



SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

VAN NESS AVENUE BRT FEASIBILITY STUDY

DECEMBER 2006

CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1-1
1.1	STUDY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES	1-2
1.2	VAN NESS CORRIDOR STUDY AREA.....	1-3
1.3	REPORT CONTENTS.....	1-3

1 Introduction

In 2003, 75% of San Francisco voters approved Proposition K, the extension of San Francisco’s sales tax for transportation, along with its New Expenditure Plan (NEP). The NEP called for an integrated citywide network of rapid bus and rail transit, including the “creation of fast, frequent, and reliable bus rapid transit service,” or BRT, on Van Ness Avenue, Geary Boulevard, and Potrero Street. The 2004 Countywide Transportation Plan (CWTP) emphasized the role of this proposed network in retaining and expanding transit ridership citywide. The CWTP forecast that the share of trips made by transit will decline in the future unless measures are taken to increase its competitiveness relative to the car. The CWTP analysis found that only a network of fast, reliable, and comfortable transit citywide - shown in Figure 1.1 below - can cost-effectively reverse the trend toward declining transit mode share.

The northwestern quadrant of San Francisco is a major gap in the city’s rapid transit network. Van Ness Avenue is the primary north-south

route in the northern half of San Francisco, with tens of thousands of travelers using MUNI and Golden Gate Transit on Van Ness Avenue each day. Transit services along Van Ness connect northwest San Francisco to the MUNI Metro rail network and to regional rail, including Golden Gate Transit, Caltrain, and BART. Van Ness Avenue is also a state highway, serving as a key link from San Francisco to Marin County via Lombard Street.

This study assesses the feasibility of implementing BRT on Van Ness Avenue as the strategy for establishing fast and reliable transit service on this key north-south corridor. The study examines which BRT designs offer the greatest benefits and fewest negative impacts. This report and its recommendations provide the foundation for implementing BRT on Van Ness Avenue.

This study has been conducted as a collaborative inter-agency and community process, involving close coordination with the Municipal Transportation Agency (MTA) and other city and regional agencies, as well as extensive public outreach. This study serves as a model for innovative inter-agency collaboration on major transportation projects, integrating urban design, land use, and public utilities planning into the transportation project development process.

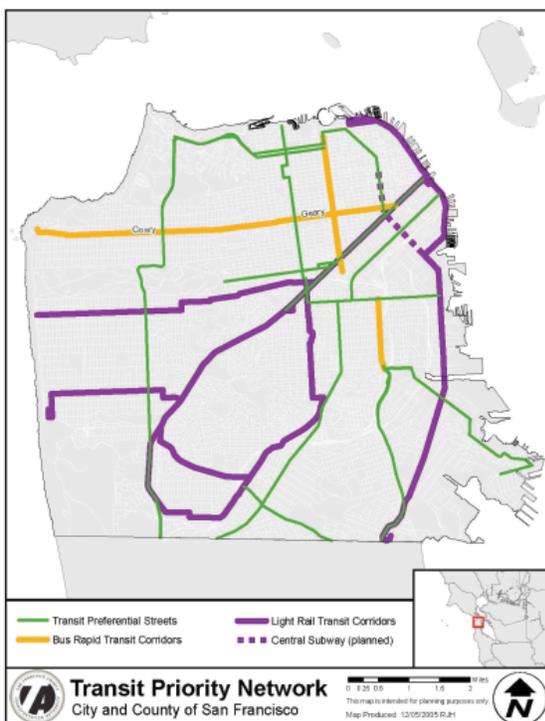


Figure 1-1: Transit Priority Network

1.1 STUDY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The inter-agency Van Ness BRT study team established goals for BRT on Van Ness Avenue that encompass both localized transportation improvements and systemwide gains:

Goal 1: Improve the level of service for existing transit passengers

Goal 2: Establish an efficient north/south link in San Francisco's transit network

Goal 3: Support the identity of the Van Ness corridor through a robust landscape and urban design program that also integrates new transit infrastructure with adjacent land uses

Goal 4: Develop standards for implementing BRT services citywide

Goal 1: Improve the level of service for existing transit passengers

Objective 1: Provide a transit service that reduces delays and that runs reliably

Objective 2: Provide a high-quality customer waiting, riding, and transfer experience

Objective 3: Increase the efficiency and visibility of connections and transfers to other regional and local routes

Goal 2: Establish an efficient north/south link in San Francisco's transit network

Objective 1: Optimize conditions for rapid and reliable north-south bus operations

Objective 2: Reduce bus bunching and maintain schedule adherence

Objective 3: Expedite passenger loading and unloading

Goal 3: Support the identity of the Van Ness corridor through a robust landscape and urban design program that also integrates new transit infrastructure with adjacent land uses

Objective 1: Distinguish Van Ness as a unique corridor

Objective 2: Improve pedestrian safety and comfort

Objective 3: Support access to adjacent land uses through transit infrastructure

Goal 4: Develop standards for implementing BRT services citywide

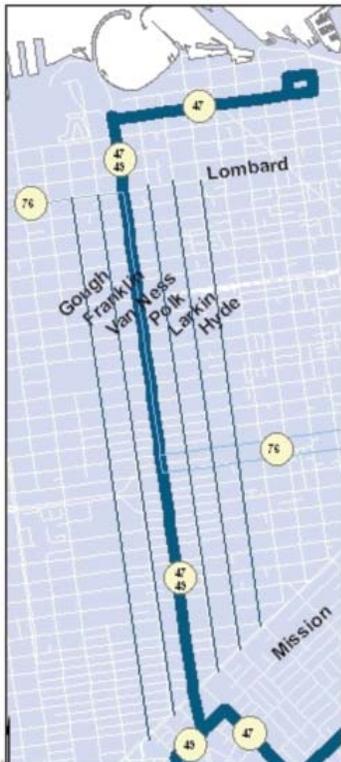
Objective 1: Demonstrate a systematic and comprehensive planning process that allows for easy applicability in other corridors and in other contexts

Objective 2: Create a toolkit of best practices to allow other studies to apply lessons learned that are appropriate within the local context

1.2 VAN NESS CORRIDOR STUDY AREA

Van Ness Avenue is a bustling six lane arterial carrying a mix of cars, trucks, transit, pedestrians, and bicycles. One of San Francisco’s key north-south arterials, Van Ness Avenue also serves as State Route 101, connecting freeway entrances and exits to the south with Lombard Street and the Golden Gate Bridge access to the north. The street is densely crossed by a number of arterials running east and west, forming a dense grid.

The study area, shown in Figure 1-2, extends about 2 miles from Mission Street in the south, to Lombard to the north. From east to west, the study area includes the one-way pairs Larkin and Hyde;



the local commercial street Polk; and the high-capacity one-way arterials Franklin and Gough to the west. While Franklin and Gough also carry large volumes of north/south traffic, Van Ness Avenue is the most direct regional route through this part of the city, and is officially mapped and signed to serve this role.

Figure 1-2: Van Ness Corridor Study Area

1.3 REPORT CONTENTS

To achieve these goals and objectives, the Authority convened an interagency study team to develop and evaluate BRT design alternatives for Van Ness Avenue. This report documents the complete study process and results:

Section 1: Introduction

This introductory section contains an overview of the Van Ness BRT project, an outline of project goals and objectives, and a brief description of the study area.

Section 2: Existing Conditions and Transportation Needs

This section documents the existing transportation supply and demand on Van Ness Avenue. The top priority transportation needs for are documented through a technical and community process.

Section 3: Alternative BRT Design Concepts

Section 3 describes the key features of BRT as defined by the San Francisco interagency study team, and outlines key design principles for developing BRT alternatives on Van Ness, as well as the four alternative BRT design concepts developed for Van Ness Avenue (plus a “no project” alternative).

Section 4: Evaluation Methodology and Evaluation Results

This section documents the methodology used for evaluating the likely impacts and benefits of BRT on Van Ness Avenue and presents the results of the study team’s evaluation of likely benefits and impacts of BRT on Van Ness Avenue for a number of key project aspects: transit performance, transit rider experience, access and pedestrian amenities, urban and landscape design, traffic operations and parking, cost, and construction impacts.

Section 5: Next Steps

This section outlines the next steps in the process of implementing BRT on Van Ness Avenue, including a funding and implementation plan.

Section 6: Appendices