



Safe Detours During Construction

Construction is essential to maintaining and improving San Francisco's infrastructure. Construction impacts, if not managed and controlled, can cause harm; it can also feel disruptive when a project requires closing a sidewalk or parts of a street. In San Francisco, we require contractors, utilities, developers, and City crews to maintain safe and accessible routes around construction zones whenever the work affects streets, sidewalks, bike lanes, or transit facilities.

Multiple city agencies establish standards, review traffic control plans, inspect work zones, and enforce compliance to ensure everyone in San Francisco, particularly people walking and biking, can continue to move safely through our City.

This document was prepared in support of Mayor Daniel Lurie's Executive Directive 25-06 - Street Safety Initiative, item 19 "*Continue to coordinate safe pedestrian and bicycle detours during construction.*"

https://media.api.sf.gov/documents/Street_Safety_ED.pdf

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How the City Ensures Safe Travel Through Construction Zones

The San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) works closely with the San Francisco Public Works (SFPW) and the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) to ensure that pedestrians and bicyclists have safe paths of travel through and around construction zones, and that work zones are properly set up and maintained on San Francisco streets. Together, the agencies establish standards, review traffic control plans, inspect work zones, and enforce compliance with safety requirements.

- **SFMTA – Traffic Routing Section**

The Traffic Routing Section prepares traffic control specifications for City capital projects; manages and maintains [Regulations for Working in San Francisco Streets](#) (the “Blue Book”); reviews contractor traffic control plans for conformance with standards and requirements, issues Special Traffic Permits, enforces work zone safety requirements; and provides education and training related to the Blue Book and work zone safety best practices.

- **SFPW and SFPUC – Capital Project Construction Management**

Construction management teams for SFPW and SFPUC capital projects oversee work occurring in the public right-of-way and are responsible for ensuring that construction work zones are set up and maintained in compliance with all federal, state, and local requirements.

- **SFPW – Permitting and Street Inspection**

SFPW’s Permitting and Street Inspection teams coordinate with private developers, utilities, and other entities performing work in the public right-of-way to ensure construction work zones comply with applicable federal, state, and local regulations.

Points of Contact

- SFMTA Streets Division Traffic Routing Section
- SFPW Project Delivery Division, Bureau of Construction Management for SFPW capital projects
- SFPW Infrastructure and Development Permitting for private building and utility construction in the public right of way
- SFPW Code Enforcement for private building and utility construction in the public right of way
- SFPUC Construction Management for SFPUC capital projects

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Who Performs Construction Work in San Francisco Streets

Several types of entities perform work within San Francisco streets and the public right-of-way, including the following:

1. **City Capital Project Contractors**
Contractors delivering City led capital projects such as paving, sidewalk construction, water and sewer infrastructure, traffic signals, transit facilities, and street lighting within the public right-of-way.
2. **City Crews**
City staff responsible for constructing, maintaining, upgrading, replacing, and repairing public infrastructure within the public right-of-way.
3. **Private Contractors and Builders**
Contractors and developers constructing, repairing, or maintaining private and public properties that require access from, or work within, the public right-of-way.
4. **Private Utilities**
Utility providers (e.g., PG&E, AT&T, telecommunications companies) constructing, repairing, and maintaining utility infrastructure, including service connections to customers, gas lines, the overhead electric power system and telecommunication networks within the public right-of-way.

Traffic Safety Standards and Regulations for Work in the Public Right-of-Way

The requirements and management of all roadway users (pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists) through a construction work zone are an essential part of any work in the public right-of-way. Some of San Francisco's work zone requirements are listed below.

1. Construction work zones and all traffic control, warning and guidance devices must conform with federal, state and local requirements including those listed below.
2. Work zones must be designed and implemented such that work can be performed safely and with the least possible interference with pedestrian, bicycle, transit and vehicular traffic.
3. Pedestrians must be provided a path of travel that meets width, grade and American with Disability Act's requirements. Pedestrian walkways may require vertical and horizontal protection. Mid-block walkway closures are discouraged and often prohibited because of their impact on pedestrians; when these closures are permitted SFMTA requires additional traffic control devices and personnel to assist pedestrians around the closure.
4. If existing bicycle lanes are impacted a temporary bicycle lane and/or signs and other devices that permit safe shared use of the remaining right of way must be provided. Bicycles are accommodated on streets and bike routes at points of construction and generally not detoured off the route.

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5. Adequate lane transitions, advance warning signs, regulatory signs, message boards and flaggers are required as described in the reference documents that follow:

California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CAMUTCD)

The California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CAMUTCD) is the State-adopted version of the federal standards used nationwide for the installation and maintenance of traffic control devices. It applies to all streets, highways, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, and site roadways open to public travel. CAMUTCD serves as the fundamental standard for traffic control in California and provides the regulatory foundation for both the SFMTA Blue Book and the SFMTA Traffic Control Specifications, which explicitly reference and rely upon CAMUTCD requirements.

CAMUTCD Part 6 – Temporary Traffic Control governs traffic control for construction, maintenance, repair, and other temporary changes to existing traffic control conditions. Part 6 is used in conjunction with additional CAMUTCD sections that address the needs of pedestrians and bicyclists, including:

- Part 2 – Roadway Markings
- Part 3 – Signs
- Part 4 – Traffic Signals
- Part 7 – Traffic Control for School Areas
- Part 9 – Bicycle Facilities

More information is available at:

<https://dot.ca.gov/programs/safety-programs/camutcd>

SFMTA Traffic Control Specifications

The SFMTA Traffic Routing Section prepares traffic control project specifications for City capital projects. These specifications establish requirements and constraints to ensure safe and continuous travel for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit users, and motorists within project limits.

Traffic Control Specifications emphasize minimizing interference with existing travel patterns while maintaining safety. Pedestrian and bicycle related provisions include, but are not limited to:

- Limitations on impacts to sidewalks and crosswalks
- Requirements to maintain existing bicycle lanes where feasible
- Use of temporary signage, striping, and qualified personnel to support safe shared use or temporary rerouting when bicycle facilities are affected

These specifications are intended to balance construction needs with safe, accessible, and predictable travel for all modes.

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SFMTA Regulations for Working in San Francisco Streets (Blue Book)

[SFMTA Regulations for Working in San Francisco Streets](#), commonly referred to as the *Blue Book*, governs private construction, utility work, City crews, and other non-City operations conducted within the public right-of-way. Traffic Control Specifications refer to the Blue Book as well. The Blue Book establishes uniform rules and guidance to ensure work is performed safely and with minimal disruption to pedestrian, bicycle, transit, and vehicular traffic.

Traffic control setups and devices required under the Blue Book must conform to the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CAMUTCD). In addition to traffic control requirements, the Blue Book includes general information, agency coordination procedures, and contact information related to work occurring in rights-of-way managed by agencies other than SFMTA. Key pedestrian and bicycle sections include:

- Section 5 – Sidewalk Closures (pedestrian access and safety)
- Section 9 – Bicycle Routes (temporary and permanent impacts to bicycle facilities)

The Blue Book is continuously reviewed and updated to respond to evolving infrastructure, policies, and operational needs.

Reference:

<https://www.sfmta.com/reports/construction-regulations-blue-book>

San Francisco Public Works (SFPW) Published Guidance

San Francisco Public Works (SFPW) issues permits for street space use, excavation, building construction, equipment occupancy (e.g., cranes and dumpsters), and street improvements, and enforces SFPW requirements at active work zones. SFPW establishes, maintains, and enforces City standards related to accessibility, barricades, temporary pedestrian walkways, and work zone safety.

SFPW and SFMTA coordinate closely to ensure that safe, accessible, and continuous paths of travel are maintained in and around construction work zones for pedestrians, bicyclists, and all other transportation modes. Key SFPW references include:

SFPW Services Page

<https://sfpublicworks.org/services/permits>

SFPW Inspection and Enforcement

<https://sfpublicworks.org/services/inspection-and-enforcement>

SFPW Barricade and Walkway Guidelines

https://sfpublicworks.org/sites/default/files/Guidelines_for_Placement_of_Barricades.pdf

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Enforcement

Construction work zones are routinely inspected, and contractors may face corrective actions, citations, fines, or contractual penalties when safety requirements are not met. Violations of construction work zone requirements within the San Francisco public right-of-way are addressed through multiple, overlapping enforcement mechanisms. These coordinated enforcement channels are intended to ensure timely correction of unsafe conditions and compliance with applicable standards and permits.

Construction Management Teams

Construction management teams from San Francisco Public Works (SFPW), the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC), and the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) oversee work performed under their respective capital and maintenance projects. These teams may issue notices of correction to contractors when violations of construction work zone requirements are observed.

For persistent, repeat, or more serious violations, construction management teams may assess liquidated damages in accordance with contract provisions. Additional enforcement actions may be available depending on the severity and nature of the violation; however, such actions are beyond the scope of this document.

SFMTA Traffic Routing Inspectors

SFMTA employs street inspectors whose primary responsibility is to inspect and enforce compliance with the SFMTA Blue Book and SFMTA issued permits. These inspectors are authorized to conduct field inspections and to progressively issue warnings, citations, and administrative fines.

Enforcement commonly addresses unpermitted work and improper or unsafe closures of bicycle lanes, pedestrian walkways, transit zones, and related facilities. Traffic Routing Inspectors play a key role in ensuring that approved traffic control plans are implemented correctly and that safe, accessible paths of travel are always maintained.

SFPW Street Inspectors

SFPW Street Inspectors enforce compliance for private building construction, utility work, and other non-City projects within the public right-of-way. Inspectors may issue warnings, citations, and, when necessary, require immediate corrective action to address unsafe or noncompliant conditions.

In cases of significant or ongoing violations, SFPW may take additional enforcement measures consistent with its regulatory authority. These actions are not detailed here but are intended to protect public safety and maintain accessibility within active work zones.

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Feedback

If you have concerns about a construction work zone please contact San Francisco through the 311 system. This is the most efficient way to bring the matter to the correct agencies.

We request that you share key details you observe such as location (street address, cross streets), date and time of concern, information you notice on project signs such as project name and permit numbers and identification of the company or agency performing work. Please do not record images of individual workers' faces, personal vehicle license plates or engage with the workers.

If you witness an emergency or a crime, please relocate to some place safe and contact emergency services through 911.