

Mission south of Chavez Neighborhood Transportation Study
July 15, 2006 Workshop Summary

Summary of Issues and Priorities

Background

The Mission South of Chavez Neighborhood Transportation Study is a community-based effort to confirm transportation needs, develop and prioritize conceptual designs for near- and medium-term transportation improvements on Mission Street between Cesar Chavez Street and Randall Street. In addition to addressing community transportation concerns, this effort also aims to build community leadership in transportation planning and direct involvement in the public approvals process. The Study is a collaborative effort to support community-based transportation improvements, working with the Municipal Transportation Agency's Department of Parking and Traffic, Muni, the Department of Public Works, the Planning Department, with the San Francisco County Transportation Authority taking the lead.

The Study builds on the Mission Street Community Vision, a community-based plan for land use, transportation, and streetscape improvements for this stretch of Mission Street. The current effort, begun in March 2006, is funded by the San Francisco County Transportation Authority and Department of Public Health, with Bernal Heights Neighborhood Center as the outreach partner. Leading up to the July 15th workshop, Authority consultants led a technical review of solutions proposed in the Community Vision to confirm feasibility and either refine improvements or identify additional methods of addressing needs or desires characterized in the Vision. Next, the Study Team will work to develop conceptual designs for the most promising projects in order to seek capital funding.

Workshop Purpose and Process

The July 15, 2006 workshop focused on updating residents, merchants, and community groups on the evolution of the ideas generated in the Vision, and getting input from them about what types of improvements and locations are most important and urgent. Following an introduction from BHNC staff, Authority staff began the workshop with a presentation on the Study objectives and key findings thus far.

The workshop materials were organized into theme-based stations. Three focused on corridor wide improvements—one station examined pedestrian safety proposals, another looked at transit performance ideas, and a third weighed streetscape improvements. The other stations tackled options for improving major intersections - Mission & Randall, Mission & Valencia and Mission & Chavez. Participants rotated from station to station, so everyone had an opportunity to weigh in on all issues. At each discussion station, participants "voted" by placing dot stickers next to their preferred option on the workshop boards. Facilitators also led discussion and solicited more general comments, which were recorded on the workshop boards.

I. Corridor-wide improvements: Pedestrian Safety

Proposals to add curb extensions where there are now none were the clear favorite of participants. Curb extensions would shorten pedestrian crossing distances. This option was prioritized first of all pedestrian safety improvements, with participants "voting" for this option twice as much as the second choice, pedestrian scale lighting. Pedestrian scale lighting would increase personal security and safety of pedestrians walking on sidewalks at night.

As for which intersection along Mission is most important for pedestrian safety, Mission & Chavez and Mission & Valencia were most commonly cited, and Mission & Virginia and Mission & 30th were favored by several other people. Participants pointed out that Mission & 30th Street is problematic because it lacks a crosswalk on the south side and advocated changes at this location. Another suggestion at this location is a "scramble" signal where pedestrians can cross in all directions at once.

Other comments included a desire to close the Safeway exit ramp onto 29th Street to car traffic, since it allows for cut through traffic from Mission and presents a hazard to pedestrians. Longer crossing times and energy-conserving lighting were also favored.

II. Corridor-wide improvements: Streetscape Environment

Participants strongly supported proposals to green the street, feeling that Mission Street presents a rather harsh streetscape environment presently. This could be done in several ways – by providing strategic landscaping at curb extensions and by adding plantings along the sidewalk. There isn't room for many more trees in the existing public right of way, but planters with bushes, vines, or grasses don't interfere with underground utilities and were supported by participants.

Other types of streetscape improvements could include street furniture like benches, which got some support but not as much as landscaping. Top locations identified for streetscape improvements were 1) in front of the Safeway parking lot; 2) Mission & Valencia (see below for more info), and 3) Mission & 30th. Participants also had ideas about the types of landscaping that should be used—they are weary of palms and allergy-inducing species.

III. Corridor-wide improvements: Transit Performance

The highest priorities expressed for transit improvements were 1) NextBus signs because participants felt that having real-time arrival information would attract new riders and 2) more service for the 14L – Limited which makes fewer stops and thus arrives more quickly.

Also favored, although by fewer people, were bus bulbs (in the few locations that don't already have them) and bus stop upgrades. Other recommendations from community members included “invest in BART at 30th & Mission” but without a plaza type entry and better connections to BART stations (for example via shuttles), especially 24th St. “to deal with crunch.” Participants also felt that “more enforcement of double parking” would benefit transit performance.

IV. Location- Based Improvements: Mission & Valencia

This group examined a proposal to turn Mission and Valencia into a T junction, refining the proposal presented in the Community Vision. Currently, Valencia Street southbound widens from one lane plus bike lane at Tiffany/Duncan to a full four lanes at Mission Street. The proposed designs show a reduction to two lanes, with curb extensions reducing the crossing distance faced by pedestrians and creating newfound sidewalk space that can be dedicated to a mini-plaza with landscaping. It would also add on-street parking by turning parallel parking spaces into angled parking. This overall idea won widespread support from the community members present. Of two options shown, the clear favorite also adds a dedicated left turn lane from northbound Mission onto Valencia. This would remove a few parking spaces, but overall there would be a small net parking gain. Participants reported that similar left-turn lanes have been a success on Potrero Avenue.

V. Location- Based Improvements: Mission & Chavez

The angles at this heavily-used intersection currently create very long crossing distances for pedestrians. The proposed design would shorten them by providing curb extensions. Participants uniformly supported this as an important safety improvement that would also make pedestrians more visible and slow the speed of turning cars. Some people qualified their support by noting that new landscaping at these curb extensions is key in a neighborhood with so much concrete. One suggestion is to coordinate with the CC Puede group, which is promoting traffic calming and/or management on Cesar Chavez. Another suggestion is restricting right turns on red from Mission onto Chavez, where cars headed to the freeways conflict with people walking to BART and other destinations, especially in the mornings. Left turns were also considered problematic here; some said the proposal could be improved by dedicating left turn lanes and/or signals, with adequate timing.

VI. Location- Based Improvements: Mission & Randall

The proposed design was largely supported by participants as drawing more attention to pedestrians and providing some refuge for them in this wide intersection. More visible stop signs were praised, as was the proposed

landscaping to screen the gas station. Some felt that the additional signage would be helpful as well as physical discouragement for drivers blocking the crosswalk.

VII. Location- Based Improvements: Prioritization

Given funding constraints, of the three intersections above, participants rank Mission & Chavez (57%) as the top priority. The second highest priority is Mission & Valencia (33%), followed by Mission & Randall (10%).

VIII. What is more important?

Tradeoffs are inevitable when making changes to improve transportation and the streetscape. Participants expressed their preferences as to how these tensions should be resolved:

	equal	
Ease of driving: 15%	6%	Ease of walking: 79%
Maintain on-street parking: 35%	12%	Shorten street crossing distances: 54%
Short distances between transit stops: 0%	7%	Better transit reliability: 93%
Maintain on-street parking: 50%	4%	More space to wait for buses: 46%
Faster transit trips: 91%	9%	Short distances between transit stops: 0%

IX. Prioritizing Potential Projects

Overall, within this list, participants prioritized projects as follows:

Rank	Improvement
1	Improvements to the Mission/Chavez intersection
1	Improvements to the Mission/Valencia intersection
3	Improve lighting on the sidewalks
5	Shorten intersection crossings with more curb extensions
5	Invest in traffic signal technology that improves bus time and reliability
5	Bus shelters at busy stops
5	Install NextBus (real time arrival information at stops)
7	Improvements to the Mission/Randall intersection
7	Plant additional greenery to improve street environment & buffer some land uses

X. Wrap Up

The final minutes of the workshop were devoted to a general discussion aimed at sharing observations on the process and information presented, and answering any questions not adequately addressed at the stations. Authority Staff explained that all technically feasible projects with community support would be incorporated when preparing the funding and implementation plan. In addition, issues without specific design solutions will be addressed in the final report of the Study, through policy or institutional suggestions or additional follow-up activities.

General comments and questions included the following:

- Community participants voiced their support for projects that recognize Mission Street’s status as a vital transit corridor. Authority staff explained that Mission Street is a “transit preferential street” slated for transit improvements, and that MTA is currently in the midst of a Transit Effectiveness Project to review possible improvements to Muni service overall. Any relevant recommendations from this Study would become part of both efforts.

- Participants reaffirmed their support for a BART station at 30th Street and Mission, while also recognizing that such a development is beyond the 1 - 5 year timeframe for improvements currently under consideration. Authority staff explained that current proposals for improvements would not preclude BART station development in the future.
- Many called for a clearer description of benefits for merchants, along with the additional merchant outreach that the Study Team plans for upcoming months.
- A few participants called for installation of emergency call boxes along Mission Street.
- Some participants called for study of Mission Street north of Cesar Chavez. Authority staff understood the desire to conduct a corridor-wide study of Mission Street but pointed out that key improvements in this area or in the Mission-Geneva area should not wait until initiation or completion of a corridor-wide study.
- Several participants asked for clarification on coordination with community-led efforts to improve San Jose/Guerrero and Cesar Chavez. Coordination with these efforts is one of the considerations when phasing the various improvements along the corridor. Staff recognize that Cesar Chavez is a top priority for neighborhood residents and merchants. The Study Team intends to collaborate with other efforts before finalizing concepts and designs where areas overlap, and to share data, agency and community feedback with leadership of these efforts.