



## MEMORANDUM

July 3, 2025

**TO:** MEMBERS, PORT COMMISSION  
Hon. Gail Gilman, President  
Hon. Stephen Engblom, Vice President  
Hon. Willie Adams  
Hon. Steven Lee  
Hon. Ken McNeely

**FROM:** Elaine Forbes  
Executive Director

**SUBJECT:** Informational presentation on a proposed Central Embarcadero Safety Project and other proposed changes between Broadway and Brannan Street, per the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency's Embarcadero Enhancement Program in support of the City's Vision Zero traffic safety goals.

**DIRECTOR'S RECOMMENDATION:** Information Only – No Action Required

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### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Embarcadero Enhancement Program is a program led by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) to improve the multi-modal experience of all users of The Embarcadero in support of the City's Vision Zero traffic safety goals. In 2020, implementation of the Embarcadero Enhancement Program (EEP) began with low-cost improvements near the Ferry Building that included a road diet, two-way separated bikeway, and expanded loading zones. The Central Embarcadero Safety Project, located along the eastern side of The Embarcadero between Brannan Street and Broadway, is the latest phase of the EEP. This phase is meant to improve connections and safety, and to elevate The Embarcadero's role as a vital local and regional corridor.

The project would address ongoing comfort and safety issues along the promenade by extending the two-way separated bikeway south from Folsom to Brannan Street. Maintaining a wide, welcoming promenade and existing northbound travel lanes, the

project does require the narrowing of center medians, new northbound left turn/U-turn restrictions, and the removal/displacement of parking spaces and palm trees. The project's estimated \$8 to \$12 million construction phase budget includes \$8.3 million in grants and local bond funding.

Pending Port Commission comment on the Central Embarcadero Safety Project, the project team will proceed with finalizing design, NEPA environmental review, permitting, and other preparations for construction.

## **STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE**

The Central Embarcadero Safety Project supports the Port's Strategic Plan goals:

### Evolution:

Evolve the waterfront to respond to changing public and Port needs.

### Engagement:

Engage internal and external stakeholders on Port functions and activities.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Central Embarcadero Safety Project is the latest phase of the EEP. This program seeks to improve safety, mobility, connectivity, and accessibility for all users of The Embarcadero, which serves as a major transit corridor, tourist destination, maritime-oriented commercial district, and public recreation area. The Embarcadero is also a key route into San Francisco's major business and cultural sites, such as the Financial District, Fisherman's Wharf, North Beach, and Chinatown.

In partnership with the Port of San Francisco, the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) spent years engaging with stakeholder groups and the broader public to envision a better, safer Embarcadero. In 2018, this process culminated in a preferred Complete Street<sup>1</sup> concept design that included a two-way, water-side separated bikeway, shorter pedestrian crossings, and promenade safety fixes (among other priorities).

In 2020, the SFMTA began phased implementation of the Embarcadero Enhancement Program using low-cost, flexible (i.e., 'quick-build') changes near the Ferry Building where safety needs and volumes are highest. These changes, reviewed and approved by the Port Commission in [August 2021](#), included a 3-to-2 lane road diet and two-way, separated bikeway that have been in place from Broadway to Folsom Street since 2022. A post-project evaluation report and additional details are available at [www.sfmta.com/embarcadero](http://www.sfmta.com/embarcadero).

The Central Embarcadero Safety Project will bring additional investments in safety, accessibility, and connectivity to build a corridor that works better for everyone. The

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<sup>1</sup> A Complete Street is an approach to planning and designing streets that enables safe access for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, and transit riders of all ages and abilities. This concept emphasizes the need for streets to be designed, operated, and maintained to ensure convenient and comfortable travel for everyone, regardless of their mode of transportation.

SFMTA, Port of San Francisco, and San Francisco Department of Public Works are working on concurrent 65% level design, environmental review, and public engagement phases to solidify the project scope and advance towards a construction start target of fall 2026.

## **PROJECT SCOPE**

### **Location**

The project is located on The Embarcadero between Brannan Street and Broadway, with changes focused primarily on the northbound side of the roadway between the center rail trackway and waterfront promenade. The project does not continue south past Brannan Street (Southern Embarcadero) or north past Broadway (Northern Embarcadero) due to physical design and funding constraints.

### **Purpose**

The Central Embarcadero Safety Project aims to:

- Build a safer Embarcadero for all users
- Improve connections between The Embarcadero, nearby neighborhoods, and region (via last-mile transit connections)
- Invest in critical infrastructure to support the City's renewal and recovery while also anticipating future changes with the Waterfront Resiliency Program and Port development

Most of The Embarcadero corridor has been identified by the San Francisco Department of Public Health as being on the Vision Zero High Injury Network, which represents the 13% of city streets that account for over 75% of all traffic-related injuries and fatalities. Existing painted (but unprotected) bike lanes are too scary for many people to use, resulting in high volumes of people riding and scootering on the Promenade and increased conflicts with pedestrians and waterfront business activities.

Introducing a two-way protected bikeway through the Ferry Building area during the initial years of COVID-19 was a major step toward addressing these safety issues and conflicts: SFMTA studies confirmed that fewer people were riding on the promenade and faster users were much more likely to use the bikeway. However, the relative short length (about a half mile) and lack of greater protection in some areas limit the usefulness and attractiveness of the bikeway for more trips.

### **Key Elements**

#### Bikeway extension from Folsom to Brannan Street

As shown on Attachment 1, Proposed Central Embarcadero Plan, the project would extend the two-way, separated bikeway along the water side of The Embarcadero by about half a mile, from the current terminus at Folsom Street south to Brannan Street. Besides converting the existing northbound bike lane, the extension is made possible through a

combination of median narrowing, parking removal, and left-turn restrictions (discussed in more detail below).

Designed primarily at street-level and adjacent to the curb, the bikeway will be protected from traffic and vehicle loading by raised concrete islands. At vehicle loading zones, these islands will be accessible for pedestrians, and a raised crosswalk over the bikeway will be provided to help maintain safe and comfortable access to/from the curb. In areas outside of the loading zones, the raised islands protecting the bikeway may include cobblestones and new palm trees (to replace those lost in the narrowed center medians).

At the Harrison and Bryant Street intersections, the bikeway transitions to promenade-level and “bends in” around the traffic signal and pedestrian waiting areas to slow bikeway traffic and allow for shorter pedestrian crossings. The bikeway will also bend and ramp up to promenade-level through the Pier 26 and Pier 28 entry drives, set back from the roadway to allow for better visibility and safety. The bikeway is located at the promenade level in these locations because of the reduced curb-to-curb street width and expanded promenade width. In these limited areas where the bikeway and promenade are at the same level, a one-foot-wide detectable warning strip will be provided consistent with sidewalk-level bikeways recently built at Mission Rock.

#### Narrowing of northbound center medians (Folsom to Brannan)

A key move to support the bikeway extension is to narrow the northbound center median, which is approximately 15 feet wide when not adjacent to a left-turn lane. Reducing the medians to about 5 feet wide (the minimum needed to maintain existing streetlights and traffic signals) makes space for the bikeway while also maintaining a wide, welcoming promenade and providing sufficient vehicle loading access in key locations. The narrowed medians will provide design flexibility for future Waterfront Resiliency Program projects and pier developments by making it easier to elevate the seawall without implicating the entire Embarcadero roadway.

Narrowing the center medians requires the removal of 15 canary palm trees. While these trees cannot be relocated due to their susceptibility to disease, the project is proposing to plant about an equal number of new (more resilient) palm trees in the new bikeway ‘buffer’ islands. These changes have been reviewed and are supported by the San Francisco Public Works Bureau of Urban Forestry, but may be subject to a tree removal hearing process as required by the Port Building Code.

Additionally, at the Harrison Street intersection, the median narrowing will remove an existing (but unused) historic streetcar platform that served the former E Embarcadero line.

#### Left/U-turn restrictions

As part of the overall design strategy for the bikeway extension, northbound left/U-turns at Folsom and Brannan streets will be restricted. At the Folsom Street approach, the existing left-turn lane will be converted to a through lane to maintain loading access for the Waterbar and Epic restaurants; this change helps improve Muni light-rail service by

reducing delays and conflicts to/from the Market Street tunnel portal. At the northbound Brannan Street approach, the left-turn lane will be removed to help maintain the existing curb line while supporting future design changes with the development of Piers 30-32. Left-turn and U-turn demand is relatively low at these two locations and will be adequately served using the remaining northbound turn lanes at the 2<sup>nd</sup>, Townsend, Bryant, and Howard intersections.

The project is analyzing a third potential turn restriction (northbound U-turns at Clay Street) to support a pedestrian crossing improvement, which is discussed further below. Northbound U-turns will continue to be allowed at the Washington Street intersection, which has sufficient capacity to absorb the additional (but relatively small number of) turns.

### Parking and loading

The project's bikeway extension will result in the removal of up to 30 metered vehicle parking spaces over several blocks of The Embarcadero. Approximately half of these spaces are rarely occupied. About one-third of these spaces will be converted into new passenger and commercial loading zones near Piers 26 and 28, both of which will be approximately 100 feet in length.

A new commercial loading zone will also replace 12 existing motorcycle parking spaces (originally installed in 2021 and rarely occupied) in front of the Waterbar and Epic restaurants. This approximately 100-foot-long commercial zone will be placed south of the existing passenger loading zone.

Outside of the bikeway extension, parking and loading changes will be minimal. Existing passenger loading zones in front of the Ferry Building could expand slightly with planned revisions to the adjacent crosswalks and bikeway, while metered parking spaces on the city side would be reshuffled – but not reduced – as part of the potential reconfiguration of the Clay Street crosswalk.

### Bikeway enhancements (Broadway to Mission Street)

Along with the existing bikeway segment, proposed changes include removing the promenade bulb-outs at the Clay Street and Ferry Building crosswalks to straighten out the bikeway and detach it from the adjacent traffic signals. New pedestrian waiting islands and traffic signals will be placed to the inside (roadway side) of the bikeway, and new raised crosswalks over the bikeway will be provided. These changes should help encourage users to stay in the bikeway through the busy Ferry Building area while also prioritizing and shortening pedestrian connections.

No changes are proposed for the striped pedestrian aisles (“bikeway buffer”) at the main Ferry Building loading zones to maintain flexibility for farmers’ market load-in/load-out activities. Other loading zone aisles and the remaining bikeway buffer extending north to Broadway will be upgraded with raised concrete islands.

### Accessibility and crosswalk upgrades

The Central Embarcadero Safety Project represents one of the most substantial investments in accessibility along the waterfront in decades. Approximately 50 new curb ramps and revised pedestrian refuge islands will be built across 10 existing crosswalks, as well as for accessing passenger loading zones across the separated bikeway.

New concrete islands for the protected bikeway will also improve pedestrian protection and comfort at the Broadway, Pacific, Washington, and Mission Street crossings.

### Electronic signage, wayfinding

The project will install a new electronic Variable Message Sign (VMS) to improve the dissemination of traffic and event-related information to people travelling along the corridor. The sign, which will be programmed and managed by the SFMTA with input from Port staff, will be located between the Washington and Broadway intersections within the northbound center median. Example messages could include warnings, suggested detours around cruise terminal-related congestion or future construction projects, traffic safety messaging, wayfinding to special events, and potentially real-time parking lot availability pending further coordination with private and city-operated garages.

### Construction, utilities, and paving

The Central Embarcadero Safety Project is not expected to include major relocation, addition, or replacement of underground utilities, except for several new sewer catch basins to be installed adjacent to the bikeway extension for drainage purposes. Much of the northbound Embarcadero roadway between Brannan and Folsom Street will be repaved as part of the project, with additional spot repaving to occur where new curb ramps and medians are being built. A more detailed construction phasing and staging plan will be prepared closer to final design and in advance of the start of construction.

## **OUTREACH & ENGAGEMENT**

SFMTA and Port staff have been working for years to build consensus around a vision for the water side of The Embarcadero, one that maximizes access to the San Francisco waterfront for all users while minimizing conflicts. This work led to successful One Bay Area and Safe Routes to BART grant applications, which demonstrated strong community support and led to the funding of the Central Embarcadero Safety Project.

Since initiating the design phase of the Central Embarcadero Safety Project in 2022, project staff have attended over thirteen meetings with stakeholder groups. Feedback from these groups has resulted in substantive changes to the project's design and broad consensus for the core project elements, including the upgrade of the quick-build bikeway between Washington and Mission Streets and the extension of the two-way separated bikeway from Folsom to Brannan Streets.

Key stakeholders engaged during this process include, the Port's Northern Advisory Committee (NAC), Hudson Properties, Foodwise, Barbary Coast Neighborhood

Association, South Beach/Rincon Hill Neighborhood Association, Market Street Railway, SF Giants, and businesses fronting the bikeway extensions, including Waterbar/Epic Steak, Hi-Dive, Red's Java House, Reimagined Parking, GAP Inc., and One Hills Plaza.

Throughout detail design and construction phases, SFMTA and Port of San Francisco staff will continue to create opportunities for stakeholders along the waterfront to participate in the development of the project. Specifically, staff will continue to meet with waterfront tenants to discuss design details affecting access to their businesses, engage with the NAC, and provide thorough and proactive notification for any construction activities impacting businesses or users of The Embarcadero.

## **SCHEDULE**

The following milestone dates are estimated and subject to change:

- 65% design – June 2025
- 95% design – November 2025
- 100% design – February 2026
- Advertise – Spring 2026
- Start of Construction – Fall 2026
- Finish Construction – Spring 2028

## **FUNDING**

The project's construction budget is estimated at between \$8 and \$12 million, depending on final design. After securing \$8.3 million in grants (including \$6.3 million from the One Bay Area Grant, or OBAG program administered by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, and \$1 million from BART's Safe Routes to BART program) and with supplemental local bond revenues (Proposition B) available, the project is considered fully funded.

## **NEXT STEPS & APPROVALS**

The Central Embarcadero Safety Project team will proceed with the following:

- Design – Finalize the 65% design package and move toward final engineering drawings by early next year.
- Tree Removal Notice/Hearing – The project proposes to post notices for all proposed tree removals in the public right-of-way. If anyone files an appeal within 30 days, the city shall hold a hearing to consider public testimony and issue a written decision regarding any objections. The SFMTA plans to conduct this process after the 65% design milestone later this summer.
- NEPA Environmental Clearance – Since the project's OBAG grant award includes federal funding, the project must receive approval under the National Environmental Protection Act (NEPA) environmental review process. This analysis is underway with support from Port staff, and the expected environmental determination is a Categorical Exclusion, with no anticipated impacts or mitigation measures required.

- CEQA – On May 20, 2025, the Planning Department determined that the Central Embarcadero Safety Project (Case Number 2019-003785ENV003785ENV, as amended Number 2025-003785ENV) is statutorily exempt from CEQA pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21080.25.
- Bay Conservation and Development Commission (BCDC) – The Port submitted Central Embarcadero Safety Project plans to BCDC on April 4, 2025 to review for compliance with BCDC Permit 1990.008.14. BCDC conditionally approved plans on May 19, 2025. Submission of further information on the project’s design and informational program will be provided later in the design phase to meet all permit conditions.
- Port Commission Approval – Upon completion of outstanding reviews and design decisions, the SFMTA will seek Port Commission approval of the Central Embarcadero Safety Project.

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Attachments: Attachment 1 – Proposed Central Embarcadero Plan