

POLK STREET IMPROVEMENT PROJECT UPDATE

Project Purpose and Goals

Polk Street between McAllister and Union is a thriving commercial corridor with shops, restaurants, and neighborhood services. Polk is also the only designated north-south bike route that connects northeastern neighborhoods to Market Street and downtown. Since Polk Street will be repaved in 2015, the SFMTA took the opportunity to have a dialogue with the local community to consider measures to better address the needs of the street and contribute to San Francisco's sustainable transportation goals.

Beginning in the fall of 2012, the SFMTA worked closely with residents, merchants and other stakeholders to develop the following project goals:

- Create a green, vibrant street for people shopping and living near Polk Street
- Make Polk Street an inviting place to walk and bike
- Improve safety for everyone

Based on these goals, the SFMTA developed several project alternatives and worked closely with local stakeholders to consider how each option met the project goals and the needs of the corridor.

Join us at our upcoming open house to discuss the SFMTA's conceptual design recommendations

WHEN: Thursday, July 25th from 5PM-8:30PM (open house)

WHERE: 1751 Sacramento Street between Van Ness & Polk Street (the Old First Church)

Pedestrian Safety

Polk Street ranks among the streets with the highest number of pedestrian injuries in San Francisco.

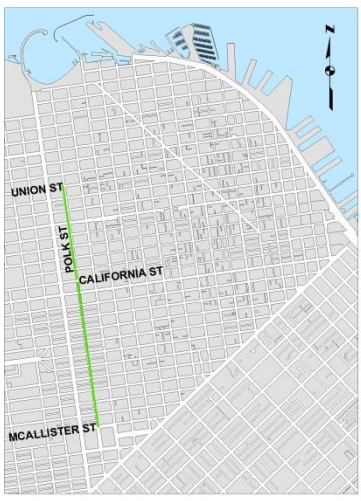
We studied each collision and found that the majority of pedestrian collisions occurred at intersections, involved turning vehicles, and were not the fault of the people walking. SFMTA staff recommend the following measures throughout the project corridor to directly address these safety concerns:

Recommendations

- High visibility crosswalks at all intersections
- Red zones near intersections to improve visibility
- Corner "bulb-out" sidewalk extensions at key locations to slow turning vehicles and make pedestrians more visible
- Pedestrian countdown signals
- Adjust traffic signal timing to slow vehicles or prioritize pedestrians at key locations
- Landscaping, seating, and other public realm improvements

Two Project Segments:

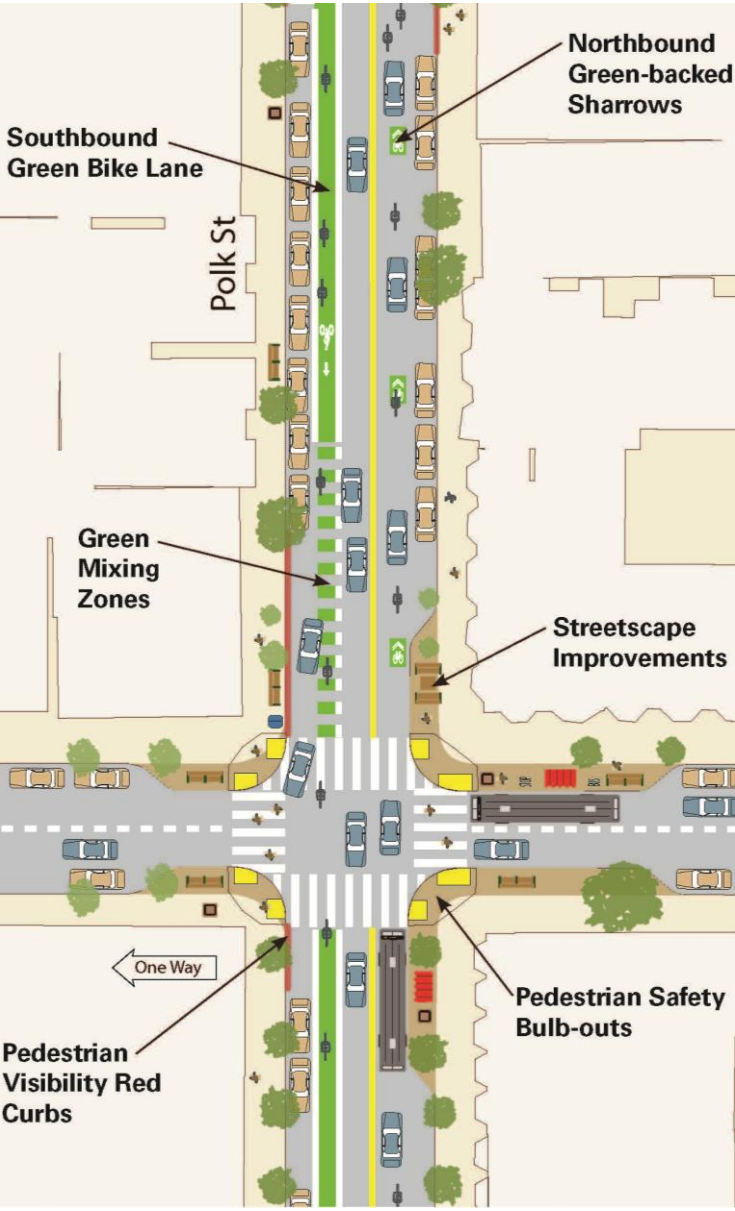
Existing conditions such as street width, grade, Muni service, and traffic collisions vary along the project corridor. We therefore divided the project area into two segments in order to craft a set of recommendations that closely match up with the needs of the street.



Polk Street: Union to California

Background

This segment of Polk Street serves as the commercial center of the Middle Polk and Russian Hill neighborhoods. The street is mostly flat here, and there are relatively fewer bicycle injury collisions. The street is more narrow than in Lower Polk, and there are no existing bike lanes.



Recommendations

- Add a green bike lane in one direction to provide a designated space for bicyclists.
- Add green shared lane markings in the other direction to help guide bicyclists and alert drivers to expect people on bikes.
- Implement morning tow-away regulations on the shared side of the street to provide more space for cars and bikes to share the road.
- Restrict parking at intersections to improve visibility of pedestrians. Approximately 90% of the parking spaces on Polk Street and 95% of the parking spaces within one block of Polk Street would be retained in this segment.

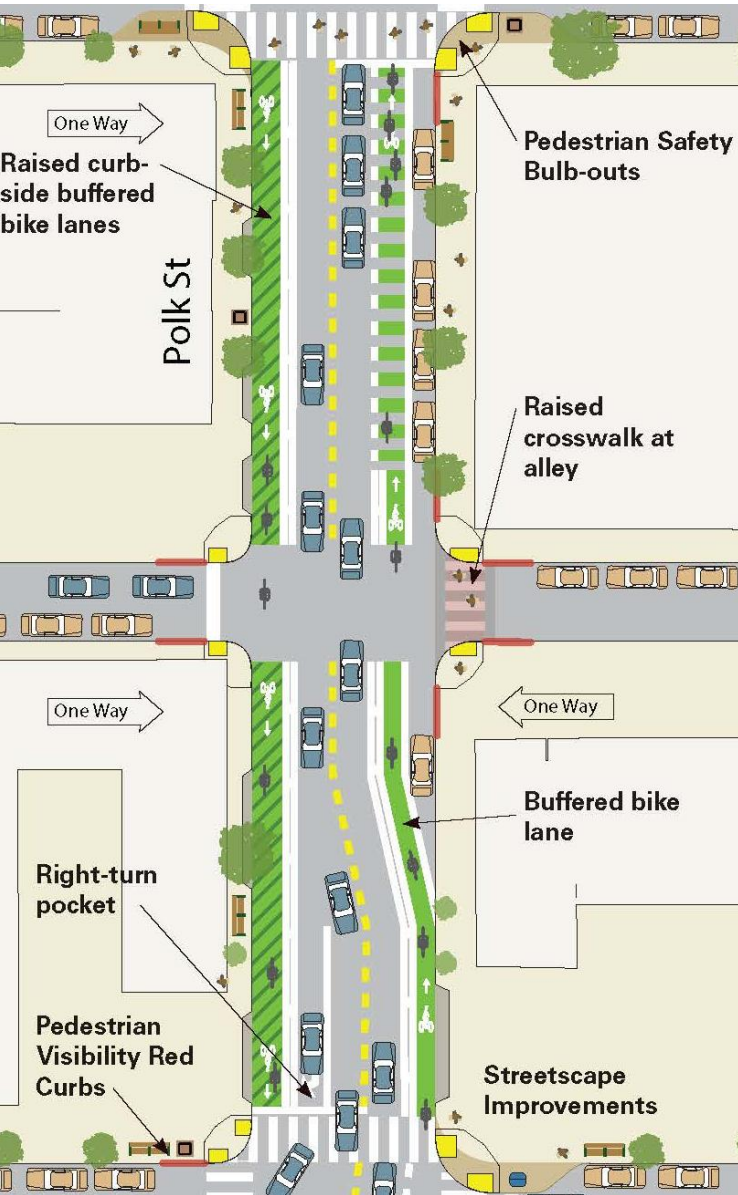


Example of a green bike lane (left) and "sharrow" (right) 2

Polk Street: California to McAllister

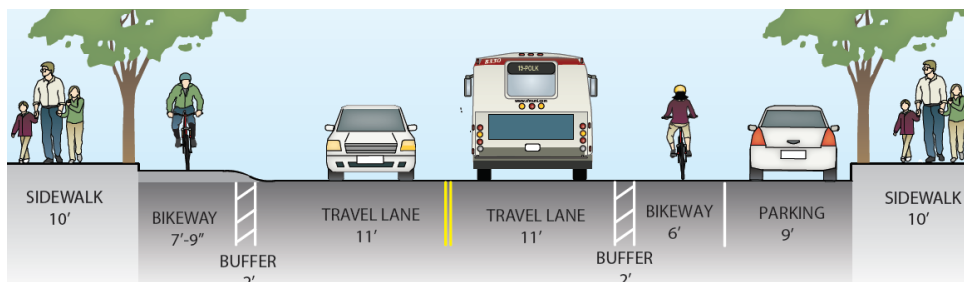
Background

Polk is fairly steep in this area, and there are a number of wide arterial cross streets with swiftly moving traffic. Bike lanes were installed along the majority of this segment about ten years ago, but there are still a high number of bicyclists being hit at intersections by turning vehicles, and many cyclists report that riding on this part of Polk is still daunting. This indicates a clear need to reduce turning conflicts, slow bike and car traffic, increase the visibility of bicyclists, and further separate bikes from moving traffic.



Recommendations

- Install buffered bike lanes to increase the separation between moving vehicles and people on bicycles
- Create a “cycle track” separated bikeway on one side of the street by raising the bike lane above the level of the roadway
- Separate turning vehicles from bike and pedestrian traffic at key locations
- Parking would need to be restricted on one side of the street to accommodate these changes. The SFMTA will work closely with local merchants to ensure that commercial and passenger loading needs can continue to be met nearby.
- Approximately 50% of the parking spaces on Polk Street and 90% of the parking spaces within one block of Polk Street would be retained.



Cross section showing the concept of raising the bike lane on one side of the street

Timeline and Next Steps

2012-2013
Planning

2013-2014
Project Approvals,
Detailed Design

2015
Construction

To date, the SFMTA has hosted four rounds of public meetings as well as numerous focused meetings with local stakeholders and advocates. The SFMTA will wrap up the planning phase of this project with a public meeting on July 25th to discuss the conceptual design and collect public feedback.

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The SFMTA will conduct additional outreach to merchants to update them on the project and discuss design details to ensure that local businesses are minimally impacted. Public input will also be sought on additional beautification enhancements.

The project will then undergo a full environmental review and ultimately be considered for approval by the SFMTA Board of Directors. If approved, the project will be designed and implemented as part of the planned repaving of Polk Street in 2015.

If the project is approved, the SFMTA plans to evaluate the effects of the proposed changes on: safety, bicycle and pedestrian volumes, sales tax receipts, and the overall perception of the street by people who live, work, and travel on Polk Street.

More information:

www.SFMTA.com/Polk

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