



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO

2020-2021 CIVIL GRAND JURY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts: Ellie Schafer, Foreperson, (415) 551-3635
Simone Manganeli, Committee Chairperson, (415) 551-3635

VAN NESS AVENUE: WHAT LIES BENEATH

San Francisco, CA, June 28, 2021 – Today, the 2020-21 San Francisco Civil Grand Jury released its report on the Van Ness Improvement Project. The Jury’s interest in investigating the project stemmed from the often-asked question: “Why is the Van Ness project taking so long?”

Conceived in 1995 and approved by voters in a bond measure in 2003, the Van Ness Project will be the first of San Francisco’s planned Bus Rapid Transit systems. Spanning nearly two decades to design and build, the promised start date has been pushed back repeatedly. Bus service is now slated to begin in 2022, three years later than promised. The cost of the project has also increased to \$346 million, \$37 million over budget.

The City says the delays were driven by unexpected findings under the surface of Van Ness, but the Jury found that better planning and investigation of the subsurface infrastructure prior to the start of construction would have lessened the delays and cost overruns. The Jury further found that problems with the construction contract led to numerous lengthy disputes between the City and the general contractor. Those disputes halted numerous blocks of work on Van Ness. Additionally, inadequate management of the project prevented issues from being resolved efficiently, further delaying actual construction progress.

The Jury’s report describes the underlying issues in planning, design, construction, and project management, and provides recommendations for avoiding these issues in future transit projects.

The Superior Court selects 19 San Franciscans to serve year-long terms as Civil Grand Jurors. The Jury has the authority to investigate City and County government by reviewing documents and interviewing public officials and private individuals. At the end of its inquiries, the Jury issues reports of its findings and recommendations. Agencies identified in the report must respond to these findings and recommendations within either 60 or 90 days, and the Board of Supervisors conducts a public hearing on each Civil Grand Jury report after those responses are submitted.

Civil Grand Jury reports may be viewed online at <http://civilgrandjury.sfgov.org/report.html>.

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