-oriented plaza and providing safe and dignified transfers for passengers between these two high-capacity transit corridors.
- Installing reverse-ramp metering at the Duboce/ Mission, 9th Street, and Octavia/Market off-ramp of the US 101/ Central Freeway. Using advanced information technology and complementing the SFGO program, regulate the flow of automobiles onto the city's surface streets by storing cars on the freeway rather than in our neighborhoods.

**O-2-10**
continued

In conclusion HVNA endorses Options 3B enthusiastically and 4B with reservation, and asks that funding be allocated to preserve the livability of adjacent areas. The mitigation for Van Ness BRT should include a dedicated funding stream to implement the above mitigations and to monitor mitigations over time. Lastly, there will be multiple moving parts in this corridor, including a much hoped-for cordon congestion pricing proposal that could overlap within the corridor, future removal of the remaining Central Freeway stub, the Page Street Bicycle Boulevard, major bicycling improvements to Market Street, and thousands of new housing units added to this area over the next two decades. Careful coordination will be needed to ensure that center-lane BRT is a great project that is synchronized with these other important projects.

Sincerely,

Jason Henderson
Chair, Transportation and Planning Committee,
Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association
300 Buchanan Street, #503
San Francisco, CA
94102
(415)-255-8136
[jhenders@sbcglobal.net](mailto:jhenderson@sbcglobal.net)

Organization Comments on the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project Draft EIS/EIR

Reviewer: Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association

Reviewer's Comment Number	Response
O-2-1	Please see Chapter 10 of the Draft EIS/EIR and the LPA Report for the analysis supporting the LPA.
O-2-2	Please see response to comments 2-8 and 2-10 below.
O-2-3	<p>On September 27, 2010 the SFCTA hosted an open house and workshop to present initial study findings and seek public input on potential transportation solutions emerging from the Central Freeway and Octavia Circulation Study. The Van Ness Avenue BRT was identified as a key project that would meet the transit needs identified in the Study. Additionally, the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project would help meet the goals of improving circulation and building a multi-modal network, shifting travel to transit and non-motorized modes, and improving safety and walkability, as identified in the Study.</p> <p>The Van Ness Avenue BRT Project was also presented at meetings of the Market and Octavia Better Neighborhoods Plan Citizens Advisory Committee and the Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association on multiple occasions during the environmental review process.</p>
O-2-4	<p>Support for Alternatives 3 and 4 with Design Option B is noted. Each of the build alternatives, including the LPA (with or without the Vallejo Northbound Station variant), would accommodate existing and planned residential and commercial growth, as discussed in Section 4.3 Growth.</p> <p>Each of the build alternatives, including the LPA (with or without the Vallejo Northbound Station variant), would substantially improve pedestrian conditions, as described in Section 3.4 Non-motorized Transportation.</p> <p>Each of the build alternatives, including the LPA (with or without the Vallejo Northbound Station variant), would result in reductions in Muni operating cost, as discussed in Chapter 9 Financial Analysis. Compared with the vehicle operations cost of the No Build Alternative, Build Alternative 2 would offer a vehicle operating cost savings of 17 percent; Build Alternatives 3 and 4 would result in a 28 percent saving compared to the No Build Alternative. Incorporation of Design Option B into Build Alternative 3 or 4 (or the LPA) would result in a 32 percent operating cost savings versus the No Build Alternative.</p> <p>Operating cost and pedestrian conditions are factors considered in the LPA selection process, as discussed in Chapter 10 Alternatives Analysis and the Locally Preferred Alternative.</p> <p>Please see Chapter 10 of the Final EIS/EIR and the LPA Report for the analysis supporting the LPA.</p>
O-2-5	Each of the build alternatives, including the LPA, would operate in a transitway separated from auto traffic, and BRT buses would not have to pull in and out of stations because the station platforms would offer level or near level boarding to buses directly from the transitway. Mixed flow traffic would benefit from the elimination of the 47 and 49 buses pulling to and from the curb as in current conditions, which causes traffic delays. In addition, north-south traffic would benefit from the implementation of Transit Signal Priority. However, Build Alternative 2 would have more opportunities for conflicts with mixed flow traffic because cars would be allowed to enter the transitway to parallel park and to complete right turns.

- O-2-6 As discussed in Section I.3.2.I Transit Performance Needs, despite the above-mentioned high existing and projected ridership demand, transit speeds and reliability are sub-optimal in the Van Ness Avenue corridor. Degradation in transit performance is a projected citywide problem that is largely contributing to a decline in transit mode share. The Authority's 2004 CWTP found that the City's 17 percent transit mode share among city residents will decline by 2025 if measures are not taken to provide a competitive transit alternative to auto travel in major corridors such as Van Ness Avenue. A key need for transit service on Van Ness Avenue is to close the performance gap, in reliability and in travel time, between transit and automobile travel. Thus transit travel time and reliability are factors considered in the LPA selection process, as noted in Section IO.2.4.I.
- O-2-7 The LPA would utilize vehicles with standard right-side doors only. Please see Chapter 10 of the Final EIS/EIR and the LPA Report for the analysis supporting the LPA. Selection of the LPA takes into account the challenges of procuring a left-right door vehicle, particularly because the 47 route would require a diesel hybrid vehicle while the 49 route would require an electric trolleybus, meaning the Build Alternative 4 would have required two sub-fleets of specialized vehicles. The LPA would involve the procurement and operation of standard right-side door vehicles. Station platforms under Alternative 3B and the LPA would include a barrier railing as well as information/advertising panels in the shelter area between passenger waiting areas and Van Ness Avenue traffic. See the Visual Simulation of the station platforms under each of these alternatives in Section 4.4 of the EIS/EIR.
- O-2-8 Please see Master Response #8 for discussion about how traffic diversion was considered. While the Van Ness Avenue BRT, by reducing lanes for vehicles on Van Ness could divert some traffic to other streets, the Van Ness Avenue BRT would reduce the overall amount of vehicular traffic projected in the future compared to the No Project. (See Chapter 3.I for projected volumes along the corridor). Nevertheless, the Van Ness Avenue BRT is intended to function together with other efforts to improve transit service and provide attractive alternatives to driving. In addition to improving the performance of Muni routes 47 and 49, the BRT will provide the benefit of a dedicated transitway to improve the speed and reliability of Golden Gate Transit service. Since the project would decrease, not increase, the total traffic volumes in San Francisco, additional measures beyond the project description to encourage a mode shift from driving to transit, bicycling, or walking would take place through other, parallel efforts.
- For example, the Transit Effectiveness Project, led by SFMTA, will improve transit travel times and reliability on major corridors citywide, providing a more competitive transit alternative to the auto. Additional City efforts are underway, such as implementation of the Bicycle Plan and WalkFirst, which are intended to improve pedestrian and bicycle conditions in San Francisco. In addition, pedestrian improvements along Franklin and Gough streets are being implemented as part of the Proposition B Road Repaving and Street Safety Bond. Finally, the MTC has prioritized Van Ness Avenue BRT as one of the regional Small Starts priorities through Resolution 3434.
- O-2-9 Support for policies to reduce greenhouse gases through reducing driving is noted. Regarding the feasibility of traffic mitigation measures, please see Response to Comment O-1-2.
- O-2-10 If the Van Ness Avenue BRT were to be implemented, traffic patterns would be monitored closely as part of standard SFMTA traffic engineering. In addition, a \$248 million Road Repaving and Street Safety Bond Program (Proposition B) to improve city infrastructure, including repaving streets, pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements, traffic flow improvements, ADA upgrades includes near-term plans for the repaving of Gough, Franklin, and Polk streets, along with installation of pedestrian enhancements to be determined through planning and design. See Chapter 2 of the EIS/EIR for more information on the Proposition B program.

From: Kevin Lee [kev88kitl@gmail.com]
Sent: Wed 12/21/2011 5:39 PM
To: vannessbrt@sfcta.org
Subject: [vannessbrt] San Francisco County Transportation Authority: Van Ness BRT EIR Comments

This is an enquiry e-mail via <http://www.sfcta.org> from:
Kevin Lee <kev88kitl@gmail.com>

Hello,

My name is Kevin Lee, and I am the Vice Chair for the SFMTA Muni Accessibility Advisory Committee.

I would like to provide the following comments on the Draft EIR for the proposed Van Ness BRT Project.

Comment 1:

Can we provide a longer crossing time on Van Ness Ave.? Right now the crossing times are very short, and this poses a difficulty for many of our senior and disabled residents who are often not able to cross Van Ness Ave. in one crossing cycle.

O-3-1

Comment 2:

Can we look into the provision of more accessible parking for the disabled (Blue Zones) along this corridor?

O-3-2

I also would like to comment that the existing push to talk features located at many intersections along Van Ness are set with the volume too low -- Are we able to see if we can set these to a higher volume?

O-3-3

Thank you very much for your time.

Sincerely,

Kevin Lee
Vice Chair
SFMTA Muni Accessibility Advisory Committee

Organization Comments on the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project Draft EIS/EIR

Reviewer: SFMTA Muni Accessibility Advisory Committee, Kevin Lee

Reviewer's
Comment
Number

Response

O-3-1 Please see Master Response #13 for information on how crossing conditions on Van Ness Avenue would improve with the project. In summary, although crossing time would not be adjusted, crossing conditions and distances to refuges would be greatly improved over existing conditions. For example, locations that already have curb bulbs would be provided a pedestrian refuge at the median with a protective nose cone. Also, under Build Alternatives 3 and 4, and the LPA, which feature center-lane configurations, bus patrons would only need to cross half of the street to arrive at/debark from a BRT station.

Van Ness Avenue BRT would increase the number of intersections with signal timing that meets FHWA and City targets for pedestrian crossing speed, allowing additional time to cross Van Ness Avenue at several intersections. The project would also improve pedestrian crossing safety by reducing average crossing distances and constructing additional median refuges, which provide a safe space to wait for those who are unable to cross the entire street during one light cycle. With or without the BRT project, countdown pedestrian signals will be installed at all intersections along Van Ness Avenue. In addition, the BRT project includes installation of Accessible Pedestrian Signals (APS) at all intersections. For a full analysis of the project impacts on pedestrian conditions, including universal design impacts, please refer to Section 3.4.3.1 of the EIS/EIR.

O-3-2 The Van Ness Avenue BRT project does not currently propose additional disabled parking spaces in the corridor. The project would result in parking space losses at some locations in the corridor and parking space gains in other locations. The number of displaced parking spaces affected (blue zones) ranges from zero to one space depending on the project alternatives, as detailed in Appendix B of the EIS/EIR. Where parking spaces can be retained on a block, the project team has assumed that colored parking spaces will be given priority. Section 3.5.2.2 and Appendix B of the EIS/EIR detail the project's expected parking impacts. The exact parking supply, and particularly the locations of specific colored parking spaces that will result with the project, will be determined during final design of the project. Final design will include additional opportunities for public input, including assisting in determining where colored curb spaces are needed and can be most suitably placed. Under the LPA (with or without the Vallejo Northbound Station variant), it is expected that it will be feasible to retain all disabled parking spaces on the same or adjoining blockside.

O-3-3 The Van Ness Avenue BRT Project proposes audible pedestrian signals that meet national and citywide audibility standards at all intersections along the corridor, wherever they do not already exist. As to the condition of existing pedestrian crossing aids, the SFMTA Department of Parking and Traffic sets and maintains the City's audible pedestrian signals (APS). The commenter may call them at 415-550-2736 to inform them which APS signals require adjustment.



December 22, 2011

Board of Supervisors
San Francisco City Hall
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco, California 94102

Dear Supervisors:

Walk San Francisco is writing in strong support of the Van Ness Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. Walk San Francisco is a pedestrian advocacy group that promotes walking as a safe and sustainable form of transportation.

O-4-1

Van Ness Avenue is a major transportation corridor connecting several neighborhoods in the center of San Francisco. Van Ness Avenue carries the #47 and #49 Muni lines that run through several neighborhoods around one of the busiest areas of the city. Traffic moves quickly up and down this street carrying a high traffic volume of cars, trucks, and buses. Thousands of pedestrians must walk along or cross Van Ness Avenue to get to their residences or places of business near the area on a daily basis.

O-4-2

Walk San Francisco supports this project because transit performance will be significantly improved through the project's use of a dedicated bus lane separated from other traffic, and because pedestrian safety will be enhanced through reduced crossing distances at BRT stations exist and large platforms for waiting passengers.

O-4-3

Regarding specific BRT project designs, we support Building Alternatives 3 and 4, which would result in the creation of a center-lane BRT with either single or dual medians. We also support reducing the amount of left-hand turns available to cars, which slow transit and pose greater risks to pedestrians.

O-4-4

In contrast, Alternative 1 would not significantly improve the pedestrian safety or transit efficiency landscape and Alternative 2 with a side-running BRT lane would still allow for unprotected left-hand turns and still pose a considerable risk to pedestrian safety.

O-4-5

Finally, as the BRT project may lead to additional traffic on other streets around Van Ness, we also support implementing pedestrian safety measures such as bulb-outs and traffic calming on these other streets to help mitigate any increased risk to pedestrian safety that might result from the project.

O-4-6

In summary, we at Walk SF fully endorse the potential benefits of the Van Ness BRT and encourage you to move this project forward with all possible speed. Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Stampe
Executive Director, Walk San Francisco

Organization Comments on the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project Draft EIS/EIR

Reviewer: Walk SF

Reviewer's Comment Number	Response
O-4-1	Support for project is noted. Each of the build alternatives, and the LPA (with or without the Vallejo Northbound Station variant), would improve the pedestrian comfort and safety in the Van Ness Avenue corridor, as described in Section 2.2.2 Project Alternatives and 3.4.3 Environmental Consequences (for Non-motorized Transportation).
O-4-2	Section 3.4 Non-motorized Transportation describes existing pedestrian and bicycle conditions in the Van Ness Avenue corridor, and how the project would affect these conditions.
O-4-3	Transit performance is considered in the LPA selection process, as discussed in Section 10.2.4.1. Each of the build alternatives, and the LPA (with or without the Vallejo Northbound Station variant), would improve transit performance, to varying degrees. Each of the build alternatives, and the LPA, would reduce crossing distances for pedestrians crossing from one side of Van Ness Avenue to the other compared to existing conditions. Build Alternative 2 would provide the greatest number of opportunities for pedestrian curb bulbs. Crossing distance is a factor considered in the LPA selection process, discussed in Section 10.2.4.3 Access and Pedestrian Safety. Section 10.2.4.2 Passenger Experience discusses how the size of the station platform and the amount of buffer between the platform and auto traffic are factors considered in the LPA selection process. Each of the build alternatives and LPA would increase the size of bus patron waiting area over existing conditions, meeting the SFCTA threshold of 5 square feet per passenger.
O-4-4	Support for Build Alternatives 3 and 4, including Design Option B is noted. Please see Chapter 10 of the Final EIS/EIR and the LPA Report for the analysis supporting the LPA. The LPA would result in center-running BRT with single median and dual platforms while limiting the left turn opportunities to one in each direction.
O-4-5	<p>The build alternatives, including the LPA (with or without the Vallejo Northbound Station variant), would offer pedestrian improvements over the No-Build Alternative including curb bulb upgrades, provision of nose cones at all east-west crosswalks, and countdown signals and APS at all intersections.</p> <p>Each of the build alternatives, and the LPA (with or without the Vallejo Northbound Station variant), would reduce the number of left-turn movements off of Van Ness Avenue over existing conditions and the No-Build Alternative, and would allow left-turn movements only during a dedicated left-turn signal phase at the remaining left-turn pockets (note however, Alternative 2 may have both protected and permissive left turn movements). This would reduce the potential for conflicts between pedestrians and turning vehicles under each of the build alternatives, and the LPA, when compared with existing conditions and the No-Build Alternative.</p>
O-4-6	See response to Comment O-2-I0.

POLK DISTRICT MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION

12.22.11

Ms Rachael Hiatt
San Francisco County Transportation Authority
100 Van Ness Avenue
26th Floor
San Francisco, CA
94102

Van Ness Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Draft Environmental Impact Report Responses

Designing and Building the Van Ness BRT to respect the Existing Van Ness Small Business Communities

Ms Hiatt:

Thank you for the opportunity of responding to the Van Ness Avenue Bus Rapid Transit DRAFT Environmental Impact Report/Statement (VNA BRT DEIR).

The Van Ness Avenue area small business communities (including the Polk Street Merchants) have a huge stake in the approach that the City of San Francisco takes to the programming, design scheduling and construction of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project planned for the Avenue. In fact, existing merchants along and on either side of the BRT route make up the San Francisco community group that has the most at stake... their very livelihood and way of life during and after construction is in the balance... the potential loss of the loyalty of their customer base, their temporary and permanent visibility and the accessibility for that base, the construction period dust and noise, etc. and, ultimately, the lack of security in the value of their capital investments when the project is completed (as the adjacent property owners can most likely anticipate).

Everything that can be done to mitigate the negative impacts (environmental AND social and economic) needs to be done to assure the continuing viability of the existing Van Ness area business community. The project has the potential of either reinforcing the existing business community, and the commercial spine as a whole, or it can serve to denigrate, and possibly destroy, the decades of work and investment expended by the existing local business owners. This is a strong statement but the Bayview's local business community's negative experience on Third Street during the same process for the T line has to be recognized and the same mistakes need to be avoided at all costs.

Some of the small business' concerns are environmental and should be addressed within the Final EIR. Other concerns are managerial, economic and social and would have to be addressed outside of the environmental review process. Nevertheless, the DEIR response process provides the best currently

POLK DISTRICT MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION

available opportunity for the local business community groups, which to date, have not been contacted by the SFCTA staff, to discuss all these issues and concerns with them and the SFCTA commissioners.

O-5-2

Small Business' Goals for the BRT Project:

- The BRT project should recognize the fact that Van Ness Avenue contains a number of diverse local commercial districts (3 or 4) that serve their adjacent neighborhoods well, in addition to the City as a whole. Each district has its own distinct qualities. Some businesses also serve the commuter traffic feeding downtown from the City's north side and from Marin. **O-5-3**
- The BRT project should recognize that the Van Ness Avenue BRT project as the potential for presenting a new a model for the eventual design and construction of the Geary BRT (and others that may emerge) and, as such, all aspects of it need to be considered carefully. Such care for the impact that the Third Street rail project would have on the local community, especially the local merchants, was apparently sorely lacking, so the SFCTA needs to be conscious of the potential for the Van Ness area's business community's current lack of confidence in the City's sincerity, capabilities and performance. **O-5-4**
- The BRT project should reinforce existing, local, community-serving small business establishments to maintain vital well-rounded and diverse commercial and residential communities along the BRT route. **O-5-5**
- The BRT project should enhance the nascent symbiotic relationships between the Van Ness Corridor businesses and the surrounding residential communities.
- The BRT project should reinforce a positive commercial (both economic and physical) environment for small locally-owned businesses in the Van Ness Avenue Corridor as the BRT project is executed.
- The City should design ***and maintain*** a handsome built environment with the BRT serving as its spine that's beneficial not only to the BRT but the small business communities and the residents along Van Ness.
- The City should enable the construction of the Van Ness BRT without the loss of the ***existing*** small businesses along the route. **O-5-6**

The DRAFT EIR:

As indicated above, some of business' concerns are environmental and should be addressed within the Final EIR. Other concerns are managerial, economic and social and would have to be addressed outside of the environmental review process. Nevertheless, the DEIR response process provides the best opportunity for the local business community, which to date, has not been contacted by the SFCTA staff, to discuss all these issues and concerns with them and the SFCTA commissioners. Following are concerns that have arisen in our review of this draft document. To the degree we can, we have cited

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sections where the subjects of our concerns are referenced and may be addressed. Other sections may also be relevant but we may have missed them in our review.

- Section 2.3 – This project’s planners and managers need to recognize the lessons learned from the Third Street MUNI project in construction management and scheduling as well as traffic management. Avoid design and project management mistakes like those that caused the loss of existing neighborhood serving businesses along Third Street when the light rail was constructed. **O-5-7**
- Section 2.3 – Develop **and enforce** a means of retaining a healthy business environment during the construction of the BRT project.
- Sections 2.7 and 4.4 - The report discusses the need for sidewalk improvements. Improvements to the Van Ness sidewalks need to be coordinated and built now to avoid later digging and repair that will negatively impact local businesses and the rest of the local community. This applies to furniture, signage, etc. which all need to be designed and installed while this project is underway. That will take coordination on a level seldom seen in interagency relations in San Francisco. **O-5-8**
- Section 3.3, 4.2 and others – Set parking **and freight transfer** policy and practices along Van Ness and on adjacent intersecting streets to encourage local commercial patronage and not downtown commuters from other districts. **O-5-9**
- Section 3.5 and others – The EIR apparently doesn’t discuss the phenomenon of “browsing for a parking spot” that exists and will probably be exacerbated by the loss of curb parking. The project needs to discuss providing the budgeting for and construction of appropriately located and contextually designed parking facilities along the route as necessary to avoid a substantive loss of parking for the local small businesses’ patrons. If the SFCTA’s projections are to be believed, the need for private motor vehicle use will ultimately decrease over time, but current demands need to be acknowledged. With the increase in business growth predicted in the next bullet, new parking garages need to be provided for. They should contain commercial uses on the first floor and the parking levels should be designed in such a way that the structure can be adapted into other residential or commercial uses (floor to ceiling height of 9’) because the San Francisco community will rely less and less on the need for car parking. **O-5-10**
- Section 4.2 - Employment in the Van Ness Avenue area is expected to increase by about 50% more than the rest of the City by 2035 (44% growth vs. 30% growth). We’re unclear as to the cause for this disparity. Is this extra growth anticipated to be small business growth or are newly arrived interstate or international companies anticipated to be the generator of those jobs. Residential growth in the area, at 28%, will not be keeping up with the business growth. The result will be radical a change in the mix of residential to business activity and the character of the neighborhood will change from a residential oriented area into a business oriented area. There is no discussion of how City planning, traffic and overall transit policy and action need to be altered to address these changes. **O-5-11**
- Section 4.4 – The project should design the sidewalks, landscaping, bus stops and stations to complement enhance the surrounding businesses.
- Section 4.4 - The Van Ness Avenue Plan (1995) and the Civic Center Area Plan (1989) need to be updated to accommodate the new BRT reality, the changes reflected in the above and the

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planning profession's new emphasis on enhanced urban community planning. This work will need funding at the SF Dept. of Planning to do this. Such additional study would provide another opportunity for local and small business input into environmental self determination that is absent in this report.

- Section 4.6 - Recent approval of AT&T sidewalk boxes for cell phone service without the benefit of an EIR process will work against improvement of the local environment and the future visibility of local businesses from moving vehicles. This is not addressed in the DRAFT EIR. **O-5-12**

- Sections 4.6 and 7.1 – The report identifies the source and scope of proposed utility projects but apparently does not address the need for fully coordinating the underground work on all proximate parallel and intersecting utilities that need updating. These need to be coordinated to avoid later digging and repair that will negatively impact local businesses. Any above ground utility lines that currently exist within the area need to be undergrounded as a part of this dig. **O-5-13**

- Section 8.2 – The City needs to establish a local small business advisory committee (or committees) for the BRT route (appointed by a party or body other than the SFCTA... the Mayor and/or the Board of Supervisors, perhaps... but officially advisory to the SFCTA and whoever is to oversee the construction) whose role is to identify and advocate for design and project management approaches that would enhance, or at least minimize the negative effect of the project on the local small businesses. **O-5-14**

- Section 8.2 - So far, the lack of local business groups in the community outreach effort is clear (Van Ness Avenue district merchants, Polk District Merchants, the SF Small Business Network, the SF Small Business Advocates, the San Francisco Locally Owned Merchants Alliance). Door to door merchant contact is not an adequate alternative to comprehensive business community interaction. Individual merchants will provide individual answers to questions posed. This also avoids interaction with the local neighborhood serving (non-sidewalk level) professional community. The need to discuss this project with business interest group(s) is paramount in order to get comprehensive business related criteria into the planning process. **O-5-15**

- Provide a strategy for evaluation of any negative economic impact the project will have on local businesses and develop a system for providing short term interest bearing financial assistance to otherwise healthy neighborhood serving local businesses that become stressed by the project and wind up in danger of failure because of the upheaval it presents. **O-5-16**

BRT Project design and management – interface with business

The SFCTA project team needs to comprehensively plan for and manage the project to minimize the negative impact on the small business community.

- The SFCTA needs to develop and maintain a continuing interface procedure with Van Ness Avenue local businesses (perhaps a Van Ness Commercial District Advisory Committee?) to address concerns during -

O-5-17
continued



POLK DISTRICT MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION

- Project programming - provide for local business input for the SFCTA's choice of the location of dedicated BRT bus lanes and the related Van Ness Avenue design elements (sidewalks, landscaping, bus shelters, parking, etc.).
 - Project concept development and design - provide appropriate access to the SFCTA designers for local business input during programming and design... offer periodic review of the designs with the local businesses for their input.
 - Scheduling and logistics - provide appropriate access to the SFCTA staff before construction starts to develop mutual understanding of each others' scheduling and access needs. Show sensitivity to the critical needs of the merchants to maintain customer access and develop plans to avoid extended periods of obstructing pedestrian (and vehicular, to the extent possible) access to each and every shop.
 - Construction management – provide appropriate access to the SFCTA contractors' project personnel for local businesses with disruption concerns during construction. Together, develop a construction procedure that does the least damage to the vitality of the surrounding existing small and locally owned businesses.
 - Post-completion R.O.W. maintenance (during both the “shake-out” period, immediately after completion, and the regularized day-to-day operation of the R.O.W. into the future – provide access to the SFCTA, DP&T and DPW staffs for local businesses to raise their concerns and make productive suggestions after the project is complete - to establish maintenance standards, to develop an effective City monitoring system for the need for repairs and to address maintenance issues quickly.
- Assist in maintaining business customer access during and after construction:
 - develop standards for parking density and adjacency
 - develop triggers (demand standards) for the provision of new short term parking garages serving the existing local business community
 - assure visibility from moving vehicles and pedestrians of existing and reasonably located new business signage
 - develop business friendly standards for the amount, location and size of celebration banners
 - develop business friendly standards for the amount, location, density (transparency) and size of sidewalk and median landscaping
 - enable as much curb drop-off and parking as possible on Van Ness and on cross streets and alleys
 - Develop designs that enable efficient store servicing:
 - Design the BRT infrastructure to recognize the local merchants' needs for: the arrival of goods (freight unloading), ease of deliveries to customers (freight loading), and waste collection procedures (trash recycling) that minimize the disruption to merchants and their customers.
 - Maintain business visibility during and after construction. Work with the local merchants to:
 - Establish street and sidewalk lighting criteria and develop designs that meet those standards
 - Choose the best type and density of landscaping (trees and planters) to create a unified boulevard effect while not blocking the view of adjacent stores and advertising signs from the view of BRT customers
 - Minimize the size, complexity and opacity of new and replacement bus shelters that are placed on the sidewalks and will, in any case, partially block the presence of stores and signs
 - Minimize the unwarranted duplication of directional and parking signs posted on street light and utility standards

O-5-17

continued

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- Insist on top quality design and materials of the Van Ness Avenue urban environment, including:
 - Bus station shelters that are sophisticated and unique to Van Ness Avenue but do not unnecessarily distract business customers' attention
 - Sidewalk materials and patterns that are more than just the normal San Francisco concrete sidewalk and will define Van Ness Avenue as a special place, unique within the Bay Area
 - Modern, well-designed, minimal, integrated, readable signage graphics that are recognizable to local and tourist alike as a part of the MUNI system and communicate well to the reader.
 - New appropriate focused and scaled lighting and light standards that set Van Ness Avenue apart from other City thoroughfares (similar to Third Street and Embarcadero) and, through adequate lumens, encourage pedestrian activity on the street.
 - Well-placed well-designed planters, benches, etc. that encourage pedestrians on the Avenue.

- Develop a strategy for attending to conditions that encourage local business commerce during construction...
 - Together with the local business community, develop a work plan to minimize the period of direct and indirect construction impact on each block. Minimize the length and duration of blocks or groups of blocks that are shut off to vehicular traffic and NEVER block off any stores to pedestrian traffic.
 - Develop a plan to assure that the contractors strictly conform to dust regulations and establish standards for strict debris removal throughout the construction process and enforce them.
 - Establish and maintain lighting and safety standards throughout the project. Existing standards for CA state highway construction projects in typical non-urban contexts may not be adequate.
 - Work with the local merchants to develop guidelines for the placement of temporary construction barriers. Review regularly whether those placed on the sidewalks remain necessary to the project and are not simply left uncollected out of convenience to the sub-contractors.
 - Conform to DPW standards for sidewalk condition to encourage pedestrian (store customer) safety.
 - Strictly conform to mandated construction noise standards and perform regular weekly audial tests in the areas of heaviest construction.
 - With the local merchants, develop a procedure for assuring continuous storefront and sign visibility and maintain those standards throughout the period of the project.

- The City needs to develop, on an interdepartmental basis, the proper environmental and finished site conditions after construction, including maintenance of:
 - The sidewalk, the street pavement and crosswalk, driving lane and curb parking markings, street and pedestrian lighting and all City signage and landscaping.
 - All publicly owned "street furniture"... benches, planters, etc.
 - Any privately owned "street furniture" such as tables and chairs, news racks, phone shelters, etc.
 - Bus shelters

O-5-17

continued

POLK DISTRICT MERCHANTS ASSOCIATION

The local business community wants to work together with the SFCTA and other San Francisco City agencies to develop the best symbiotic relationship among all parties and we encourage you to reach out to all the local and citywide business community groups in order to begin that process. The Polk Merchants Association will do what it can to convene a meeting of the small business community in order to begin the process of providing useful further input.

If you have any questions or wish to begin the interactive process we propose in this letter, you may contact Stephen Cornell of the Polk Street Merchants Association at 415 673-8900 or at stephen@brownieshardware.com .

Sincerely,

Bruce Bonacker
for Stephen Cornell, President
Polk Street Merchants Association

 **O-5-17**
continued

Organization Comments on the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project Draft EIS/EIR

Reviewer: Polk District Merchants Association

Reviewer's Comment Number	Response
O-5-1	<p>Please see Master Response #6 and Section 4.15.1.2 for information on construction impacts to businesses and residents. The EIS/EIR analyzes the effects of construction on the community in Section 4.15.2.1. The project development team recognizes the importance of maintaining access to and supporting businesses within the Van Ness Avenue corridor both during construction and during project operation. Long term, the project is not expected to adversely affect businesses in the Van Ness area. As stated in Section 4.2.1.2, which considers the effect of the project operation on community character and cohesion "because the proposed BRT project would be constructed along an existing transportation route, the communities and neighborhoods adjacent to the corridor would not experience a disruption..." The project does not displace businesses and is expected to improve transit and pedestrian access to the area, a potential benefit to businesses.</p>
O-5-2	<p>Throughout the project, the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project team has performed outreach to residential, business, and neighborhood stakeholder groups. During and after the public review period of the Draft EIS/EIR, the project team has met with the Polk District Merchants Association as well as neighborhood groups that comprise merchants. Please see Chapter 8 of the Final EIS/EIR for a full list of groups that met with the project team.</p>
O-5-3	<p>Sections 4.1 and 4.2 of the Draft EIS/EIR define Van Ness Avenue as having multiple neighborhoods and characteristics within the project limits.</p>
O-5-4	<p>Please see Master Response #6 and Section 4.15.1.2 for information on construction impacts to businesses and residents. The EIS/EIR analyzes the effects of construction on the community in Section 4.15.2.1</p> <p>One of the benefits of BRT versus light rail is the relatively shorter construction duration and intensity. Please see Chapter 4.15 of the Draft EIS/EIR for more details. Project staff met with the Polk District Merchants Association in May 2012, and plans to continue meeting with resident and business stakeholders alike throughout the remainder of project design and construction, if the project is approved.</p> <p>The TMP would include SFMTA's process for accepting and addressing complaints. This includes provision of contact information for the Project Manager, Resident Engineer and Contractor on project signage with direction to call with any concerns. Complaints are logged and tracked to ensure they are addressed.</p>
O-5-5	<p>The project development team recognizes the importance of maintaining and enhancing business in the Van Ness Avenue corridor. Implementation of the proposed BRT would increase ridership over 50% in the corridor and thus bring new potential consumers to existing businesses (See Section 3.2.2.2 for ridership forecasts). As stated in Section 4.15 Construction Impacts, most of the construction will be done during daylight hours and two lanes of traffic will be maintained in each direction. Some nighttime construction would occur that would close one additional lane of traffic. To ensure that access is maintained to businesses within the Van Ness Avenue corridor during construction, two lanes of traffic will be maintained in each direction during peak hours. Construction will also be phased in three block segments when a closure of a lane or closure of on-street parking is required (see Section 2.3.1). Sidewalk</p>

access to businesses will be maintained. Please see Construction Master Response #6.

- O-5-6 Please see responses to comments O-5-1 to O-5-5 above.
- O-5-7 To ensure that access is maintained to businesses within the Van Ness Avenue corridor during construction two lanes of traffic will be maintained in each direction during peak hours. Construction will also be phased in three block segments when a closure of an additional lane or closure of on-street parking is required (see Section 2.3.1). Please see Master Response #6 for more details on construction impacts on businesses and residents.
- O-5-8 As stated in the project purpose and need in Chapter I, the build alternatives, including the LPA, are intended to improve conditions for pedestrians compared to the existing condition.
- These improvements will be refined during the design phase of the project and partial closure of sidewalks would be required only where curb bulbs would be constructed as part of the proposed project (See Chapter 4.15 for further information about construction plans). Please see Master Response #6, which explains that project construction will be coordinated among City departments to minimize disruption.
- O-5-9 Maintaining the multi-modal use of the Van Ness corridor is key component of the project purpose and need. As explained in Section I.3.2, accommodating private vehicles and commercial loading must be balanced with attainment of project objectives to maintain traffic and goods circulation and access within the corridor. The following mitigation measures to be implemented as part of the TMP address freight loading:
- As part of the TMP public information program, SFMTA will coordinate with adjacent properties along Van Ness Avenue to determine the need for colored parking spaces and work to identify locations for replacement spaces or plan construction activities to minimize impacts from the loss of these spaces.
 - As part of the TMP, adequate passenger and truck loading zones would be maintained for adjacent land uses, including maintaining access to driveways and providing adequate loading zones on the same or adjoining street block face.
- O-5-10 Changes in parking, including parking loss, is presented in Section 3.5. Section 4.2.4.2 describes how changes in parking could affect the economic and business environment, an analysis consistent with NEPA requirements. The proposed project would generally maintain curbside parking throughout the corridor, ranging from a gain of 3 percent of curbside parking under Build Alternative 4 with Design Option B, to a loss of 23 percent under the LPA (with and without the Vallejo Northbound Station Variant). Table 4.2-9 lists businesses and residential properties that could be adversely affected by displacement of colored parking spaces. Mitigation measures described in Section 4.2.5 explain steps the SFMTA will take to minimize impacts from displacement of curbside parking, including working with individually affected properties to identify replacement parking locations or other measures to minimize impacts to businesses. At the same time, BRT transit improvements, plus pedestrian enhancements would likely enhance the image and desirability of commercial areas in the Van Ness corridor and provide a more pedestrian-oriented environment, which would support access to businesses in the corridor.
- Creation of parking garages and modification of parking other than curbside parking is outside the scope of this project, as is redesign of commercial properties.
- O-5-11 Table 4.2.I illustrates the U.S. Census and Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) growth projections for the study area. The Planning Department then distributes the residential and employment growth to match existing plans and development proposals. The “cause” of the growth detailed in this table, therefore, is outside of the scope of the project; however, the goal of this project is to accommodate growth in transit ridership within the corridor. City policy in regard to the jobs/housing balance in the

corridor is also outside of the scope of this project and is addressed through the approval process considering those projects identified by the Planning Department as leading to growth.

- O-5-12 Approval of AT&T phone service boxes are not within the purpose and need or scope of this project. With implementation of the LPA, there would be little moving or replacement of utilities along the sidewalk, except in locations where new OCS support poles/streetlights are in conflict with existing utilities.
- O-5-13 In Section 4.6.4, mitigation measures M-UT-1 through 4 discuss the coordination with City agencies and local utilities that will occur throughout construction of the proposed project. Planned repaving of Gough, Franklin, and Polk streets will be coordinated to include street utility replacements, as needed, and also are anticipated to be completed before the start of construction of the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project.
- The OCS lines on Van Ness Avenue would continue to be placed above ground. Consideration of placing above ground utility lines underground on streets other than Van Ness Avenue is outside the scope of this project.
- O-5-14 The project would be designed and constructed by SFMTA if it is approved. The SFMTA would have advisory committees throughout design and construction; these committees would have community members as well as business representatives. Please see Master Response #6 for more details on construction impacts on businesses and residents.
- O-5-15 The project team met with the Polk District Merchants Association in May 2012, and will continue to hold regular meetings with this group and other small business groups throughout the remainder of the planning process. If the project is approved, the SFMTA would have advisory committees throughout design and construction; these committees would have community members and business representatives. Please see Master Response #6 for additional information about project construction.
- O-5-16 The EIS/EIR identifies construction impacts as well as all relevant, reasonable mitigation measures that will alleviate the environmental effects of the project. The mitigation measures do not include economic compensation of businesses, as no economic impacts of that nature were identified. The SFMTA will ensure customers have access to businesses throughout the construction period (see Master Response #6 and Section 4.15).
- O-5-17 The project team appreciates the support and effort from the Polk District Merchants Association in contacting small businesses.
- The EIS/EIR identifies construction impacts as well as all relevant, reasonable mitigation measures that will alleviate the environmental effects of the project.. These are detailed in Section 4.15 of the EIS/EIR. Community impacts and mitigation measures during the operation phase of the project, including impacts to businesses are explained in Section 4.2 of the EIS/EIR. Master Response #6 provides a summary of the project TMP; including associated mitigation measures intended to minimize disruption to local businesses.
- Recommendations of the commenter will be taken under consideration by the project team and plans to continue working with the commenter and other business stakeholders through the advisory committees as part of the design and construction phases.

Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund

P.O. Box 151439 San Rafael, CA 94915 415-331-1982

“Solutions Is Our Middle Name”

December 23, 2011
By E-Mail

Mr. Michael Schwartz
San Francisco County Transportation Authority
100 Van Ness Avenue, 26th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94102

Re: Van Ness BRT EIS/EIR

Dear Mr. Schwartz:

TRANSDEF, the Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund, has been involved in sustainable transportation in the Bay Area for the past 18 years. We strongly support the development of BRT service on Van Ness Avenue, and believe that Alternative 4 will have the most beneficial urban design impacts. This project is exactly the kind of cost-effective infrastructure we have been recommending. We urge its approval and its full funding.

O-6a-1

We previously commented during the Scoping Process for the Van Ness BRT, and recommended then the study of a sub-alternative of Build Alternatives 3 and 4. We recommended that a sub-alternative be studied with 3 southbound travel lanes and one local service northbound lane. Such a configuration would allow an optimal timing of progressive traffic signals, because it would not be attempting the impossible: to optimize for flow in both directions. This would substantially increase the traffic capacity of Van Ness, which would provide needed support for the political compromise necessary to eliminate two travel lanes. Northbound traffic would be directed onto Franklin Street, which would become a couplet with Van Ness. We were unable to find any reference to this proposal in the DEIS/DEIR. As such the document is currently incomplete.

O-6a-2

Finally, we suggest that the EIR recognize the impact of the planting of palm trees in this corridor on San Francisco's urban identity as potentially significant. Palm trees are far too identified with Los Angeles. Given San Francisco's long-standing rivalry with Los Angeles, the time has come to draw the line on planting further palm trees for civic projects here. The mitigation for this significant impact should be the elimination of palm trees from the landscaping design.

O-6a-3

TRANSDEF

12/23/11

Page 2

We would have preferred to have been notified upon the release of the document, given our previous interest in this project. Also, for some odd reason, the PDF files in which the document was published exhibited an oddly blackened blurring that made much of the data unreadable. Thank you for this opportunity to comment on the DEIS/DEIR for the Van Ness BRT.

O-6a-4

Sincerely,

/s/ DAVID SCHONBRUNN

David Schonbrunn,
President

Organization Comments on the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project Draft EIS/EIR

Reviewer: TRANSDEF

Reviewer's
 Comment
 Number

Response

O-6a-1 Support for Build Alternative 4 is noted.

O-6a-2 Please see Master Response #2, Chapter 2 of the Draft EIS/EIR, and the Alternatives Screening Report on the project website (www.vannessbrt.org) for further description of alternatives considered and withdrawn. Since Van Ness Avenue is US 101 in San Francisco, reducing northbound traffic to one lane while compensating through diverting the traffic to Franklin Street is not seen as a desirable way to balance traffic across the corridor. North-south traffic on Van Ness Avenue benefits from the transit signal priority as well as the increased signal time through the reduction in left turns (particularly through the LPA). Signal timing for all streets in the corridor are optimized to minimize traffic delay impacts.

O-6a-3 The tree types, including palm trees, depicted in the visual simulations is representative at this time, and is not a confirmed tree type in the project landscaping plan. Palm trees offer the benefit of minimized interference with the OCS wires and reduced maintenance compared with many other tree varieties. Opportunities and constraints for new tree plantings are documented in Section 4.4 of the EIS/EIR, for example:

- Build Alternative 3, featuring the narrowest (9-foot wide) median for tree planting, would require replacement trees with a narrow canopy. Some example trees could be palm trees as shown, or Italian Cypress, Skyrocket Juniper, Hillspire Juniper, and Red Maple.
- Selection of median tree type would consider tree canopy size and maintenance requirements to ensure a 5-foot clear zone between tree canopies and OCS wires.

The replacement tree palette will be developed in close coordination with the CAC, SFDPW and Bureau of Urban Forestry staff, with the overall goal of maintaining consistency with urban design goals set by the City for Van Ness Avenue. A project landscape design, including tree type, will require review and approval by the City Planning Department and the San Francisco Arts Commission, and future opportunities for public input on the design and tree type will be available during these review processes.

O-6a-4 We regret that your organization did not receive our email blast and mailings which were distributed to thousands of interested parties in the project area. However, the release of the Draft EIS/EIR was posted in the Federal Register, the San Francisco Examiner, Sing Tao, El Mensajero, Central City Extra, and Marina Times and there was also local news coverage of the release by the SF Chronicle, KCBS and KQED. Advertisements for the released document were posted on line 47 and 49 SFMTA buses as well as Golden Gate Transit buses, and the Notice of Availability was posted all along Van Ness Avenue. A radius mailing to properties along Van Ness Avenue, Polk and Gough streets was also distributed during the public review period. An electronic version of the document was also made available on the www.vannessbrt.org website and was readable in both Adobe's free Acrobat Reader and Apple's free Preview program. Hard copies of the document were available in multiple libraries (listed in all public notices), the Authority and SFMTA offices, and at the Planning Department.

This is an enquiry e-mail via <http://www.sfcta.org> from:
TRANSDEF <info@transdef.org>

You haven't provided a means to submit a file with our comments nicely formatted.
We would appreciate the opportunity to provide the comments we submitted moments
ago via this contact form, via a PDF attached to an email.

O-6b-1

Please provide us with an email address.

Thank you,

--David Schonbrunn

Organization Comments on the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project Draft EIS/EIR

Reviewer: TRANSDEF

Reviewer's
Comment
Number

Response

O-6b-I Comments could be emailed, with attachments, to vannessbrt@sfcta.org.

On Fri, Dec 23, 2011 at 4:58 PM, TRANSDEF <info@transdef.org> wrote:
This is an enquiry e-mail via <http://www.sfcta.org> from:
TRANSDEF <info@transdef.org>

Sir,

Just yesterday, we were made aware of the publication of Recapturing Global Leadership in Bus Rapid Transit A Survey of Select U.S. Cities, by Annie Weinstock, Walter Hook, Michael Replogle, and Ramon Cruz, May 2011. It is available at http://www.itdp.org/documents/20110526ITDP_USBRT_Report-HR.pdf

Although I have not had a chance to read it yet, I understand that it contains a checklist to evaluate BRT projects. Please evaluate the Van Ness BRT alternatives using this book.

O-6c-1

Thank you,

--David Schonbrunn

Organization Comments on the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project Draft EIS/EIR

Reviewer: TRANSDEF

Reviewer's
Comment
Number

Response

O-6c-I	Please see Chapter 10 of the Final EIS/EIR and the LPA Report for the analysis supporting the LPA. The evaluation criteria in Chapter 10 reflect the priorities for transit on Van Ness Avenue, and may not fit the broad goals of BRT internationally. Nevertheless, the criteria reflect some of the priorities in the checklist, and the LPA contains many of the features noted in the checklist.
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From: David Schonbrunn <David@schonbrunn.org>
Date: Fri, Dec 23, 2011 at 4:53 PM
Subject: TRANSDEF's Comments on Van Ness BRT DEIS/DEIR
To: Michael Schwartz <Michael.Schwartz@sfcta.org>

Mr. Schwartz,

Our comments are attached. It sure wasn't easy finding an email address for you. Most agencies that expect professional comments publish an email address with their NOA.

O-6d-1

--David

David Schonbrunn, President
Transportation Solutions Defense and Education Fund (TRANSDEF)
P.O. Box 151439
San Rafael, CA 94915-1439

415-370-7250 cell & office

David@Schonbrunn.org
www.transdef.org

Organization Comments on the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project Draft EIS/EIR

Reviewer: TRANSDEF

Reviewer's
Comment
Number

Response

O-6d-I The email address on the NOA was vannessbrt@sfcta.org, which is a general email box that was accessible to Mr. Schwartz and other project staff at the SFCTA.

From: robert bardell [bbardell@comcast.net]
 Sent: Fri 12/23/2011 3:12 PM
 To: vannessbrt@sfcta.org
 Subject: [vannessbrt] San Francisco County Transportation Authority: Draft EIS/EIR Comment

This is an enquiry e-mail via <http://www.sfcta.org> from:
 robert bardell <bbardell@comcast.net>

Comments from members of Golden Gate Valley Neighborhood Association. (1) The project is too expensive for the projected savings in bus travel time. (2) The limited stop features of BRT will make it less accessible than the current system for people with mobility issues. The mobility challenged group includes but is not limited to seniors, handicapped, and individuals recovering from injuries or medical procedures. (3) The option to eliminate left turns from Van Ness except at Broadway SB and Lombard NB destroys the Avenue's function as a traffic circulator. (4) Severe restriction on left turns from Van Ness will worsen pedestrian safety at intersections along Van Ness, Franklin, and Polk as drivers, frustrated by the loss of left turns, execute rapid "around the block" maneuvers to reach streets that were once accessible from Van Ness by simple left turns. (5) Although the scope of the Draft EIS/EIR did not require modeling and evaluation of automobile traffic on streets outside of the narrowly defined Van Ness Avenue corridor, it should have. If traffic lanes are eliminated and left turns curtailed on Van Ness, significant numbers of automobiles will divert from from Lombard St. during the AM rush hours and on Friday and Saturday nights. These vehicles will avoid the Van Ness Avenue corridor entirely--except, perhaps, to cross it--and will travel along residential streets in Golden Gate Valley, Cow Hollow, and Pacific heights. This diversion problem will be particularly acute under Alternatives 3 and 4 which will reduce overall traffic capacity on Van Ness by nearly 1/3. Congestion-beating automobile diversions already cause accidents on residential streets. Changes to traffic patterns on Van Ness will only make matters worse. (6) The parameters and variables of the several traffic models employed in the Draft EIS/EIR are not presented in that report making evaluation of the adequacy of those models impossible. (7) The Draft EIS/EIR does not address the effect of Doyle Drive's reconstruction. In particular, it does not account for the effect on Lombard St. traffic from the de-emphasis of Marina Blvd. as a through route from Doyle Drive to downtown. Since Lombard functions as a feeder to Van Ness, failure to account for increased traffic on Lombard leads to underestimates of future traffic volume on the Van Ness corridor. (8) It is a mistake not to view Lombard and Van Ness as constituting a single traffic-carrying system. (9) Swerving traffic lanes in center-lane-running Alternatives 3 and 4 create a traffic hazard. (10) Traffic lanes adjacent to the sidewalk in center-lane-running Alternatives 3 and 4 eliminate the buffer of a parking lane and create a serious hazard for pedestrians. (11) Swerving traffic immediately adjacent to the sidewalk will make the intersection of Van Ness and Broadway particularly dangerous to pedestrians. (12) The proposed re-routing of Golden Gate Transit buses along Chestnut and Laguna--residential streets--will increase traffic congestion, noise, and air pollution along that route.

O-7-1

O-7-2

O-7-3

O-7-4

O-7-5

O-7-6

O-7-7

O-7-8

O-7-9

O-7-10

Organization Comments on the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project Draft EIS/EIR

Reviewer: Golden Gate Valley Neighborhood Association

Reviewer's
Comment
Number

Response

O-7-1

Please see Master Response #4, which addresses the cost-effectiveness of the BRT project.

Cost effectiveness was a key consideration in evaluating BRT build alternatives for the Van Ness Avenue corridor in the DEIS/DEIR, and in selecting the LPA. Section 2.1 outlines the alternatives screening process and criteria, which included project benefits, capital cost, and operating cost. As part of the screening process, a wide range of alternatives was considered for further evaluation, including potentially lower-cost transit improvements such as Transit Preferential Streets (TPS) treatments without a dedicated bus lane, and more expensive alternatives including surface rail or a subway. As explained in greater detail in Master Response #2, alternatives were screened out from further environmental analysis if they indicated a "fatal flaw" or overall low performance in meeting the project purpose and need. (For additional information on the project purpose and need, see Chapter 1.) Transit improvements that did not include a dedicated bus lane were screened out due to low performance, while the rail options were eliminated from further consideration based on high capital and operating costs. Section 2.6 includes additional information on alternatives considered and withdrawn (and the rationale for withdrawing them from consideration). The BRT alternatives were advanced for additional environmental analysis because they meet all elements of the project purpose and need and are not prohibitively costly. More information on this process and the criteria used to screen alternatives can be found in the Alternatives Screening Report, which is on the Project website at www.vannessbrt.org. This report, indicating the three alternatives studied in the Draft EIS/EIR, was adopted by the Authority Board in 2008 (Resolution 08-71).

An express bus alternative was not included in the Alternatives Screening Report because it would not address many elements of the project purpose and need. New express buses in mixed traffic would be subject to congestion and other vehicle conflicts that increase travel times and significantly reduce transit reliability. They would also remain subject to signal delay. Express buses would not improve the passenger waiting or boarding experience, the safety and comfort of pedestrians, or the streetscape on Van Ness Avenue. While adding express buses would likely have a lower capital cost than BRT, the additional service would increase ongoing Muni operating costs.

Van Ness Avenue BRT has received the Federal Transit Administration's highest cost-effectiveness rating several years in a row, an indication of its high benefit-to-cost ratio. The project does provide significant travel time and reliability benefits, meeting the purpose and need. Compared to the No Build Alternative, BRT would reduce travel times in the corridor by 15 to 32 percent and unexpected stops (a measure of reliability) by 28 to 52 percent, depending on the alternative. Chapter 3 provides additional information on the transportation performance of BRT relative to the No Build Alternative. Chapter 9 provides details on the capital and operating costs of the BRT alternatives. The capital cost estimates for BRT range from \$93 to \$136 million. However, BRT would provide annual operating cost savings because faster speeds and reduced travel times allow fewer vehicles to provide the same service frequency. These savings would range from \$1.2 to \$2.4 million annually.

O-7-2

Please see Master Response #5 for a discussion of stop spacing, the factors used to select stop locations, and impacts of the project on universal accessibility. In response to comments regarding wider stop spacing in the vicinity of the Van Ness Avenue and Vallejo Street intersection, which has higher grades

than other parts of the corridor, the LPA would include a southbound station at the intersection of Vallejo Street and Van Ness Avenue. A northbound transit station in this same location, referred to as the Vallejo Northbound Station Variant, could also be implemented, and will be decided upon at the time of project approval.

O-7-3

See Master Responses #8 and #9, and Section 3.3 of the EIS/EIR for explanation of how traffic diversion was considered. Also, the Vehicular Traffic Analysis Technical Memorandum provides detailed information on the traffic diversion analysis. As explained in Master Response #8, the traffic modeling takes into account the relative attractiveness of a travel route, including left-turn opportunities. Thus, the modeling performed reflects the traffic effects of eliminating left-turns. With the implementation of BRT, including the LPA, some localized circulating traffic wishing to make left turns on Van Ness Avenue under the No Build Alternative may choose streets other than Van Ness Avenue under the build alternatives. Alternatively, a similar number of through trips on parallel streets may choose to use Van Ness Avenue instead. This change in traffic pattern is consistent with Van Ness Avenue's role as US 101 in San Francisco. The transportation models show that there will be fewer turning vehicles overall on Van Ness Avenue, even when accounting for the increase in "triple-right" turns.

Regarding pedestrian safety, incorporation of Design Option B (elimination of most left turns) into Build Alternatives 3 or 4, and the LPA (with or without the Vallejo Northbound Station variant), would reduce conflicts with other vehicles and pedestrians due to the reduction in left turns, the number one cause of vehicle-pedestrian collisions along the corridor. While there could be an increase in right turns at some locations along Van Ness Avenue, the speed of these turns would be slowed with the implementation of bulbouts at numerous locations along the project study area. Also, as discussed in Section 3.4.2.I, wide medians serve as a refuge for pedestrians that are unable to finish crossing the street during one light cycle. For the center-running alternatives the average median widths are greatest with Design Option B (see Table 3.4-8). Each of the build alternatives, including Design Option B and the LPA, would incorporate median refuges with nose cones at all signalized intersections, substantially improving pedestrian crossing conditions. Please see Master Response #13 for a summary of how pedestrian crossing conditions on Van Ness Avenue would be improved.

O-7-4

See Master Response #8 the Transportation Technical Memorandum, and Chapter 3.1.2.3 regarding traffic diversions. The SF-CHAMP model analyzed changes in traffic volumes for all streets in San Francisco. Results indicated that there would not be significant traffic volume increases outside of the traffic study area with the implementation of BRT.

Chapter 3.1 of the EIS/EIR indicates that the peak traffic volumes occur during weekday PM peak periods, which is why the traffic impact analysis focused on that time period.

During the AM peak period, Lombard Street already only has two eastbound right turn lanes onto Van Ness Avenue, thus governing the capacity of traffic that can enter the roadway to two lanes, even under the No Build Alternative. For this reason, the project team anticipates Van Ness Avenue to be able to accommodate a similar amount of traffic in the north end of the corridor, especially when the traffic lanes do not have the friction of transit or left turns (which increases the signal time for the through movement). In locations where there are significant right turn movements (Market and Pine streets), the project is proposing right turn pockets on Van Ness Avenue to allow better capacity for the remaining two lanes.

The major constraint in the AM peak is the lone remaining left turn on Broadway, which is already the only left turn opportunity between Filbert and Washington (i.e., there would not be a significant reduction in major left turn opportunities in the area). The project is proposing to create a second dedicated left turn lane SB at Broadway on Van Ness Avenue to help increase the capacity of this left turn movement and reduce the potential for spillover outside of the turn pockets (see engineering drawings in Appendix A of EIS/EIR). Currently, the second lane is both a through lane and a left turn lane. This means there are already two through lanes at Broadway when there is someone trying to make a left turn in the second turn lane, thus blocking the through movement during the green phase of the cycle. Thus,

the capacity would be similar at Broadway and Van Ness Avenue with BRT as in the No Project.

If there is an assumption during the AM Peak that all people who would otherwise make left turns in the No Build Alternative (accounting for a conservative 28% growth in traffic volumes between now and 2015) at Filbert and Washington, and half of the people who would otherwise make left turns at Bush Street, decided after the project is implemented to use Broadway, there would be the potential for around 150-200 vehicles/hour (approximately 3 per minute) to divert to other streets. If evenly divided, that would mean up to 1 additional vehicle per minute on Gough, Octavia, and Laguna. These volumes are lower than those shown during the PM peak hour, and thus additional project impacts beyond those shown in Section 3.3 would not be anticipated.

- O-7-5 The Vehicular Traffic Analysis Technical Memorandum (CHS, 2013) includes the parameters around the Synchro traffic model as well as the validation report of the SF-CHAMP travel demand forecasting model. Additional explanation of the overall modeling approach and methodology has been included in this Final EIS/EIR in Section 3.3.
- O-7-6 Chapter 5, Cumulative Impacts, analyzes other projects including the Presidio Parkway Project (Doyle Drive Replacement), California Pacific Medical Center, the Geary Boulevard BRT, and Hayes Two-Way Street Conversion, along with several planned residential developments. In Section 3.3, the traffic models account for the Presidio Parkway's construction for Year 2035 analysis. Where adverse cumulative impacts are identified, measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate these impacts are presented.
- O-7-7 There would be no swerving traffic or conflicts with parking and right-turning automobiles under Alternatives 3 and 4, or with the LPA, the center-running BRT in dedicated transit lanes (see Chapter 2 for a full description of these alternatives). Designs for all build alternatives, including the LPA (with or without the Vallejo Northbound Station variant), would meet SFMTA, Caltrans, and federal safety standards.
- O-7-8 The analysis of pedestrian impacts in Section 3.4.3.1 of the Draft EIS/EIR addresses the benefit on-street parking provides as a buffer between moving traffic and pedestrians on the sidewalk. The analysis identifies the negative effect of parking removal on pedestrians, but given the project's other planned improvements to sidewalk conditions, such as new curb bulb-outs, pedestrian lighting, and removal of existing bus shelters, the analysis finds an overall neutral to positive impact on sidewalk conditions and safety. Section 3.5 identifies measures that will be incorporated into project design to minimize loss of on-street parking and its negative effects on pedestrians.
- This factor was considered in the conceptual development of the LPA and will be further considered in design. Parking was retained along the corridor wherever possible. Chapter 3.5 indicates that there would only be 5 blocks that would not have parking along one side of the street for the entire block. This is higher compared to existing conditions, which has one block without parking along one side of the street.
- O-7-9 No swerving traffic is anticipated at Van Ness Avenue and Broadway with any of the build alternatives, including the LPA. The center-running alternatives (Build Alternatives 3 and 4 and the LPA, with or without the Vallejo Northbound Station variant) are in dedicated transit lanes and include a design option referred to as Design Option B. This design option would eliminate all but one NB left turn (at Lombard Street) and all but one SB left turn (at Broadway) in the project corridor. Broadway would operate as a double left-turn lane with one left-turn pocket (and a second, outside lane allowing left-turn and through traffic). No BRT station is proposed at Broadway under any of the build alternatives. The transitions to the left turn lanes for all build alternatives, including the LPA, would meet SFMTA and Caltrans safety standards for design speeds appropriate to Van Ness Avenue.
- O-7-10 The LPA does not propose routing Golden Gate Transit buses along Chestnut Street. GGT buses would maintain the same routes with the LPA as in the No Build Alternative, although they would be using the dedicated BRT lanes and BRT stations.

From: Robert Boden, San Francisco Transit Riders Union [rboden@sftru.org]
Sent: Fri 12/23/2011 5:03 PM
To: vannessbrt@sfcta.org
Subject: [vannessbrt] San Francisco County Transportation Authority: Draft EIS/EIR Comment

This is an enquiry e-mail via <http://www.sfcta.org> from:
Robert Boden, San Francisco Transit Riders Union <rboden@sftru.org>

The San Francisco Transit Riders Union has reviewed the Van Ness Bus Rapid Transit Draft EIS/EIR and is providing the following public comments:

1. SFTRU strongly opposes the adoption of Alternative 2, "Side Lane BRT." Alternative 2 is a poor choice for transit riders. Compared to Alternatives 3 and 4, Alternative 2 has slower travel times and more unexpected stops, is less reliable, costs more to operate, and attracts fewer riders. Alternative 2 also forces pedestrians to walk the farthest, requiring them to cross the entire width of the street to reach the opposite platform, as well as causing buses to have more conflicts with bicyclists, right-turning vehicles, and double-parked vehicles. SFCTA and SFMTA should choose either Alternative 3 or 4 over Alternative 2.

O-8-1

2. Although SFTRU is not taking a position at this time between Alternatives 3 and 4, the environmental report underplays several advantages of Alternative 3. For example:

O-8-2

a. A tremendous benefit of Alternative 3 is its flexibility to operate with any transit vehicle in Muni's (or Golden Gate Transit's) fleet. This has both capital and operating cost ramifications, but the measure referring to "special events" does not capture this. The ability to operate with any transit vehicle has many benefits: Facilitating Owl service, special events, and new route and ballpark services, as well as reducing necessary spare ratios.

b. Alternative 4 would have slower net operating speeds than Alternative 3, primarily because the left-door buses in Alternative 4 would load and alight through two doors, while the right-door buses in Alternative 3 would have 3 doors. Buses with three doors, such as those in Alternative 3, can board and alight passengers faster.

O-8-3

c. The left-door buses in Alternative 4 would require ticket-vending machines (TVMs) at all locations because there will be no door near the bus driver. The right-door buses in Alternative 3 avoid the need for TVMs at all stops.

O-8-4

d. Whereas the environmental report cites many passenger amenities associated with the center loading in Alternative 4, the right-side boarding in Alternative 3 also has benefits that the report does not discuss. For example, conventional right-door buses have more seating for passengers than comparable left-and-right door buses.

O-8-5

Ultimately, SFTRU strongly supports the Van Ness BRT project. We strongly encourage SFCTA and SFMTA to move toward eventual adoption of either Alternative 3 or 4, to oppose Alternative 2, and to respond to the benefits of Alternative 3 discussed above that the environmental report did not address.

O-8-6

Sincerely,

Robert G. Boden
On Behalf of the Executive Board
San Francisco Transit Riders Union

Organization Comments on the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project Draft EIS/EIR

Reviewer: SF Transit Riders Union

Reviewer's Comment Number	Response
O-8-1	Opposition to Build Alternative 2 is noted. Please see Chapter 10 of the Final EIS/EIR and the LPA Report for the analysis supporting the LPA. As discussed above (response 3-I), under Build Alternatives 3 and 4, and the LPA, which feature center-lane configurations, bus patrons would only need to cross half of the street to arrive at/debark from a BRT station.
O-8-2	Please see Chapter 10 of the Final EIS/EIR and the LPA Report for the analysis supporting the LPA. A factor considered for the LPA is the ability to operate standard, right-side door only vehicles. Performance indicator A-4, flexibility, serves as a proxy for the ability to serve the corridor with any vehicle. The additional vehicle spare ratio (and thus additional vehicles) required to operate a dedicated fleet was included as part of the capital and maintenance costs of Build Alternative 4.
O-8-3	The transit speed and reliability was modeled through the VISSIM model. The model was not sensitive enough to distinguish the small differences between the center-running alternatives, including the LPA. Nevertheless, the LPA would use all three doors on the right side of the bus.
O-8-4	All build alternatives in the Draft EIS/EIR, including the LPA, include ticket vending machines at selected station locations. One of the distinguishing features of BRT is the ability of transit customers to pre-pay for their tickets.
O-8-5	The LPA will use right-side door only vehicles.
O-8-6	Please see Chapter 10 of the Final EIS/EIR and the LPA Report for the analysis supporting the LPA. The ability to use standard right side door vehicles was included as part of the decision-making process.

From: **Donna Morrison** <morrison.donna@sbcglobal.net>
Date: Fri, Dec 2, 2011 at 10:54 PM
Subject: FW: Better Rapid Transit Proposal
To: michael.schwartz@sfcta.org

Dear Michael,

I am writing to express my grave concerns that the BRT proposal to eliminate two lanes of traffic on Van Ness Avenue for buses only will be a very expensive venture for VERY little commuter time saved. And it will quite obviously push more frustrated drivers on to the residential side streets. I urge you to retain the 6 lanes (No Build) and consider instead the possibility of a dedicated right lane for buses during commute hours. Then if this proves to be of limited help in speeding bus time and attracting riders, it would be the LEAST expensive to undo.

O-9-1

O-9-2

Sincerely,

Donna Morrison
Gough Street Property Owners Association
2523 Gough Street
San Francisco, California 94123

Organization Comments on the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project Draft EIS/EIR

Reviewer: Gough Street Property Owners Association, Donna Morrison

Reviewer's
Comment
Number

Response

O-9-1 The FTA has rated the Van Ness Avenue BRT “medium-high” for project justification (the only Small Starts Project in the country to receive such a designation), and “high” for cost effectiveness; it is one of only two projects in the Bay Area identified for Small Starts funding through MTC’s Resolution 3434, in part due to its cost effectiveness. Recent research comparing the construction of BRT to Light Rail transit and Metro systems indicates that BRT is substantially faster and less disruptive to construct than light rail, and it shares the existing roadway (Deng and Nelson, Recent Developments in Bus Rapid Transit, Transport Reviews, Vol. 31, No.1, January 2011). Chapter 1 and 3.2 of the Draft EIS/EIR describes the benefits of the build alternatives (including the LPA), including transit travel time and reliability improvements, pedestrian safety enhancements, increased transit ridership, and reduction in transit operating costs.

Please see Master Responses #8 and #9 which provide an explanation of how traffic diversion from Van Ness Avenue onto parallel streets was analyzed. Please also see response to comment I-3 above.

O-9-2 Please see Master Response #2 on alternatives definition and screening, Chapter 2 of the EIS/EIR, and the Alternatives Screening Report (April, 2008). TPS treatments were looked at during screening, including peak-hour only bus lanes. Analysis showed that this treatment was not effective in meeting the project purpose and need because delays to transit caused by traffic on Van Ness Avenue occur during off-peak and weekends in addition to weekday peak periods.

From: Eric Baird [eric@relisto.com]
Sent: Tue 12/6/2011 8:15 PM
To: vannessbrt@sfcta.org
Subject: [vannessbrt] San Francisco County Transportation Authority: Draft EIS/EIR Comment

This is an enquiry e-mail via <http://www.sfcta.org> from:
Eric Baird <eric@relisto.com>

I support Alternative 3 Variation B...

As a business owner of a real estate rental and leasing firm, I see first hand the negative effects a slow transit system has on the San Francisco's economy.

O-10-1

People don't want to be on a crowded bus for 20-40 minutes to go 1-5 miles. Just yesterday, an individual declined an offer to lease because the property was "too far from downtown" based on commute times. He owned start up technology company and had entertained the idea of bringing his business to the Inner Richmond.

A truly rapid bus system will allow for San Francisco to spread the technology boom and other businesses across the whole city, not just downtown. Creating jobs and better living condition for everyone.

Alternative 3 Variation B- I support this option because it is the fastest option to select... A true barrier on either side of the bus lane will protect cars and trucks from using a bus lane to pass or park. Variation B also prevents left hand turns, again speeding the bus.

O-10-2

Thank you for your time and consideration

Eric Baird
Managing Director
ReLISTO
eric@relisto.com

Organization Comments on the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project Draft EIS/EIR

Reviewer: ReLISTO, Eric Baird

Reviewer's
Comment
Number

Response

- | | |
|--------|---|
| O-10-1 | Support for a rapid bus system is noted. The following are two transit performance needs identified in Section 1.3.2 Project Need: 1) Separate Transit from Auto Traffic to Improve Travel Time and Service Reliability; and 2) Reduce Delays Associated with Loading and Unloading and Traffic Signals. These two needs are key to improving travel times and reliability, and providing a competitive transit alternative to auto travel in major corridors such as Van Ness Avenue, as discussed in Section 1.3 Project Purpose and Need. |
| O-10-2 | Support for Build Alternative 3 with Design Option B is noted. Please see Chapter 10 of the Final EIS/EIR and the LPA Report for the analysis supporting the LPA. Section 10.2.4.I Transit Performance describes how transit travel time is considered in the LPA selection process. As described in Section 10.2.4.I and 3.2.2.3, Transit Travel Time, Speed, Delay and Reliability, Build Alternatives 3 and 4 would have approximately the same travel time savings within the project limits, of approximately 28% when compared with existing conditions. Incorporation of Design Option B under either Build Alternative 3 or 4 would save approximately 33% versus existing conditions. This additional time savings with Design Option B is due to the removal of left-turn movements and the left-turn signal phases at those intersections along Van Ness Avenue, allowing for extended transit signal priority and north-south signal time. The LPA would have a barrier from traffic at station locations, and would have a similar travel time and reliability benefit as the center running alternatives with Design Option B presented in the Draft EIS/EIR. |

From: Mel Lee [mel.lee@sfal senior.com]
Sent: Tue 12/13/2011 11:45 AM
To: vannessbrt@sfcta.org
Subject: [vannessbrt] Passenger Loading Zone (BRT)

Mr. Michael Schwartz

Please contact me to discuss the concern our current "White-Color Passenger Loading Zone" for our seniors located at 1035 Van Ness Ave?

The Avenue Assisted Living is a state licensed Residential Care for the Elderly. The majority of our seniors are either wheel-chair bound or assisted with walkers/canes. All 911 Emergencies for seniors must require loading and unloading at the current White-Color Passenger Zone and must be maintained at the current location. A meeting with your office is an urgent situation.

O-11a-1

Thank you,

Mel Lee
The Avenue Assisted Living
1035 Van Ness Ave.
S.F., CA 94109
(415) 776-1800
www.theavenuesf.com

Organization Comments on the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project Draft EIS/EIR

Reviewer: Avenue Assisted Living, Mel Lee

Reviewer's
Comment
Number

Response

O-IIa-1

The Avenue assisted living facility is noted in Table 4.2-9 as a property that may be significantly impacted by removal or relocation of a colored parking zone since it is a special use that requires an adjacent loading zone to serve elderly and infirmed people. As stated in Section 3.5.3, the SFMTA will give priority to retaining color-painted on-street parking spaces, such as white passenger loading zones and blue disabled parking. Section 4.2.5 states that the SFMTA will minimize impacts to affected businesses by identifying in coordination with businesses, those that would be affected by removal of colored parking spaces, confirming the need of the businesses for truck and passenger loading spaces and identifying appropriate replacement parking locations. As part of this process, the project team has identified design modifications that will avoid removal of the passenger loading zone that serves this special use. The special needs served by the passenger loading zone are acknowledged in Section 4.2.4.2 and Table 4.2-9. Under the LPA (with or without the Vallejo Northbound Station variant), all white colored parking spaces will be retained in front of the Avenue assisted living facility.

The Avenue Assisted Living

1035 Van Ness Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94109
(415) 776-1800

December 15, 2011

Van Ness BRT EIS/EIR
Attn: Michael Schwartz, Transportation Planner
Project Manager for Planning and Environmental Review
100 Van Ness Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Mr. Schwartz,

Thank you for meeting with us at the Avenue Assisted Living yesterday, along with your colleagues Brynna McNulty of Parsons and Darton Ito of MTA.

The Avenue Assisted Living is a state licensed Residential Care for the Elderly. To reiterate the necessity and safety of retaining our existing **“White-Color Passenger Loading Zone”** for our seniors who are reliance on wheel chairs and walkers/canes, coupled with emergency (911 calls) vehicles from the San Francisco Fire Dept., ambulances and paratransits, the existing **Passenger Loading Zone** is a prerequisite for any senior facility.

O-11b-1

The existing Loading Zone is necessary to stay “as is” due to:

- Safety hazards.
- No alternatives to relocate to Myrtle Street (major street grade for ADA).
- Our only ADA entrance is on Van Ness Ave., there are no alternatives.

Referring to Alternatives 3 and 4, the proposed BRT passenger loading and unloading station is on Van Ness Ave. between Geary Blvd. and O’Farrell Street. We would suggest relocating the passenger loading and unloading station on Van Ness Ave. between O’Farrell and Ellis Streets. Rationale: This block is occupied by merely two retail motor vehicle sales facilities, no residents and “day use” only.

O-11b-2

Thank you for your considerations,

THE AVENUE ASSISTED LIVING



Mel Lee

cc: Teresa Wong, Administrator

Organization Comments on the Van Ness Avenue BRT Project Draft EIS/EIR

Reviewer: Avenue Assisted Living, Mel Lee

Reviewer's Comment Number	Response
O-IIb-1	Please see response above to comment O-IIa-1.
O-IIb-2	Please see the above response to comment O-IIa-1. The project has not proposed to relocate the Geary/O'Farrell station to the block further south because of the lack of connectivity to westbound Geary Boulevard and the proposed Geary BRT as well as the proposed CPMC hospital. See Master Response #5 for the criteria used to select BRT station locations.