



1 California Temporary Emergency Transit Lanes

Outreach Summary

March 2021

Background

The 1 California Temporary Emergency Transit Lanes project proposes to install temporary emergency transit lanes on segments of the 1 California corridor to help keep 1 California buses moving, reducing crowding and travel times for people who still depend on transit to get around the city. In winter 2020/21, SFMTA completed extensive outreach to seek input on the proposed transit improvements. The purpose of this document is to summarize the outreach conducted, key themes and sentiment of feedback received, as well as to share how the proposal has been revised in response to this feedback. Next, the project will go to the SFMTA Board for consideration, which will include another opportunity to provide feedback directly to the Board during the Public Hearing portion of the item. Learn more about the project at [SFMTA.com/TempLanes1Cal](https://www.sfmta.com/TempLanes1Cal) or [subscribe to our email list](#) to receive updates.

Notification and Outreach

The SFMTA notified stakeholders about the project proposals using the following techniques:

- A mailer was sent to all properties within one to two blocks of the proposed street changes, covering almost 24,000 addresses. The mailer was in English, Chinese and Russian and included an overview of the project proposal as well as information about two virtual community meetings to learn more and provide feedback.
- Email/text updates were sent to 1 California subscribers and other relevant topics.
- Posters in English, Russian and Chinese were posted at key destinations along the project corridor, including at bus stops.
- Stakeholder meetings were conducted with known stakeholder organizations within the project limits who accepted our invitation to meet, including: Chinatown TRIP, Chinatown merchants' representatives, Pacific Heights Residents Association, Friends of Lafayette Park, the Nob Hill Association, Discover Polk CBD and the San Francisco Transit Riders.
- Direct phone calls or emails to notify organizations in close proximity to the proposal about the community meetings, including medical institutions, places of worship, community centers, grocery stores, large residential properties, schools and banks.
- Two virtual community meetings were held:
 - [February 17, 11:30 a.m.](#), focused on the western portion of the corridor west of Steiner Street, conducted in English. There were ~15 attendees.
 - [February 24, 2:00 p.m.](#), focused on the eastern portion of the corridor east of Franklin Street, conducted in both English and Cantonese. ~45 attendees.

The meetings were facilitated by an SFMTA Public Hearing Officer and included remarks from the relevant District Supervisor's office, a staff presentation, public questions/comments and staff responses.

- Feedback was accepted by phone and email. We received emails and/or phone calls from >50 individuals and everyone who contacted us received a response.

Sentiment of Feedback

Figure 1 summarizes the number and sentiment of comments received via phone/email and live at one of the two community meetings. Out of 98 comments received, the majority, ~56%, were in support of the proposal, with approximately 30% opposed and additional 14% neutral.

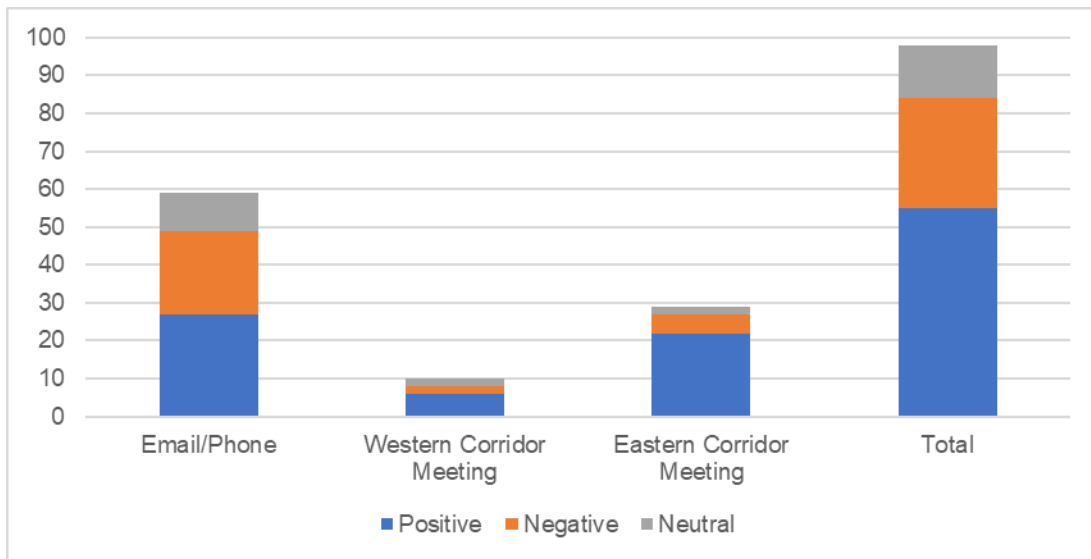


Figure 1: Number and sentiment of comments received on 1 California Temporary Emergency Transit Lane Proposal

Revised Proposal

In response to the feedback received, the project team has developed a revised proposal, shown in Figures 2 and 3 below. This proposal will be considered for approval at a future SFMTA Board meeting, tentatively anticipated on April 20, 2021.



Figure 2: 1 California Proposal (western segment) (no revisions since Community Meeting)

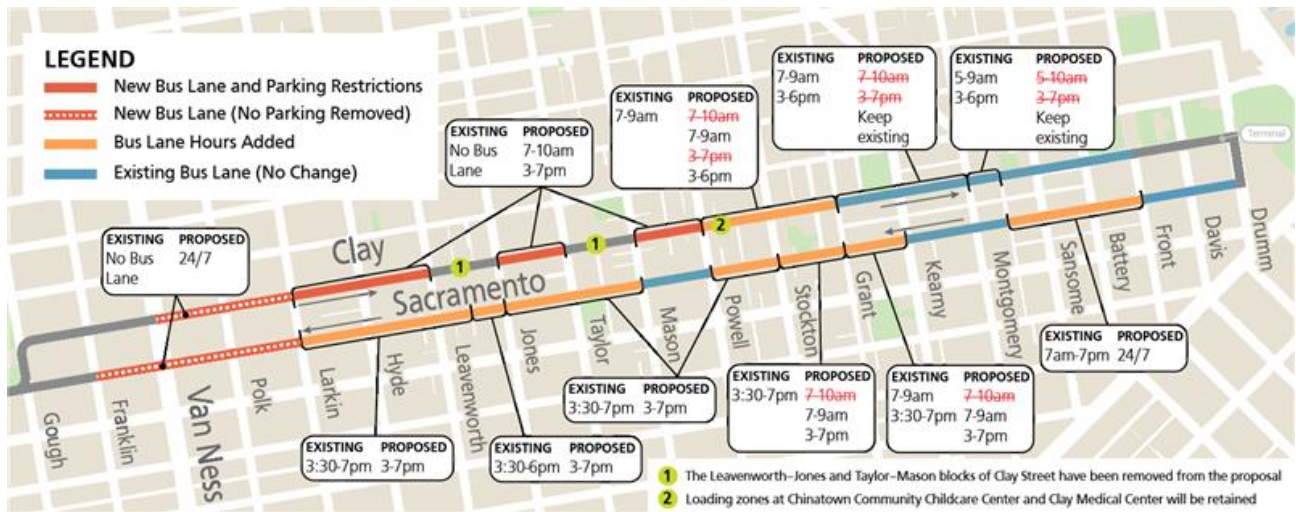


Figure 3: 1 California Revised Proposal (eastern segment)

Key Feedback Themes and Responses

- 1. Transit customers who support the improvements and have experienced buses slowed by congestion and pass-ups/crowding on the 1 California. Requests to make transit lanes active for more hours and segments of the 1 California corridor.**

Most commenters in support of the proposal focused on these points, providing firsthand experiences of pass-ups and crowded conditions (by COVID standards) riding the bus and expressing an expectation that the proposed improvements will improve their travel experiences. Some of these comments requested that additional segments of the 1 California line be considered for transit lane treatments and that locations where part-time transit lanes are proposed be considered for full-time lanes. The locations and times of day proposed for transit lanes are based on where it is feasible to install a transit lane (e.g. adequate lane width), and where data indicated the greatest potential for benefit (locations where the reduction in transit travel time during Shelter in Place was notable, indicating that reduced congestion was improving bus travel times and therefore a transit lane was likely to help protect buses from the return of congestion).
- 2. Mixed opinions about whether the 1 California is experiencing crowded conditions and being slowed by traffic.**

In addition to those 1 California riders who reported crowding and/or pass-ups, we also heard from some stakeholders that they have not observed crowded buses or the bus being slowed by traffic. As summarized in the [presentation deck](#) on Slides 7 and 8, our analysis found that 1 California travel times increased when traffic speeds slowed, coinciding with a significant increase in transit crowding in Fall 2020. Passenger volume data is collected by on-bus sensors and averages together a large volume of samples, which can give a clearer picture of trends than any limited set of observations.



- 3. Concerns about impacts to loading and parking in Chinatown.** Several comments raised specific concerns about merchant loading impacts of the proposed expanded hours of transit lanes in Chinatown. In response, SFMTA gathered additional feedback from Chinatown stakeholders and revised the proposal to remove the proposed 9-10 a.m. addition on segments of Sacramento and Clay in Chinatown, given the importance of that hour for loading. In addition, proposed changes along Clay Street between Grant and Montgomery were dropped, and some minor changes to the limits of the afternoon transit lane hours on Clay between Powell and Stockton were made to maintain two passenger loading zones that support a childcare center and a medical center.
- 4. Concerns about increased traffic congestion and impacts to parallel streets.** Several comments were concerned that these changes would result in slower travel speeds for people driving. The traffic volumes we are seeing should be reasonably accommodated in this corridor with potential that some people who are driving will divert to parallel streets. As this is a temporary proposal, we will be evaluating impacts, including to traffic, and could make adjustments at any point if the lanes are causing any undue impacts.
- 5. Concern about the impacts of new parking restrictions in Nob Hill, particularly on Clay Street.** Those raising these comments were concerned that people who own cars and do not have access to off-street parking would have a difficult time finding alternative locations to park, and find it challenging to need to move their cars twice during the workday when many people are working from home. In response to this feedback, the revised proposal removes the proposed transit lane on Clay Street between Leavenworth and Jones streets and on Clay Street between Taylor and Mason streets. We would need to remove partial blocks of the proposed transit lane on these blocks because of two locations where a tree overhangs the curbside lane. We are removing these two entire blocks to allow for additional preservation of parking. With this change, the total reduction of peak-hour parking spaces on Clay Street in Nob Hill decreases by 26, from 69 to 43 parking spaces. In addition, part-time transit lanes would only be in effect from Monday through Friday. Recognizing the constrained parking supply in the surrounding neighborhood, we limited the proposed transit lane hours to only those where data was showing the greatest potential for benefit.
- 6. Suggestions to move the portion of the 1-California that operates on Clay and Sacramento Street to California Street.** Several commenters suggested that because the California line cable cars are not currently operating, the 1-California might be able to experience travel time benefits from operating on California Street instead of along Clay and Sacramento streets. Because the 1-California buses are trolley coach buses, they can only operate on streets that have Overhead Catenary System infrastructure (wires that supply power to our electric fleet). In addition, we try to limit changes that affect where riders catch stops because of the tremendous communication resources required to

properly communicate changes in stop locations. This would be especially complicated as we will eventually be bringing cable car service back and would then need to reverse all of the previous communications work when moving buses back to their normal route.

7. Confusion about the goals of project, connection to the COVID pandemic, and process for considering making permanent. Some commenters were confused about the goals of the project and thought that making these changes permanent would be a foregone conclusion. The main goals of the project are:

- To minimize crowded conditions (by COVID standards) on the 1 California line.
- To maintain or increase 1 California service frequencies.

The proposed transit lanes are anticipated to accomplish these goals by protecting the bus from traffic delays as we move into greater levels of economic reopening. The faster the bus can repeat its “cycle time” from one end of the route to the other, the faster it can begin its next run, which means more frequent service. Typically, we assign 25 buses to the 1 California during peak hours. In April 2020, we saved so much time on the 1 California that we were able to provide the same service frequency with only 22 buses. Given the financial hardships our agency is under due to COVID-19 and a pre-existing structural deficit, SFMTA’s focus will be to restore services that have been discontinued during COVID. If the bus becomes slower due to increases in traffic, we expect 1 California travel time to increase, decreasing our service frequency, and exacerbating existing crowding. In addition, we expect ridership to increase as we move into greater levels of economic reopening, creating even more impetus to address crowding.

Within four months of the State of Emergency ending, we must remove the project unless there is an additional public process and policymaker consideration and action to make it permanent. If approved and implemented, we will conduct an evaluation including a stakeholder survey. If the evaluation shows positive results and there is stakeholder support, we may bring a proposal to make some or all of the project permanent to the SFMTA Board for their consideration and potential action. We may also propose some modifications or additions to respond to what we learn during the evaluation. Improving transit speed and reliability is a priority of the SFMTA’s even when we are not in the midst of a pandemic. The type of changes considered here are similar to ones we might consider in non-COVID times, but there is additional urgency for this project in light of COVID-19.

You can let us know what you feel would be important to evaluate if these temporary emergency transit lanes are approved by taking [this short survey](#).

8. Questions about why transit lanes are proposed on Clay Street in Nob Hill in the afternoon from 3-7 p.m. when the dominant commute direction during these hours is westbound.

Tables 1 and 2 show the change in 1 California travel time through Nob Hill comparing pre-Shelter in Place (February 2020) to Shelter in Place (Spring/early Summer 2020) on Clay Street and Sacramento streets, respectively. Because there were substantial savings on Clay Street in both the AM and PM peak, we are proposing transit lanes during both AM and PM peak hours. In contrast, as shown in Table 2, on Sacramento Street, because there were nominal savings in the AM peak, we did not recommend expanding transit lane hours during the AM Peak.

Period	2/1 - 2/29	5/18 - 7/11	Percent Savings
7-10am	9:42	5:36	42%
10am-3pm	6:48	5:42	16%
3pm-7pm	7:12	5:24	25%

Table 1: Clay St b/w Powell and Polk

Period	2/1 - 2/29	5/18 - 7/11	Percent Savings
7-10am	6:54	6:36	4%
10am-3pm	7:12	6:36	8%
3-7pm	7:36	6:12	18%

Table 2: Sacramento St b/w Powell and Polk

9. Questions about whether transit travel time savings during Shelter in Place was only as a result of reduced ridership?

No, we have analyzed the proportion of travel time savings associated with all aspects of bus travel time related to ridership (time it takes for the bus to stop, time the bus dwells while passengers get on and off the bus). While the results vary somewhat by segment and time of day, in most segments much less than half the travel time savings is attributable to ridership (see Table 3).

	Clay		Sacramento		California	
	<i>Chinatown</i>	<i>Nob Hill</i>	<i>Chinatown</i>	<i>Nob Hill</i>	<i>Inbound</i>	<i>Outbound</i>
AM Peak	10%	23%	56%	No travel time savings	31%	No travel time savings
PM Peak	6%	28%	67%	46%	4%	27%

Table 3: Proportion of 1 California Travel Time Savings Attributed to Ridership (dwell, bus stop, acceleration and deceleration time)

10. Requests to implement earlier than May 2021

Several comments requested that the SFMTA implement these improvements faster given the existing challenges. SFMTA is working to implement a variety of street changes to respond to COVID-19 (such as Slow Streets and other Temporary Emergency Transit Lanes



that are all competing for the limited time of the field staff who implement projects like this one. Moving forward more quickly would defer another project.

More information is available at [SFMTA.com/TempLanes1Cal](https://www.sfmta.com/TempLanes1Cal).