Chapter 3. Goals and Needs

This chapter summarizes the process for identifying the highest priority transportation needs in the Tenderloin, and summarizes the key findings. This effort resulted in community-derived goals to guide the development of improvement projects. The complete Existing Conditions and Needs Report is provided as Appendix 2.

3.1 Needs Assessment Methodology

The Tenderloin-Little Saigon Neighborhood has been the subject of a number of previous studies that all identified similar transportation issues in the community. Key among these were the need for enhanced pedestrian safety, to slow and "calm" traffic traveling through the neighborhood, to improve the condition of the sidewalks, and to improve transit reliability. These needs were further developed through technical analysis and outreach.

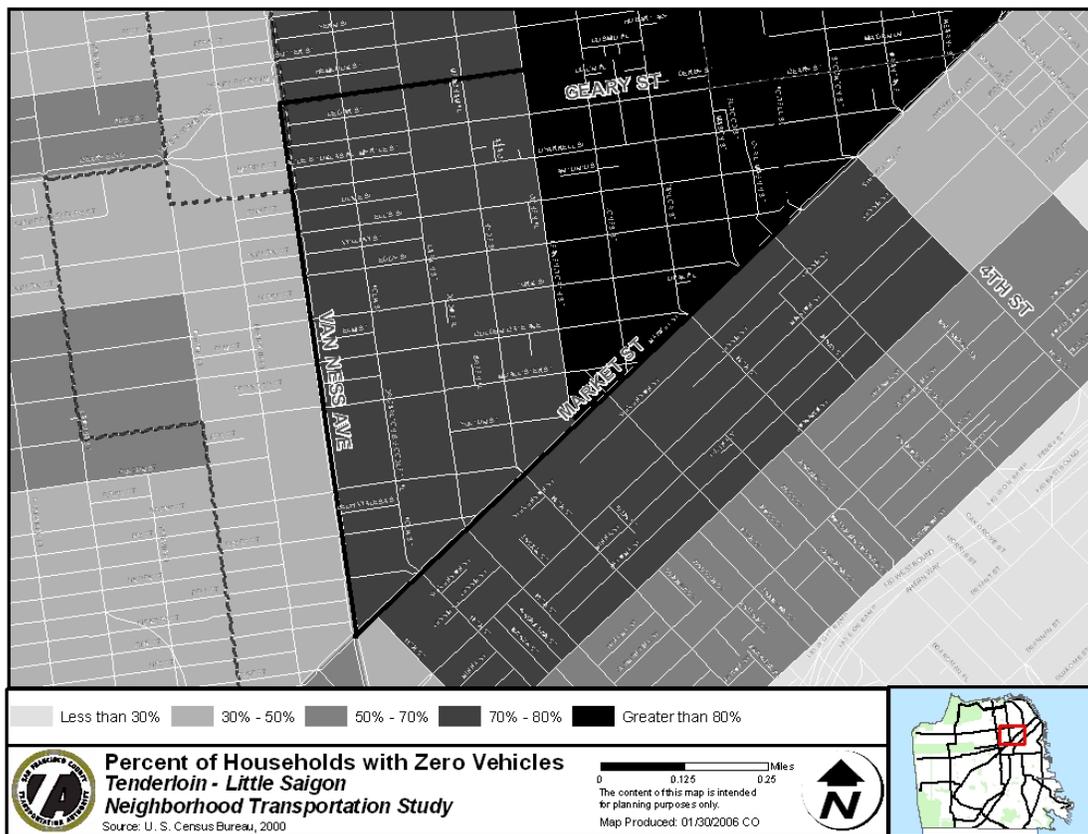Technical steps to identify transportation needs included:

- 2000 U.S. Census data, used for demographic and land-use analysis;

- Travel patterns and mode shares estimated using the San Francisco County Transportation Authority's San Francisco Travel Demand Model (SF-CHAMP);

- Field observations and inventories to assess streetscape, bus stop, and pedestrian conditions;

- Statewide Integrated Traffic Records System (SWITRS) data on pedestrian accidents to assess pedestrian safety and collisions;

- Transit schedules and performance data from Muni records;

- Muni ridership statistics from Muni's National Transit Database (NTD) Data for fiscal year 2005;

- Field observations and reviews of roadway geometry (e.g. number of lanes, directionality (one-way vs. two-way) and functional classification (arterial, collector) to document automobile circulation patterns;

- City-provided data on traffic volumes were independently verified by supplemental field observations;

- City's Synchro model of traffic operations, updated with newly collected traffic counts; and

- Site visits and city diagrams to catalog parking spaces and evaluate conditions.

3.2 Existing Conditions and Needs Assessment

The Tenderloin-Little Saigon area is unique among San Francisco neighborhoods. As a place, it is one of San Francisco's oldest neighborhoods, and its fine-grained streets provide a humane, pedestrian scale. Located next to San Francisco's urban core, it is home to a high density of housing, employment, and shops.

The Tenderloin is unique in other ways. It is San Francisco's most ethnically diverse neighborhood, providing a home to many recent immigrants who give it a dynamic and rapidly evolving character. It is also one of its poorest communities, with low household incomes and the lowest car ownership rates in the City – just 18% of households own an automobile (see Figure 3-1). To get around the City, Tenderloin residents are first and foremost pedestrians who use transit. Perhaps because of this, the key transportation needs that emerged from the community focused on improving transit and walking conditions.

Figure 3.1 – Percent of Households with Zero Vehicles

Percent of Households with Zero Vehicles
Tenderloin - Little Saigon
Neighborhood Transportation Study
Source: U. S. Census Bureau, 2000

Legend: Less than 30% | 30% - 50% | 50% - 70% | 70% - 80% | Greater than 80%

The content of this map is intended for planning purposes only.
Map Produced: 01/30/2006 CO

Given the unique environment and transportation setting in this neighborhood, it is not surprising that the primary needs identified by the community focus on establishing a safe environment for diverse users including pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders and drivers. One of the most critical needs identified by the community was the need to

"rebalance" the transportation system to improve the pedestrian and transit environment, since most Tenderloin residents walk or take transit for nearly all their trips. The most critical needs include:

- **Improve pedestrian safety.** Accident rates are six times higher in the Tenderloin than in the city at large, and unsafe intersections are located throughout the neighborhood, and especially at intersections with Market Street and the intersection of McAllister and Leavenworth Streets;

- **Improve transit service reliability and accessibility to low income individuals.** The neighborhood is well served by multiple bus lines with frequent service, but buses are often crowded and bunched together – in other words, service is unreliable. Residents are also concerned with the affordability of transit for low-income individuals.

- **Reduce the speed of traffic through the neighborhood.** The Tenderloin's multi-lane, one-way streets, many with excess capacity, encourage speeding and careless turn movements, endangering pedestrians and lowering the neighborhood's quality of life.

- **Use the street environment as a tool to enhance security and improve the community experience.** Narrow, cluttered, damaged and often barren sidewalks aren't just unattractive, uncomfortable and uninviting; criminal activity in confined spaces often forces pedestrians into the street.

Improve pedestrian safety. The fundamental tension between streets designed for auto mobility and high numbers of pedestrians is related to community concerns about pedestrian safety. The perception that the Tenderloin is dangerous for pedestrians is confirmed by data. The Tenderloin has a high rate of pedestrian incidents: order of magnitude estimates show that pedestrians are about six times more likely to be injured or killed by a car in the Tenderloin than in other areas of the City. Additionally, collisions are distributed throughout the neighborhood, indicating that traffic speeds are an issue in the neighborhood at large and not just at one or two "hot spots."

**Figure 3.2 – Locations of Pedestrian Accidents**
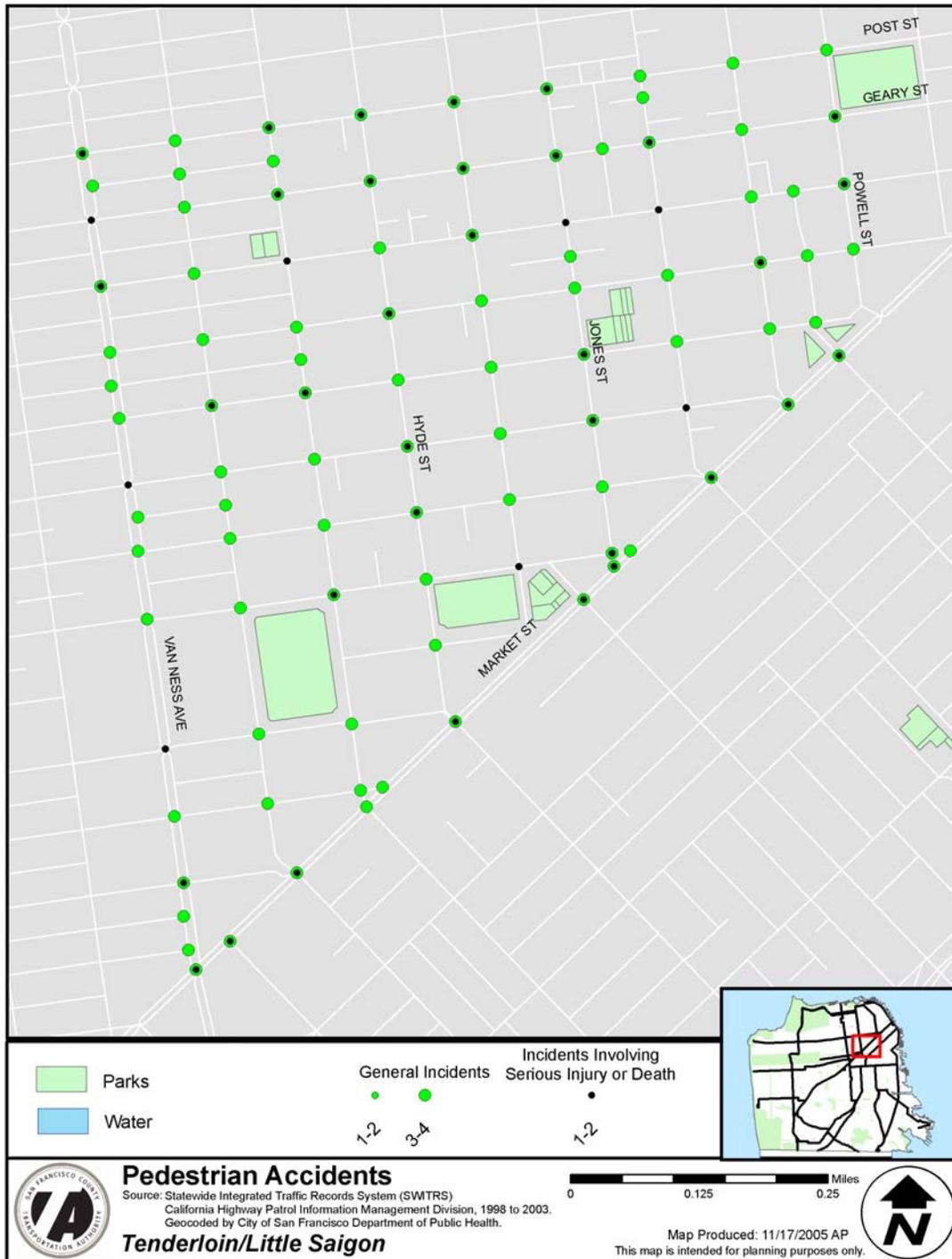
Improve transit service reliability and accessibility. Because of its central location, no neighborhood in San Francisco has a better supply of transit in terms of geographical coverage, frequency of service, regional connectivity, or amount of late night (i.e., 24 hour) service. In this sense, there is an abundance of transit in the Tenderloin.

However, the Tenderloin community's concerns with transit are not related to its *supply*, but rather to its *performance*. Performance issues cause many Tenderloin residents to perceive Muni as something that is unreliable and crowded, and data confirm these impressions. The 5-Fulton and the 38L-Geary Limited (Figures 5.8 and 5.9) recently have surpassed Muni's load standards, and only about half of trips on those lines arrived according to scheduled headways. Every Tenderloin route except the 27-Bryant is less reliable than the Muni average.

Figure 3.3 – Reliability of Muni Routes Serving the Tenderloin
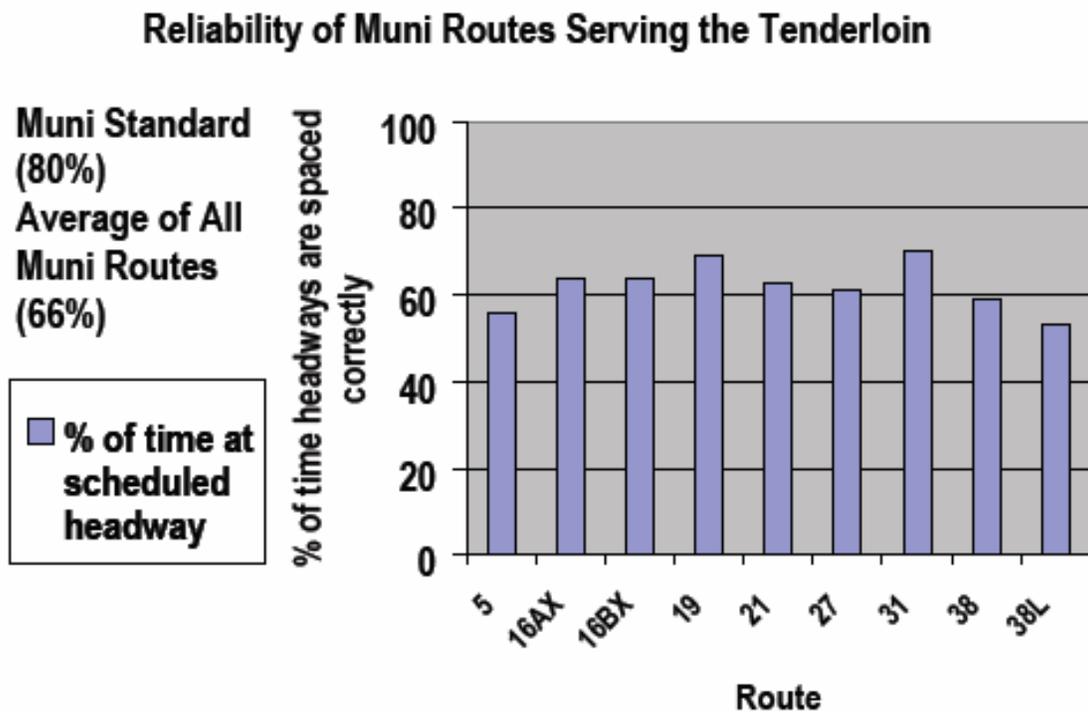
Unfortunately, these issues do not have an easy solution: just as the Tenderloin's location brings benefits in terms of transit supply, its location is related to transit performance problems. Transit routes taking Tenderloin riders into downtown are typically at their fullest when they arrive in the neighborhood. Routes that pass through the Tenderloin are among the longest in the City, so they have many opportunities to get off schedule before arriving in the Tenderloin, impacting their reliability. Moreover, it is likely that transit reliability tends to degrade when traveling *within* the Tenderloin because of unpredictable delays caused by high volumes of vehicle, passenger, and pedestrian activity.

These factors combine to degrade transit reliability in the Tenderloin. Bunching, and long gaps between transit vehicles, are fairly common yet unpredictable, making it seem that there is not enough transit service in the neighborhood.

Finally, Tenderloin residents frequently mention the expense of paying for transit trips as a significant concern, particularly since a fare increase in September 2005.

Reduce the speed of traffic through the neighborhood. While the location, density, demographics and scale of the neighborhood support walking and transit as the primary modes of travel, the streets themselves are generally designed to move large volumes of traffic going through the Tenderloin to the downtown core and the freeway system. The majority of the streets in the area are multi-lane one-way arterials designed to move cars as efficiently as possible to and from downtown or the freeway entrances and exits south of Market Street. A common theme throughout this report is the tension between the desires of residents living in this high-density, largely residential and mixed-use neighborhood, and the role its roads currently play for cars. Community members repeatedly expressed concerns about speeding traffic and pedestrian conflicts, and the technical analysis found that in many locations there is excess auto capacity, enabling drivers to speed. Analysis of nine key intersections found afternoon-peak Level of Service (LOS) rankings at seven of them to be "free flowing" or Level of Service A. This is very unusual for an urban neighborhood with high volumes of traffic, and demonstrates the fact that cars move through the neighborhood very quickly.

Use the street environment as a tool to enhance security and improve the community experience. One of the primary concerns expressed by community members was the condition of sidewalks, their lack of cleanliness and state of disrepair. Desire for more pedestrian scale lighting was widely voiced. Additionally, because so much of the public right of way has been dedicated to automobile travel and parking, sidewalks in the Tenderloin may be too narrow for the high volume of pedestrian traffic they carry. Although considered pedestrian and streetscape amenities, the existing street furniture, trees, and transit shelters further constrain the effective width of the sidewalks. Finally, pedestrian conditions in the Tenderloin are degraded by the quantity of automobile traffic.

3.3 Summary of Project Goals

Figure 3.4 – Community Prioritization of Needs
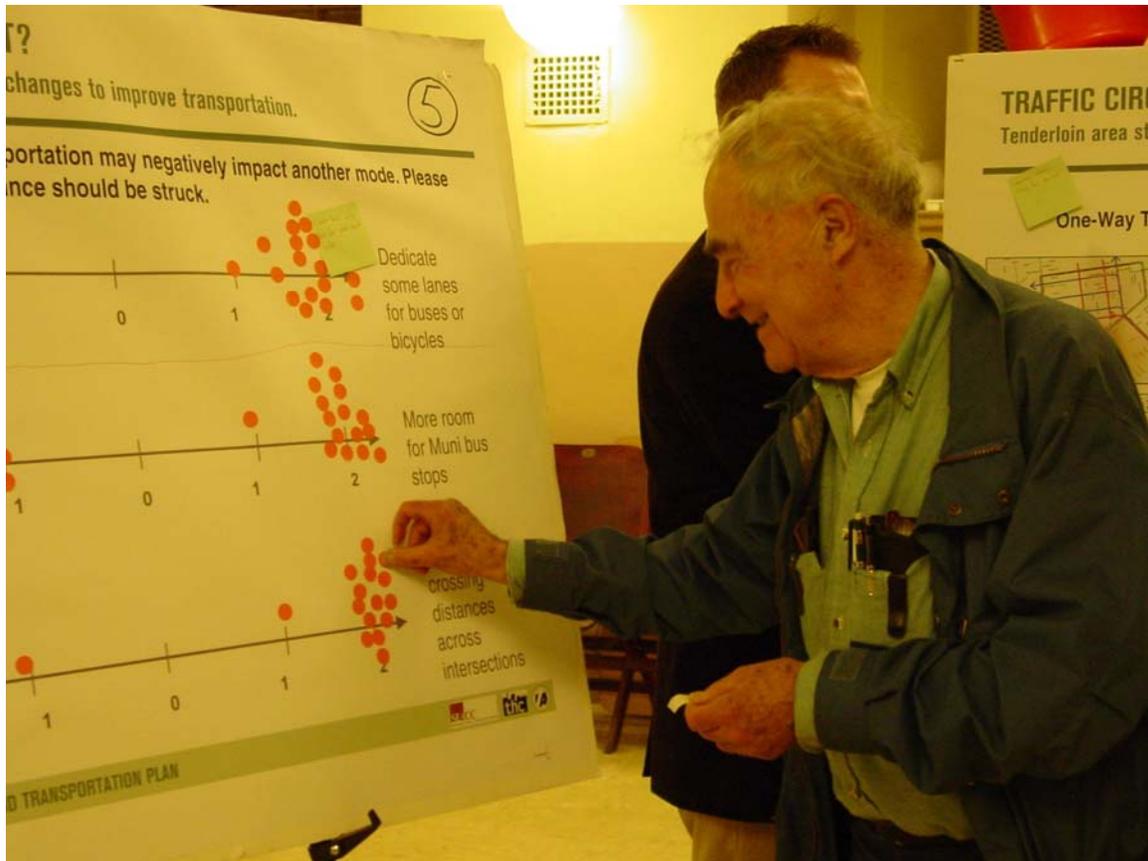
Working with the community through stakeholder meetings, focus groups and public workshops, the high priority needs were translated into goals for the project. These are outlined below: The relationship between the transportation needs and the project goals are summarized in Figure 3-5.

Figure 3-5 -- Transportation Needs and Project Goals

TRANSPORTATION NEED	PROJECT DEVELOPMENT GOAL
Improve Pedestrian Safety	**Implement street designs that reduce likelihood of collisions**
Rate of pedestrian collisions in the Tenderloin is several times higher than S.F. average	- Reduce vehicle speeds - Increase pedestrian visibility - Reduce conflicts between pedestrian and cars at intersections - Reduce conflicts between pedestrians and bicyclists on the sidewalks - Establish balance between pedestrian and auto

	traffic
Improve the street experience	**Use street design treatments to improve the look and feel of the street**
Sidewalks often feel dangerous, uncomfortable, unattractive	- Provide ample space, light, and amenities for pedestrians - Buffer pedestrians and transit passengers from traffic - Improve bus stop quality
Improve Transit Reliability	**Implement measures that improve the transit experience**
Service is unreliable, passenger experience is uncomfortable, access is limited	- Increase reliability - Increase user friendliness - Reduce physical barriers to access, including to regional services such as BART or Golden Gate - Improve access of low income individuals to Muni's Lifeline Fast Pass
Reduce the Speed of Traffic Traffic is too fast	**Implement street designs that slow down car traffic** - Reduce "design speed" of streets - Reallocate mixed vehicle capacity to other street users – transit, pedestrians, bicyclists