



Van Ness BRT Community Advisory Committee

Thursday, May 25, 2017

6:00-7:30 p.m.

One South Van Ness, 7th floor, Union Square Conference Room

MEETING MINUTES

1. Meeting was called to order at 6:03.
2. Public comment (see policy on reverse): Members of the public may address the Van Ness BRT Community Advisory Committee on matters that are within their jurisdiction and are not on today's calendar.
 - a. No public comment was heard.
3. Minutes from the April 27, 2017, meeting were approved by a voice vote.
4. SFMTA staff updates.
 - a. Project schedule.
 - i. Project staff has not received an updated current schedule from the contractor since the April 27 meeting.
 1. The schedule shows a 105-day delay due to weather and subcontractor bids. The SFMTA acknowledges they are responsible for 14 days of this delay.
 2. In the original contract for the Van Ness Improvement Project, the water and sewer work were considered core work. During price negotiations, that part of the project was removed from the core work of the project at the request of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission.
 3. In repackaging and bidding the water and sewer work, staff received a bid that was more than double the engineer's estimate. As a result, staff is drafting a modification to the current contract to reintroduce the water and sewer work as core work under the original bid price received from the contractor.
 4. Bob Bardell asked whether it was correct to assume utility work couldn't be performed until after the contract is modified.
 - a. Staff and the contractor are currently working together on a traffic management plan for the utility work phase of the project. Once that plan is approved, the work can move forward.
 - b. It is expected that impactful utility work will start in late July, but potholing and traffic reconfigurations can occur before then.
 - c. Joanna Gubman asked whether the comments staff has made on the traffic management plan have been reasonable.
 - i. The city traffic engineers have been meticulous in their reviews because the project has high visibility within the city.
 - ii. Before construction began, Caltrans was responsible for approving traffic management plans since Van Ness Avenue is their right-of-way. Once construction began, however, Caltrans placed responsibility for traffic management on the city. This was unexpected and has been the cause of some of the challenges in the review process.
 - iii. The location of bus stops during the curbside utility work is included in the traffic management plan. The safety of

passengers and pedestrians, as well as the maneuverability of the buses, are top priorities when reviewing and approving the plan.

1. Bob Bardell asked what the current plan includes for bus stops and boarding during the utility work.
 - a. Staff is currently looking into building a temporary waiting area or platform within the existing parking lane. This would be ADA accessible and would include protection from traffic with barricades.
 - iv. Joanna Gubman asked whether the current traffic management plan considered bicycle activity on Van Ness. She said that bicyclists will continue to use Van Ness even after the bicycle improvements are made on Polk Street.
 1. The traffic management plan does account for safety, but staff encourages the use of Polk Street for bicycling instead of Van Ness. Staff acknowledged that there will continue to be bicyclists who choose to use Van Ness.
 5. Bob Lockhart asked whether the project was still in an active construction phase as of today.
 - a. Until close of business Friday, construction of the Van Ness Improvement Project remains active. After Friday, there will be a distinct drop in activity on the street. Most of the work will occur behind-the-scenes, but the contractor will begin potholing on the western sidewalk of Van Ness in preparation for digging the electrical trench in the coming weeks.
 6. Bob Anderson asked what work is being done at night.
 - a. Night work this week has included repairing potholes and temporarily paving over the location of the old median.
 7. Alex Wilson said the utility work seems to be the bulk of the project work and cost. He asked why the contracts for this work were not in place before breaking ground. He also asked whether the delays on the project create a situation where the city would pay any price to keep the project moving.
 - a. While the city couldn't come to an agreement on a price for the sewer and water work with the contractor, the contract does include a guaranteed maximum price. This puts the risk of additional costs with the contractor instead of the city. Any bid on the work above the engineer's estimate would cut into any potential profits for the contractor.
 - i. Alex asked whether the contractor could walk away from the project as a result of profit loss.
 1. Staff said the contractor feels confident that they can perform the work for the amount originally proposed. A contract modification is in the works to add this language back to the original contract.
 8. Project staff met with SFPUC managers on May 24 to discuss schedule recovery for the water and sewer work. Testing of water supplies can only be performed by city crews, which has been a scheduling issue in the past because of limited resources. SFPUC and project staff are committed to working together to recover lost time and minimize delays moving forward.
- b. Construction update.
 - i. The removal of the median on Van Ness is wrapping up this week.
 - ii. Traffic signals were relocated from the median and mounted to construction barricades, allowing for flexibility during repaving and future construction activity.

- iii. Potholes are being repaired this week while the location of the old median is temporarily paved over.
 - 1. Joanna Gubman said it was nice that the median at Van Ness and McAllister was flattened.
 - 2. Mark Moreno said that his properties at 1800 Washington and 1701 Jackson did not receive door hanger notification for the night work this week. He wanted to know who he could speak with to make sure these properties receive notice in the future.
 - a. Staff said they would pass word on to the contractor and ambassadors who are doing the night work notifications.
 - 3. Bob Anderson said night work this week has kept him up all night. He lives at 77 Van Ness and said the building is typically quiet inside and soundproof. He asked what notifications were done for the work.
 - a. Notifications for the pothole repairs and temporary paving of the median included door hangers (distributed on May 19), email and text messages to project subscribers, and an alert/update posted on the SFMTA website. Staff encouraged Van Ness BRT CAC members to share additional ideas for these notifications in the future.
 - i. Alex Wilson asked whether the agency is using NextDoor, as was suggested at a previous Van Ness BRT CAC meeting.
 - 1. The SFMTA does not have access to post on NextDoor. This is a policy of NextDoor.
 - ii. Joanna asked for clarification on the text messaging notifications. She said if the agency had an app with location sharing and push notifications, they could improve their direct outreach.
- c. Lighting on Van Ness Avenue.
 - i. Update on motion passed at April 27, 2017, meeting.
 - 1. Staff submitted a letter to the Board of Supervisors on May 15 outlining the result of their resolution passed last September encouraging the SFMTA to make efforts to retain the character of the existing streetlights on Van Ness. The Van Ness BRT CAC feels the current design lacks uniformity, which is a violation of Mitigation Measure M-AE-2 of the Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report.
 - a. Bob Anderson asked what the next steps were to ensure uniformity on Van Ness. He asked who the committee members could speak with and who had the authority to make these decisions. He feels that Ed Reiskin should be communicating with the Historic Preservation Committee to make sure the lights are uniform and have one design.
 - b. Don Savoie agreed with stance of the Historic Preservation Commission. He said the HPC has a responsibility to protect the historic district using the Secretary of Interior's standards. He said the changes to the streetlight design came after the project obtained all the necessary approvals.
 - c. Alex Wilson doesn't care what the ultimate design is for the streetlights, but expressed his desire for uniformity. He also said it seemed bizarre that San Francisco Arts Commission wasn't involved in any of the spiral replica pole design work.
 - d. Randy Uang asked whether there were any designs that could possibly be approved by all parties involved.
 - i. Staff could not answer definitively. However, if the project did not have the ongoing water and sewer work subcontractor issue, this would be critical path item and would be the root cause of delay.

- ii. Bob Bardell said he remembered seeing a style of pole used on Van Ness that had three bulbs. If this design was replicated, he asked whether staff felt the HPC would raise similar concerns.
 - 1. Joana Gubman asked if this was considered in the original design work.
 - 2. Staff said this was considered in the original work, but that the San Francisco Arts Commission and Historic Preservation Commission both requested a modern design for the streetlights.
- ii. Public comment:
 - 1. Lynne Newhouse Segal said she was impressed with the level of engagement from the Van Ness BRT CAC members. She said the current design of the lighting on Van Ness wasn't what the Coalition to Save the Historic Streetlamps of Van Ness asked for or dreamed of, but sees it as a compromise. She said she hopes a plaque can be installed on the corridor that links the historical-inspired design to the original poles. She said the Historic Preservation Commission and Arts Commission are concerned with different guidelines, but do not need to approve anything anymore. She said the rest of the corridor is subject to the mitigation measures established in the EIS/EIR.
 - a. Coalition to Save Historic Streetlamps of Van Ness (Lynne and Jim Warshall)
 - b. Van Ness Corridor Neighborhood Council
 - 2. Jim Warshall said he personally had different feelings about streetlamps, but the consensus of the Coalition to Save Historic Streetlamps of Van Ness and the Van Ness Corridor Neighborhood Council was well represented in Lynne Newhouse Segal's comments. He said nobody wanted to see the project delayed or over budget. Fortunately, he said, the streetlamps are made of standard fixtures and therefore should not impact schedule or budget much. He felt that the HPC forced the issue of separate designs for the streetlights. He said it would be desirable to have consistent lights, but that the HPC has jurisdiction over the Civic Center Historic District. He said the Secretary of Interior Standards are guidelines, not directives. His point of view is that pursuing a uniform design would be a wise course of action, but is ok with the current design.
 - a. Members of the Van Ness Corridor Neighborhood Council include Cathedral Hill Neighbors Association, Golden Gate Valley Neighborhood Association, Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association, Lower Polk Neighbors, Middle Polk Neighbors, Pacific Heights Residents Association, Pacific Avenue Neighborhood Association, Russian Hill Community Association, Russian Hill Neighbors and Western SoMa Voice.
- d. Current conditions on Van Ness Avenue.
 - i. No conclusions can accurately be drawn definitively connecting Van Ness Improvement Project construction to conditions observed on Van Ness today. Staff shared preliminary observational data, but said it could take up to a year to have concrete evidence from crash and traffic citation data.
 - 1. Southbound travel times seem to have slightly increased, while northbound travel times have generally stayed the same.
 - 2. Bob Anderson said southbound traffic at Van Ness and Mission is considerable. He said he has noticed an increase in volume as well as the number of vehicles honking in the area.
 - a. Staff has changed the signal timing at the intersection of South Van Ness and Mission to improve southbound traffic flow in the area.
- e. Update on neighboring projects.

- i. Polk Streetscape Project.
 - 1. The Polk Streetscape Project continues with water and sewer work on the northern end of Polk Street and on North Point Street.
 - 2. Traffic signal upgrades are expected to be completed in June.
5. Outreach update.
 - a. Recent public engagement activities.
 - i. Sunday Streets Tenderloin.
 - 1. Project staff attended Sunday Streets in the Tenderloin alongside Director Joel Ramos and Sustainable Streets Division staff. Project information was displayed on a 60-foot hybrid Muni bus. Children of all ages completed a scavenger hunt on the vehicle and Sustainable Streets demonstrated a parking protected bike lane at the booth.
 - ii. Spring 2017 newsletter.
 - 1. The spring issue of the Van Ness Improvement Project newsletter was distributed electronically to more than 2,000 project subscribers and posted on the project website. It focused on planned SFgo improvements for Van Ness and how the city is implementing smart technology on its streets to keep traffic moving more efficiently.
 - iii. Meet the Expert: SFgo.
 - 1. Kenneth Kwong from the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency spoke about the planned SFgo improvements for Van Ness. The event included a brief walk from Van Ness and Turk to Gough and Turk to show an example of the changeable message signs planned for Van Ness.
 - b. Outreach Calendar.
 - i. Meet the Expert event.
 - 1. The next Meet the Expert event will be held Wednesday, June 7, from 6:00 to 7:30 p.m. No venue has been secured at this time, but the discussion will focus on project delivery.
 - ~~c. Open for Business marketing program.~~
6. Member comment. Members of the Community Advisory Committee may address the Van Ness BRT project staff on matters not on today's calendar.
 - a. Joanna Gubman reiterated that project team should make better use of the 311 app. She also said she has heard a general comment that there are too many bus stops on Van Ness.
 - b. Alex Wilson raised public concerns he had heard from his neighbors including the California stop removal and increased traffic on Hyde, Leavenworth and Larkin streets at peak hours.
 - c. Bob Anderson appreciated people's flexibility and endurance regarding the streetlight issue. He said that, though the Van Ness BRT CAC took the time to send the letter to the Board of Supervisors, he feels a responsibility as a Van Ness BRT CAC member and citizen to continue pushing for uniformity. He feels that the HPC and their interpretation of the Secretary of Interior Standards is the root cause for the two designs and asked who else the committee can push for resolution.
 - i. Don Savoie said he agreed with Bob, but felt the opposite way. He said he is frustrated that changes are being made now to a design that was already vetted and approved.
 - 1. Bob Anderson said the changes are being made because of a lack of community awareness. He said the project has been more active, meaning more people are aware now than when the design was approved.
 - ii. Bob Bardell said the Van Ness BRT CAC shouldn't be pushing the issue of uniformity. He feels the Coalition to Save the Historic Streetlamps of Van Ness should be using their influence and contacts to resolve the conflict between the modern design and the spiral replica design.
 - iii. Alex Wilson said the new administration in Washington has changed the Department of Interior since January. He said the Secretary of Interior Standards are from a previous administration new guidelines could exist or are forthcoming.

- iv. Joanna asked about the organizational structure of the HPC. She asked about term limits, appointees and who they report to.
 - 1. Staff believes commissioners report to San Francisco Planning Department, but are appointed by the mayor. Staff was not sure about term limits or lengths.
 - v. Alex asked Van Ness BRT CAC members to comment on whether they were leaning toward one design for the streetlights over another.
 - 1. Adam Mayer said he was fine with the originally approved modern design, but is also fine with the compromise reached with the Coalition to Save the Historic Streetlamps of Van Ness. He said he originally felt that consistency would be preferred, but he now agrees with the HPC that the modern design in the historic district would contrast nicely with the four restored concrete poles planned for the area.
 - 2. Joanna Gubman said she is fine with the current design.
 - 3. Erica Murdock-Waters said she wanted consistency along the corridor.
 - 4. Bob Anderson said consistency was his priority for the design.
 - 5. Bob Bardell agreed that consistency was key, but he liked how Adam framed the contrast within the historic district.
 - 6. Bob Lockhart said he was fine with the current design, but wouldn't mind consistency.
 - 7. Randy Uang said no product is perfect. He said consistency would be nice if this conversation were happening five years ago, but now he feels there are other more pressing issues with the project.
 - 8. Don Savoie said he preferred the modern design because he felt it provided better pedestrian lighting. He said the arm that extended over the sidewalk was longer and felt it would provide better lighting than the spiral bracket.
 - a. Joanna Gubman agreed that the modern design would probably provide better lighting, but that she wasn't committed to one design over another.
7. Next meeting — Thursday, June 22, 6:00-7:30 p.m.
- a. July 27, 6:00-7:30 p.m.
 - b. August 24, 6:00-7:30 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Every agenda shall provide an opportunity for members of the public to address the Committee on items of interest to the public that are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Committee.

Public comment will be taken for each agenda item after discussion of the item by the Van Ness BRT CAC.

Privilege of Floor and Public Participation. The privilege of the floor shall be granted to any member of the public or officers of the City and County of San Francisco, or their duly authorized representatives for the purpose of commenting on any question before the Committee. Each person wishing to speak on an item at a regular or special meeting shall be permitted to be heard once per item for up to three minutes. The presiding officer shall be the judge of the pertinence of such comments, and have the power to limit this privilege if in the presiding officer's opinion the comments are not pertinent to the question before the Committee or the comments are merely reiterative of points made by previous speakers.

Presentations. After a presentation, the Van Ness BRT CAC Chair will ask committee members if they have any questions and then will open the meeting to public comment. When members of the public ask a question of the presenter, presenters should not respond, nor engage in any conversation. First, the commenter should finish their commentary. After which, if the Van Ness BRT CAC Chair or any committee member wants the presenter to respond to that question, the presenter will then respond to the Committee and not to the public.

MEMBER COMMENT

Every agenda shall provide an opportunity for members of the Committee to address project staff on items of interest to the public that are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Committee.

Privilege of Floor and Public Participation. The privilege of the floor shall be granted to any member of the Committee. Each person wishing to speak shall be permitted to be heard for up to three minutes. The presiding officer shall be the judge of the pertinence of such comments, and have the power to limit this privilege if in the presiding officer's opinion the comments are not pertinent to the question before the Committee or the comments are merely reiterative of points made by previous speakers.