



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

General Plan Referral

Date: April 30, 2015
Case No. Case No. 2014-000603GPR
DPW Masonic Streetscape Improvement Project

Block/Lot No.: N/A

Project Sponsor: Mike Matsuoka
San Francisco Department of Public Works
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San Francisco, CA 94102-6099

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Recommendation: Finding the project, on balance, is **in conformity** with the General Plan

Recommended By: 
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The General Plan Referral application was submitted to the Department on October 28, 2014, pursuant to Section 4.105 of the Charter, and Section 2A.53 of the Administrative Code. The proposed project would add transportation improvements to Masonic Avenue between Geary Boulevard and Fell Street north of the Panhandle, including repaving the roadway, constructing a new landscaped median and raised cycle tracks on both sides of Masonic Avenue, widening sidewalks on Masonic Ave (between Geary Blvd and O'Farrell Street on the east side, and between Grove St and Hayes Street on the west side), adding street trees and pedestrian scale lighting, constructing new curb ramps and bulb-outs at intersections, constructing new bus shelters at MUNI platform

loading stops, improving traffic signals, and upgrading irrigation and sewer systems. The project would also enlarge an existing triangular median at the Southwest corner of Geary Boulevard and Masonic Avenue to create a paved public plaza with limited vehicle access. The project preserves the existing number of vehicle travel lanes, and would result in a net loss of 167 parking spaces.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

The proposed project was evaluated in the San Francisco Bicycle Plan EIR Addendum issued 6/28/12 (Case No. 2011.0935E), except for sewer work, which is statutorily exempt from CEQA under Section 15282(k) of the CEQA Guidelines.

GENERAL PLAN COMPLIANCE AND BASIS FOR RECOMMENDATION

The Project is consistent with the Eight Priority Policies of Planning Code Section 101.1 as described in the body of this letter and is, on balance, **in-conformity** with the following Objectives and Policies of the General Plan:

TRANSPORTATION ELEMENT

OBJECTIVE 1

MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL RESIDENTS AND VISITORS FOR SAFE, CONVENIENT AND INEXPENSIVE TRAVEL WITHIN SAN FRANCISCO AND BETWEEN THE CITY AND OTHER PARTS OF THE REGION WHILE MAINTAINING THE HIGH QUALITY LIVING ENVIRONMENT OF THE BAY AREA.

POLICY 1.2

Ensure the safety and comfort of pedestrians throughout the city.

POLICY 1.3

Give priority to public transit and other alternatives to the private automobile as the means of meeting San Francisco's transportation needs, particularly those of commuters.

POLICY 1.6

Ensure choices among modes of travel and accommodate each mode when and where it is most appropriate.

Comment: The proposed project enhances mode choice and encourages non-automobile travel by improving transportation infrastructure to make it safer and more comfortable to travel by transit, walking, and biking.

OBJECTIVE 2**USE THE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM AS A MEANS FOR GUIDING DEVELOPMENT AND IMPROVING THE ENVIRONMENT.****POLICY 2.4**

Organize the transportation system to reinforce community identity, improve linkages among interrelated activities and provide focus for community activities.

Comment: The proposed project improves community identity while improving pedestrian and bicyclist safety and accessibility. The public plaza, landscaped median, and widened sidewalks beautify the street while improving linkages between community nodes.

OBJECTIVE 14**DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT A PLAN FOR OPERATIONAL CHANGES AND LAND USE POLICIES THAT WILL MAINTAIN MOBILITY AND SAFETY DESPITE A RISE IN TRAVEL DEMAND THAT COULD OTHERWISE RESULT IN SYSTEM CAPACITY DEFICIENCIES.****POLICY 14.4**

Reduce congestion by encouraging alternatives to the single occupant auto through the reservation of right-of-way and enhancement of other facilities dedicated to multiple modes of transportation.

POLICY 14.2

Ensure that traffic signals are timed and phased to emphasize transit, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic as part of a balanced multi-modal transportation system.

POLICY 14.3

Improve transit operation by implementing strategies that facilitate and prioritize transit vehicle movement and loading.

POLICY 14.4

Reduce congestion by encouraging alternatives to the single occupant auto through the reservation of right-of-way and enhancement of other facilities dedicated to multiple modes of transportation.

Comment: The proposed project aims to improve efficiency and safety for all users of Masonic Avenue, by improving transit operations through new loading facilities and improved signal timing, creating dedicated space for bicyclists, and enhancing the pedestrian experience through widened sidewalks, improved street crossings, and street trees and pedestrian scale lighting.

Collectively, these improvements are intended to encourage mode shifts away from single-occupant vehicles to walking, biking, and transit.

OBJECTIVE 15

ENCOURAGE ALTERNATIVES TO THE AUTOMOBILE AND REDUCED TRAFFIC LEVELS ON RESIDENTIAL STREETS THAT SUFFER FROM EXCESSIVE TRAFFIC THROUGH THE MANAGEMENT OF TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS AND FACILITIES.

POLICY 15.1

Discourage excessive automobile traffic on residential streets by incorporating traffic-calming treatments.

POLICY 15.2

Consider partial closure of certain residential streets to automobile traffic where the nature and level of automobile traffic impairs livability and safety, provided that there is an abundance of alternative routes such that the closure will not create undue congestion on parallel streets.

Comment: The proposed project calms automobile traffic by introducing a landscaped median, safer pedestrian crosswalks and improved signal timing, and a street plaza that diminishes the size of the intersection at Masonic Ave and Geary Blvd. The street plaza will partially close off a section of street except to adjacent building occupants. Transit and vehicle service/capacity will not be compromised as part of these streetscape improvements.

OBJECTIVE 18

ESTABLISH A STREET HIERARCHY SYSTEM IN WHICH THE FUNCTION AND DESIGN OF EACH STREET ARE CONSISTENT WITH THE CHARACTER AND USE OF ADJACENT LAND.

POLICY 18.2

Design streets for a level of traffic that serves, but will not cause a detrimental impact on adjacent land uses, nor eliminate the efficient and safe movement of transit vehicles and bicycles.

Comment: The proposed project preserves the existing number of vehicle lanes, while introducing improvements to improve safety and comfort of all users without compromising transit and vehicle service/capacity.

OBJECTIVE 21

DEVELOP TRANSIT AS THE PRIMARY MODE OF TRAVEL TO AND FROM DOWNTOWN AND ALL MAJOR ACTIVITY CENTERS WITHIN THE REGION.

POLICY 21.9

Improve pedestrian and bicycle access to transit facilities.

Comment: Transit facilities are well-integrated into the proposed street design, and overall the project would improve safety and comfort for pedestrians and bicyclists traveling to transit.

OBJECTIVE 23

IMPROVE THE CITY'S PEDESTRIAN CIRCULATION SYSTEM TO PROVIDE FOR EFFICIENT, PLEASANT, AND SAFE MOVEMENT.

POLICY 23.2

Widen sidewalks where intensive commercial, recreational, or institutional activity is present, sidewalks are congested, where sidewalks are less than adequately wide to provide appropriate pedestrian amenities, or where residential densities are high.

POLICY 23.9

Implement the provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the city's curb ramp program to improve pedestrian access for all people.

Comment: The proposed project would widen sidewalks at key commercial and institutional nodes. The project also enhances access for disabled populations through improved pedestrian crossings and sidewalks.

OBJECTIVE 24

IMPROVE THE AMBIENCE OF THE PEDESTRIAN ENVIRONMENT.

POLICY 24.2

Maintain and expand the planting of street trees and the infrastructure to support them.

Comment: The proposed project would introduce street trees and landscaping along the full length of the project area.

OBJECTIVE 26

CONSIDER THE SIDEWALK AREA AS AN IMPORTANT ELEMENT IN THE CITYWIDE OPEN SPACE SYSTEM.

POLICY 26.2

Partially or wholly close certain streets not required as traffic carriers for pedestrian use or open space.

Comment: The project would introduce a street plaza at Masonic Ave and Geary Blvd that closes off a section of street except to adjacent building occupants. Transit and vehicle service/capacity will not be compromised as part of these streetscape improvements.

OBJECTIVE 27

ENSURE THAT BICYCLES CAN BE USED SAFELY AND CONVENIENTLY AS A PRIMARY MEANS OF TRANSPORTATION, AS WELL AS FOR RECREATIONAL PURPOSES.

POLICY 27.1

Expand and improve access for bicycles on city streets and develop a well-marked, comprehensive system of bike routes in San Francisco.

POLICY 27.3

Remove conflicts to bicyclists on all city streets.

POLICY 27.6

Accommodate bicycles on local and regional transit facilities and important regional transportation links wherever and whenever feasible.

Comment: Dedicated cycle tracks will reduce conflicts with vehicles and pedestrians, and enhance access to transit facilities and to bicycle routes elsewhere in the City.

RECREATION AND OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

OBJECTIVE 3

IMPROVE ACCESS AND CONNECTIVITY TO OPEN SPACE

POLICY 3.1

Creatively develop existing publicly-owned right of-ways and streets into open space.

POLICY 3.4

Encourage non-auto modes of transportation – transit, bicycle and pedestrian access – to and from open spaces while reducing automobile traffic and parking in public open spaces.

Comment: The introduction of cycle tracks, sidewalks, and transit stops will encourage use of non-auto modes of transportation and strengthen these connections to open spaces, including the Panhandle. Also, the creation of a street plaza will creatively use excess right-of-way to improve access to public open space.

POLICY 3.5

Ensure that, where feasible, recreational facilities and open spaces are physically accessible, especially for those with limited mobility.

Comment: The project will provide sidewalk facilities and transit stops that will be accessible to people with limited mobility and will include curb ramps, bulb outs, marked crossings, and other improvements that facilitate the use of these facilities.

POLICY 3.6

Maintain, restore, expand and fund the urban forest.

Comment: The project proposes additional street trees and landscaping, which would increase the city's urban forest and provide habitat for local fauna.

OBJECTIVE 4

PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE BIODIVERSITY, HABITAT VALUE, AND ECOLOGICAL INTEGRITY OF OPEN SPACES AND ENCOURAGE SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES IN THE DESIGN AND MANAGEMENT OF OUR OPEN SPACE SYSTEM

POLICY 4.1

Preserve, protect and restore local biodiversity.

Comment: Native vegetation will provide expanded habitat for local fauna. Expansion into habitat outside of the existing right-of-way is not proposed.

URBAN DESIGN ELEMENT

OBJECTIVE 1

EMPHASIS OF THE CHARACTERISTIC PATTERN WHICH GIVES TO THE CITY AND ITS NEIGHBORHOODS AN IMAGE, A SENSE OF PURPOSE, AND A MEANS OF ORIENTATION.

POLICY 1.4

Protect and promote large-scale landscaping and open space that define districts and topography.

POLICY 1.5

Emphasize the special nature of each district through distinctive landscaping and other features.

POLICY 1.6

Make centers of activity more prominent through design of street features and by other means.

Comment: The project will enhance and define the character of the neighborhood through a consistent typology of street improvements and a planting palette for street trees and landscaping,

POLICY 1.10

Indicate the purposes of streets by adopting and implementing the Better Streets Plan, which identifies a hierarchy of street types and appropriate streetscape elements for each street type.

POLICY 1.12

Indicate the purposes of streets by means of a citywide plan for street lighting.

Comment: The project will provide a calm, spacious street environment for street users, consistent with its Boulevard street type designation. It will include the installation of new pedestrian scale lighting consistent with what is recommended by the Better Streets Plan.

OBJECTIVE 4

IMPROVEMENT OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD ENVIRONMENT TO INCREASE PERSONAL SAFETY, COMFORT, PRIDE AND OPPORTUNITY

POLICY 4.3

Provide adequate lighting in public areas.

POLICY 4.4

Design walkways and parking facilities to minimize danger to pedestrians.

POLICY 4.8

Provide convenient access to a variety of recreation opportunities.

Comment: The project will improve lighting along streets and open spaces, reduce pedestrian safety hazards, and provide greater mode choice and connection to recreational opportunities.

POLICY 4.12

Install, promote and maintain landscaping in public and private areas.

Comment: As part of the streetscape improvements, additional native landscaping will be provided within the public right-of-way.

PROPOSITION M FINDINGS – PLANNING CODE SECTION 101.1

Planning Code Section 101.1 establishes Eight Priority Policies and requires review of discretionary approvals and permits for consistency with said policies. The proposed project, Mansell streetscape improvements, is found to be consistent with the Eight Priority Policies as set forth in Planning Code Section 101.1 for the following reasons:

1. That existing neighborhood-serving retail uses be preserved and enhanced and future opportunities for resident employment in and ownership of such businesses enhanced.

The proposed project would have no adverse effect on neighborhood serving-retail uses or opportunities for employment in or ownership of such businesses.

2. That existing housing and neighborhood character be conserved and protected in order to preserve the cultural and economic diversity of our neighborhoods.

The proposed project would have no adverse effect on the City's housing stock or on neighborhood character.

3. That the City's supply of affordable housing be preserved and enhanced.

The proposed project would have no adverse effect on the City's supply of affordable housing.

- ~~4. That commuter traffic not impede MUNI transit service or overburden our streets or neighborhood parking.~~

The proposed project would not result in commuter traffic impeding MUNI's transit service or overburdening the streets or neighborhood parking. MTA has determined that the existing supply of on-street parking exceeds demand, and that the potential change in roadway level of service due to the reduction of roadway width is acceptable.

- 5. That a diverse economic base be maintained by protecting our industrial and service sectors from displacement due to commercial office development, and that future opportunities for residential employment and ownership in these sectors be enhanced.

The Project would not adversely affect the existing economic base in this area, displace industrial or service uses, or impede future opportunities for residential employment and ownership in these sectors.

- 6. That the City achieve the greatest possible preparedness to protect against injury and loss of life in an earthquake.

The proposed project would have no adverse effect on the City's earthquake preparedness.

- 7. That landmarks and historic buildings be preserved.

The proposed project would have no adverse effect on the City's historic buildings.

- 8. That our parks and open space and their access to sunlight and vistas be protected from development.

The proposed project would have no adverse effect on the City's sunlight access in parks and open space or on vistas.

RECOMMENDATION:	Finding the Project, on balance, in-conformity with the General Plan
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