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Most asked

1. Why improve Valencia Street?

One of the SFMTA's strategic goals is to make streets safer for everyone. On average, mid-Valencia (between 15th to 24th streets) experiences about two collisions per month, and more than half the time, these collisions involve someone bicycling or walking on the street. In the past five years (01/2017 to 06/2022), there have been a total of 154 reported collisions within this project extent. Furthermore, there have been numerous requests regarding traffic safety on Valencia Street and the need to improve it. One of the top goals of this pilot is to make Valencia Street safer for everyone.

It's important to also note that Valencia Street usage has changed significantly in the last two years. The weekend street closures and the proliferation of parklets along the corridor were made possible through the Shared Spaces program. On-demand food and goods deliveries also added more demand to an already limited amount of curb space. This has required the project team to take a different approach in designing an improved street. See the following question to learn more about the various design considerations.

2. Why are you proposing a center-running protected bikeway along Valencia?

The goal of the pilot is to reduce conflicts and promote safety while preserving Valencia's dynamic character. Valencia is both a vibrant attraction and a major north-south connector in the City's bike network. With all these diverse uses, there are numerous multimodal conflicts that occur, particularly due to limited curb space. For example, double-parking, which often occurs when a vehicle is stopped in the painted bike lane, creates a major safety issue between vehicles and people biking. Both the arrival of Shared Spaces and increase in food and parcel deliveries have created more competing demands for curb space.

A center-running protected bikeway design creates an opportunity not currently available along Valencia, fully separating bicycles from moving vehicles. Currently, when vehicles are double-parked on the painted bike lane, those who are traveling by bike do not have the choice of avoiding moving vehicle traffic. People on bikes often have to maneuver into the vehicle travel lane to get around the double-parked vehicle. The center-running protected bikeway will effectively separate bicycle traffic from the various travel and parking lane activities that currently lead to multimodal conflicts.

To learn more about our thought process behind other design concepts please navigate to the Design Alternatives Section of the FAQ.

3. Why are you pursuing a pilot project?

The pilot proposal for Valencia Street is an effort to address safety issues in the near-term. After presenting the pilot proposal to the SFMTA Board of Directors for a vote, the project team can continue to explore the long-term vision of Valencia Street.

The Valencia Bikeway project began as a capital project. Capital projects are long-term projects that require significant money, resources, and time to plan, design, bid, and construct. This pilot project will be using project elements from the [Vision Zero Quick-Build](#) toolkit to respond to the need to address Valencia's immediate traffic safety concerns and operational inefficiencies. This effort is being

proposed as a pilot, because there has never been a center-running protected bikeway in the City of San Francisco.

Pilots are also legally bound to produce a comprehensive evaluation comparing multimodal traffic behavior changes before and after the project is built. They are also subject to a final vote by the SFMTA Board of Directors to keep, modify, or remove the design at the end of the pilot period (in this case after 18 months). Pursuing a pilot project in the near-term also allows the project team to conduct a longer-term study of the corridor. This study is being made possible by Neighborhood Transportation Improvement Program (NTIP) funds committed by District 9 Supervisor Ronen for further exploration of the long-term vision for this corridor. As far as we can see in the future, this pilot is an interim design and we are committed to pursuing a capital project in the longer term.

4. What happens after the pilot?

Throughout the 18-month pilot, both the project team and the Vision Zero Safe Streets Evaluation Program team will observe and analyze the project extent before implementation and three, six, and 12 months after implementation to review outcomes and determine design effectiveness. In summer 2024, we will share evaluation findings and propose next steps to the SFMTA Board of Directors. The Board will then vote to decide whether the pilot should continue as a permanent installation or if the pilot should be modified or removed.

The project and efforts to improve Valencia Street will not stop with the pilot. Long-term visions on the corridor can include design concepts like a curbside two-way protected bikeway or pedestrianized Valencia Street. Both visions are either more capital intensive and/or require further coordination, studies, and community engagement not within the current scope of the pilot project.

Bikeway Design/Using and Navigating the Bikeway

5. Is the center-running protected bikeway protected? What materials will be used to implement it?

Yes, the current center-running protected bikeway will be protected. Currently, the proposal shown in the [mid-Valencia Virtual Open House](#) is using delineators/safe-hit posts that are about three feet tall with an elongated base to create the separation from the vehicle lanes. Safe-hit posts are considered a standard treatment in the Vision Zero Quick-Build Toolkit. However, community feedback during the design phase and open house has led the project team to consider other types of robust materials to be used for the bikeway separation. As part of our material exploration, the team is also coordinating with emergency responders to figure out the best solution.

6. How do people get into and out of the protected bikeway?

There will be a bicycle signal installed at the project limits and at 16th & Valencia that will provide dedicated crossing times only for bicycles to get into and out of the center-running protected bikeway. All other intersections within the project limits will have bike boxes for people on bikes to exit the center-running bikeway.

7. In this design, how do people access midblock destinations?

The proposed spacing of vertical delineators will allow for bicyclists to exit the bikeway midblock and into the vehicle travel lane. People bicycling along the center-running protected bikeway may exit the bikeway at any point and use the vehicle lane to reach the curb.

If a person bicycling does not want to mix with vehicular traffic to access a midblock destination, they can use the bike boxes or crosswalks at any of the signalized intersections when vehicles are stopped at a red light. This action to access midblock destinations would be the same for a curbside two-way protected bikeway or a curbside one-way protected bikeway on both sides of the street, if accessing a destination midblock in the opposing direction or other side of the block.

8. In this design, how do people make left turns at intersections?

At intersections, there are bike boxes and/or bike signals to enable bicyclists to safely turn at intersections and to exit the center-running protected bikeway.

9. Why is FIRE LANE written along the proposed center-running protected bikeway?

The existing designation of the center lane as a fire lane along some blocks of Valencia is due to the clear-width requirement set by the San Francisco Fire Department (SFFD) during the Valencia Shared Spaces street closure. The pilot proposal includes FIRE Lane along all blocks to address congestion concerns raised since the implementation of the street closure and to achieve the clear-width needed for emergency vehicle access. It is not expected that first responders will choose to use the bikeway/fire lane first over the vehicle travel lanes. Emergency responders will use the bikeway/fire lane in cases where the vehicle lane is blocked or otherwise not accessible. If the emergency vehicle needs to access the lane, the proposed center-running protected bikeway design includes buffers along the sides of the bikeway where people bicycling can pull over. Educational and outreach materials will be distributed to the public as part of the roll out and the project team will continue to coordinate with SFFD on this matter. We will also be looking at how emergency vehicles are using the space as part of the pilot evaluation.

10. Why doesn't the project extend to Cesar Chavez Street?

The pilot project does not extend to Cesar Chavez Street because the goal is to immediately address the span of Valencia Street where collisions are most concentrated. Additionally, since this is a pilot project, the team wants to ensure that the proposed center-running design is effective in creating a safer bikeway and addressing all the competing demands on a smaller area before extending the design. The SFMTA is committed to bringing protected bikeways to the remainder of the Valencia corridor following this pilot project.

Design Alternative Questions

Please also see our [Long-Term Project Concepts document](#) on our project website to learn more about design considerations.

11. Why are you not proposing a curbside parking-protected bikeway?

In February 2020, the project team proposed a [parking-protected design for southern-Valencia from 19th to Cesar Chavez streets](#). This design would have repurposed about 40% of the curb space for the new bikeway and was met with heavy opposition from merchants and other institutions along the

corridor that rely on the curb lane for business operations, like commercial and passenger loading. Additionally, the pandemic has changed the corridor dramatically with the introduction of the Shared Spaces Program and an increase in on-demand, app-based deliveries. As a part of the project, we strive to have a balanced design for pedestrian and bicycle safety while supporting the economic vitality of the corridor.

12. Have you considered the Burrito Plan?

The project team heard a lot of questions about the community-member generated Burrito Plan. This plan would shift outdoor dining to the sidewalk level and would implement a two-way contraflow bikeway on one side of the street, protected by planters, with a floating loading lane adjacent to the planters and a moving vehicle lane on the other side of the floating loading lane.

The Burrito Plan is challenging to implement because half of all businesses would no longer have curb space to utilize for commercial and passenger loading. We are doing our best to support the Shared Spaces Program and enable businesses and visitors to enjoy the parklets. Currently, Shared Spaces structures are not allowed on sidewalks and legislative changes would be required to enable enclosed structures to be placed on the sidewalk. Additionally, putting commercial loading in the middle of the roadway makes it harder to achieve the clear width requirement set by the emergency responders and increases potential conflicts between cyclists and goods or people getting picked up and dropped off.

Check out the [Long-Term Project Concepts document](#) for more information.

13. Why don't we close Valencia Street to all vehicle traffic permanently?

As mentioned above, the mid-Valencia pilot is taking a Vision Zero Quick-Build model as a near-term solution. Car-free Valencia, or pedestrianization of the corridor, requires extensive feasibility and traffic studies to understand multimodal circulation patterns and impacts. It also requires extensive outreach and communication with residents, businesses and other stakeholders.

Car access would also still need to be maintained for commercial deliveries, residents, paratransit users, and more –much of which could not be pushed off to side streets as businesses and residents also have existing driveway access that will need to be maintained.

The project team is committed to pursuing a capital project on Valencia Street and exploring the long-term vision for the corridor, like a curbside two-way protected bikeway or pedestrianizing Valencia Street, after we implement near-term solutions to immediately address the current state of traffic safety along the corridor.

Check out the [Long-Term Project Concepts document](#) for more information.

Parking/Loading Questions

14. Is the proposal prioritizing parking over a better protected bikeway?

The current curb management proposal complements the bikeway design and rebalances curb space to prioritize loading. There was already a need for more loading access along Valencia before the pandemic. Since then, the increase in different types of deliveries, as well as the amount of loading displaced by the proliferation of Shared Spaces parklets, have made the need for loading more critical.

With a center-running protected bikeway, the center turn lane will no longer be available for trucks to double park and unload goods and there will be no lane on Valencia for cars to double park without completely blocking the flow of traffic.

For more on how we prioritize curb uses along the curb, refer to the SFMTA's [Curb Management Strategy](#), which describes which curb uses are prioritized in different types of neighborhoods and why.

15. Some businesses get commercial deliveries in the center turn lane in the current configuration of Valencia Street. Where will these trucks go once the center bike lane is implemented?

Commercial loading needs are at the center of our approach to curb management along Valencia Street. We are roughly doubling the amount of existing loading in the current proposal. Loading zones will need to be long enough, in the most effective location, and available during the right times throughout the day to meet business needs to limit double parking and accommodate the loading that currently takes place in the center turn lane.

16. Where can I park/load on Valencia Street once this pilot is implemented?

We are prioritizing loading along Valencia during business hours. New metered parking spaces are proposed around the corners onto the cross streets to increase private parking access. These spaces will help increase availability more than an unmetered space where vehicles can park for multiple days. Metered spaces will not cover the entire block and neighbors can still park overnight at metered spaces.

All existing passenger loading zones (i.e. faith institution and school-related) will remain as they are now or will be expanded. There will also be “dual-use zones” that are regulated as commercial loading during the day and [general loading](#) (five minutes for any type of vehicle) starting midday or in the early , depending on the needs of the given block. Neighbors will also be able to park in these zones overnight. There are also several off-street parking options like garages that generally have available spaces to park. Click [here](#) for more information about the locations of these garages.

17. What is a “dual-use” zone?

“Dual-use zones” serve two different types of parking/loading (commercial, passenger, general, etc.) along the same stretch of curb during different hours of the day. Depending on the block, most of the dual-use zones proposed in this pilot would serve as commercial loading (vehicles with commercial license plates) during the day and [general loading](#) (5-minute loading for any need or vehicle type) in the afternoon through the evening or just during the evening.

18. What is a general loading zone?

[General Loading Zones](#) are a new type of zone the SFMTA has developed to provide loading space for vehicles at the curb and to limit double parking along busy commercial corridors. They are active loading zones where any type of vehicle can load or unload goods or passengers for up to five minutes. Picking up takeout, dropping off or picking up passengers, dropping off a package, using an ATM, and grabbing garments from the dry cleaners are all examples of how one can use the general loading zone when it is in effect.

19. What are the red zones at the intersections for?

Also known as [daylighting](#), the proposed red zones at intersections within the pilot extents remove visual barriers (ie. parked vehicles or parklets) within a minimum of 20 feet of a crosswalk or intersection. This provides more visibility for pedestrians and other modes approaching the intersection, and thus, opportunity for people to better respond to oncoming conflicts. The SFMTA is committed to daylighting the entire High Injury Network, following a resolution that was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in spring 2019.

For this pilot, however, the red zones do more than daylight the street. They create space needed for bike boxes, provide ample room for cars to turn at intersections without encroaching into the center-running protected bikeway and allow for a realignment of the vehicle lane from one block to the next.

Enforcement-Related Questions

20. How are you addressing the prevalence of double-parking along Valencia Street?

Double-parking is a common issue on Valencia Street and one of the main drivers of this pilot project. The proposed center-running protected bikeway and accompanying curb management plan aims to address this issue by separating bicycle traffic from vehicles and allocating sufficient curb space for loading. In addition to the center-running protected bikeway, we are taking an aggressive approach to loading by prioritizing loading zones in the curb management plan and by making the proposed loading zones long enough to accommodate larger trucks that need to access Valencia for commercial and parcel deliveries. Take a look at the Parking/Loading section of this FAQ or our [project website](#) to learn more about our curb management plan.

21. Will cars be able to double park or drive in the proposed center-running protected bikeway?

It would be illegal for non-emergency vehicles to drive or park in the bike lane. We will be monitoring this behavior and any other unsafe driving throughout the pilot and will coordinate with enforcement on efforts to keep the bike lane clear.

22. How will the turn restrictions be enforced?

After implementing safety treatments in northern-Valencia, we found from the project evaluation that 99% of vehicles complied with the left-turn restriction. Nonetheless, when we roll out projects, we partner with our parking control officers and often employ street ambassadors to help street users adjust to the new street configuration. With any new change, there is an adjustment period to a new concept of the street. We will be actively monitoring and evaluating the design following implementation.

Evaluation Questions

23. What data will you be looking at during the evaluation period?

The project team will conduct an evaluation on the pilot proposal and will collect data before the pilot is installed and three, six, and twelve months after construction. The data that will be collected and analyzed include bike volumes, vehicle volumes, vehicle speeds, collision patterns, emergency vehicle access activities, commercial loading and curb use, bikeway blockage, compliance with new regulations and traffic control devices, bike positioning along the street, and bikeway ease of access.