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IMPLEMENTATION

Achieving the vision of the Better Streets Plan will rely on the ability to effectively fund, build and maintain improvements, and to sustain improvements over time.



Implementation

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To implement the vision of the Better Streets Plan, the City must consider how to make these improvements happen, and how to sustain improvements over time. Identifying desired street design concepts is merely the first step to making them real; the City must also identify strategies for on-going funding, efficient and effective maintenance practices, and pedestrian enforcement and education campaigns.

This chapter describes preliminary ideas about how to implement Better Streets improvements. Some additional next steps are described in Section 1.3: Moving Forward. Other proposed next steps are called out in Chapter 3: Goals and Policies.

Additionally, the Better Streets team engaged the Controller's Office to evaluate current street design practices and offer recommendations to make the system more comprehensive and efficient. Their final report recommends ways for the City to improve its street design process to help implement the Better Streets Plan, and is available at www.sfbetterstreets.org.



Planting the medians on Guerrero Street
Courtesy of San Jose/Guerrero Coalition

Consistent with the Controller's Office recommendations, the City has begun to implement the following changes:

- An inter-agency "Street Design Review Team" will be established to provide policy-level review of major projects, whether initiated by public or private sponsors, to determine the degree to which each project meets the City's objectives for the design and use of streets as spelled out in this plan and other documents.
- An inter-agency "Streetscape Capital Group" will be established to conduct advance planning for capital street improvements, building on existing City resources and data, to maximize funding opportunities and to coordinate improvements and expenditures planned by agencies.

The City will test this new approach by selecting certain pilot projects to measure success, and to make further adjustments as necessary. The Controller's Office report contains many other recommendations, such as providing a design checklist for project managers within agencies and improving customer service to facilitate and encourage community-led projects. The City will review and implement these recommendations as appropriate.

See the Controller's Office report:

*"Better Streets Plan:
Recommendations for Improved
Streetscape Project Planning, Design,
Review, and Approval,"*

available at www.sfbetterstreets.org

7.1 IDENTIFYING PRIORITIES

To help implement the Better Streets Plan, the City is working to identify priority criteria for pedestrian and streetscape improvements. These criteria would be used to prioritize projects for capital funding, including transportation sales tax dollars, external grants, and other funding sources. Priority criteria for street improvements may include the following pedestrian-oriented criteria:

- **Areas with especially high collision/crash rates:** Pedestrian safety is a prime objective of the Better Streets Plan. Areas with high incidences of pedestrian safety issues should be prioritized for improvement.
- **Transit Hubs:** San Francisco is a "Transit-First" city, with large volumes of commuters, visitors and residents traveling around the city on public transit. Pedestrian volumes are concentrated at major transit hubs (stations, bus stops, transfer points, transit centers, and regional transit facilities), and stress levels are often high as complex transit connections are often made. Improvements should be prioritized at and around key transit locations to enhance the experience and safety of walking to a transit trip, supporting the City's Transit-First Policy.
- **Schools, child care centers, senior centers, and senior housing:** The areas around these facilities are more likely to be populated by pedestrians of age-specific vulnerability. Application of Better Streets Plan recommendations in these areas will help ensure that the vulnerability and exposure of these populations is given more attention, and encourage walking as a safe mode of travel by these populations.
- **Neighborhoods with sub-standard infrastructure:** As neighborhoods develop at different rates and with differing land uses, certain neighborhoods are in greater need of high-quality infrastructure investment than others. Streetscape and pedestrian improvements should be prioritized in these areas to ensure more equitable distribution of resources, both geographically and economically.
- **Accessibility gaps:** Areas that have sub-standard infrastructure for accessibility features should be prioritized per the ADA transition plan for sidewalks and curb ramps.
- **Areas with high population densities and/or intense mixes of land use:** Areas of concentrated land use and population, such as downtown or commercial areas, generally produce higher numbers of pedestrian volumes, as more people are inclined to walk as a primary mode of travel; hence, they deserve greater concentrations of pedestrian facilities and amenities.
- **Areas with significant regional and local destinations:** Similarly, people are attracted to large centers of regional and local activity, such as tourist destinations, recreational facilities, large institutions, and cultural attractions. These institutions are often dependent on the pedestrian networks that link them to transit facilities and concentrated points of origin, and often people walking in these areas are unfamiliar with local travel patterns and the city's overall landscape.

- **Areas of ecological connection or concern:** Streets can serve as green corridors through the city, connecting larger parks and open spaces with a swath of green, and providing habitat for small wildlife. Particular areas may also be prone to flooding or other environmental issues. Streets that provide these connections or have significant environmental issues should be prioritized for improvements.
- **Streets that are important to the city pattern:** The San Francisco General Plan identifies streets that contribute to the city pattern—streets that are most useful in creating a distinctive urban design and recognizable image for San Francisco, clarifying routes for travelers, and contributing to the overall legibility of the city as a whole.
- **Opportunities to leverage other projects:** The City has limited funding to make streetscape and pedestrian improvements. This funding should be leveraged by piggy-backing on existing capital infrastructure projects, such as re-paving projects or utility upgrades to realize cost efficiencies and create more complete street improvements.

7.2 MAINTENANCE

When contemplating the pieces that must come together to make great streetscapes a reality, it is easy to overlook management and maintenance considerations. Yet those functions will determine San Francisco's ability to not only deliver streetscape improvements but also sustain them into the future.

Many of the design concepts described in this plan go beyond the standard streetscape treatment given to San Francisco streets today, requiring different or additional maintenance than current practice provides. This is not to say such features are difficult or impossible to maintain—indeed, the concepts shown in this document are used by cities throughout the country today. Rather, the City must consider its maintenance practices as a whole to incorporate new desired street designs, and explore innovative maintenance practices to address them.

The Better Streets team hired a consultant team led by Community Design and Architecture to make initial recommendations for how the City can improve its streetscape maintenance practices. Their final maintenance memo is available at www.sfbetterstreets.org. In addition, the Controller's Office through their work will be further developing streetscape maintenance recommendations, including the development of a life-cycle cost model for streetscape features. Their report on maintenance is forthcoming. Primary areas of investigation include:

- identifying and developing alternative funding sources for street maintenance, such as community benefit districts, parking benefit districts, private 'adopt-a-street' sources, and the like;
- exploring and developing community stewardship models and programs;

- clarifying streetscape and sidewalk maintenance responsibilities between property owners and the City, and exploring programs that enable the City to take on maintenance of these features to take advantage of economies of scale;
- considering life-cycle costs of streetscape materials and designs, and accounting for full costs and benefits of streetscape improvements. For example, stormwater management features may add routine maintenance in the short-term, but may require less infrastructure costs to the City in the long-term;
- exploring opportunities for long-term, dedicated maintenance funding associated with capital projects; and
- minimizing deferred maintenance so as to spend more on routine maintenance than on rehabilitation or reconstruction. Experience has shown that it is usually most cost-effective to allocate funding to routine maintenance; this extends the life of infrastructure while helping to delay or prevent the need for more costly rehabilitation or reconstruction.

7.3 FUNDING

To realize the street improvements proposed by the Better Streets Plan in a systematic manner across the city, the City must commit to a significant investment in street improvement projects. The City should aggressively pursue federal and state grant opportunities for Better Streets projects. New funding sources, such as public/private partnerships, developer requirements, bond measures, and others should be considered.

The City should also look for opportunities to combine and create synergies among capital street improvement projects, such as by matching curb ramp funds with curb extension projects, merging traffic calming, greening, and stormwater projects, or prioritizing streetscape improvements when major capital work (e.g. sewer upgrade, repaving) will take place.

See the Controller's Office report at www.sfbetterstreets.org for additional streetscape funding recommendations.

7.4 EDUCATION AND ENFORCEMENT

Education and awareness campaigns regarding pedestrian safety and activity are essential to successfully implementing Better Streets Plan ideas. Pedestrian education and enforcement efforts should work in tandem to promote safe use of streets and encourage walking – they are more effective when combined. For example, a campaign may institute a progressive ticketing procedure for enforcement: 1) first educate (such as by holding an awareness day), 2) warn, then 3) ticket.

Education and enforcement policies and campaigns should:

- focus on conditions which affect high-risk populations, including seniors, children, and people with disabilities;
- focus on streets and routes which carry heavy and speeding traffic, particularly those streets in low-income residential areas;
- focus on schools by developing a comprehensive Safe Routes to School Program. Safe Routes to School is a national and international movement to create safe, convenient, and fun opportunities for children to bicycle and walk to school. It helps improve health, reduce traffic congestion, improve air quality, and enhance neighborhood safety for children and their communities;
- continue to build the capacity of neighborhood and community groups to advocate for pedestrian improvements in their neighborhoods and citywide through mini-grants and technical assistance;
- use media campaigns as an adjunct to community-based awareness campaigns, rather than as stand-alone tools. Media campaigns can help change and reinforce community norms and values, in the context of on-going education and policy interventions that have visible community support;

- secure long-term funding streams for educational and encouragement efforts in order to conduct long-range efforts that are consistent and persistent; and
- involve community groups, activists, residents and public agencies. Long-term involvement by these groups is necessary for priorities to be set, plans implemented, interventions reviewed, and problems resolved.

General strategies

The City should create a shared database that can be accessed by all departments. This database should include traffic statistics and collisions, walking exposure numbers (in order to calculate rates), and other information. Currently, multiple departments use their own statistics and interpret them differently. A shared database would promote consistent interpretation of pedestrian safety data. This data would help the City to identify the most appropriate education and enforcement strategies given limited resources.

The City should promote on-going, consistent campaigns such as media outreach, pedestrian decoy stings, and the like. Currently, pedestrian education and enforcement efforts are done piecemeal, primarily through grant funding. Few campaigns are conducted on a regular basis. There is a need for stable funding sources such that campaigns can continue and create on-going efforts with greater impact.

City departments should collaborate with community-based organizations involved in pedestrian safety, including sharing of information and resources.

Education campaigns

Education campaigns should be multi-pronged, sustained over long period of time, and relevant and appropriate to San Francisco. Public awareness campaigns should be based on analyses of traffic collision data. This can help the City concentrate efforts on a certain risk group or high-impact corridor. Campaigns may use media materials such as posters on transit vehicles and transit shelters, radio, television, and internet advertising, newsletters, and neighborhood association communications. Positive results should be publicized to the media.

Some creative pedestrian safety education campaigns may include:

- marking chalk outlines at the location of pedestrian collisions;
- providing incentives for good driver or pedestrian behavior, or for people to shift to walking as a mode of transportation; and
- instituting a “Don’t Block the Box” campaign (combined with enforcement) to keep drivers out of crosswalks and intersections at red lights.

Pedestrian education campaigns should also involve strategies to promote walking. These might include:

- media campaigns to promote walking;
- rewarding behaviors with incentives;
- institutionalizing the Safe Routes to School program;
- creating accessible walking maps and routes; and
- promoting organized activities such as the Walking Challenge, Walk to School Day, Sunday Streets, and the like.

Enforcement Strategies

Effective enforcement of applicable regulations is crucial to promote pedestrian safety and sidewalk accessibility. The term ‘enforcement’ includes enforcement of traffic and pedestrian safety laws (found in the California Vehicle Code and San Francisco Transportation Code), with a focus on speeding, pedestrian right-of-way violations, and sidewalk parking, as well as Planning Code and Public Works Code violations such as sidewalk obstructions, required front yard landscaping, and others.

The goal of pedestrian enforcement should be to create a safe, comfortable space for pedestrians that encourages walking. Enforcement should be based on data analyses, to concentrate enforcement efforts where they are most needed, for particular at-risk populations, and at specific unsafe behaviors.

Enforcement efforts should include training of law enforcement officials (including law enforcement and judicial courts, crossing guards, and parking enforcement officers) on the rights and responsibilities of pedestrians and drivers. These entities should collaborate to ensure prosecution of failure to yield violations and reduce plea bargaining and downgrading of such offenses that has frequently occurred in the past.

Some enforcement strategies include:

- create a traffic complaint hotline, perhaps through 311;
- create a dedicated section of the Police Department for traffic enforcement only. Currently, enforcement staff are pulled between staffing special events, escorting dignitaries, and traffic enforcement;
- create and enforce double-fine zones to protect vulnerable groups, for example at schools;
- institute consistent, on-going pedestrian safety operations, such as the use of “decoys” or “stings.” These campaigns place a police officer in civilian clothes to cross in crosswalks where drivers typically ignore pedestrian laws, and cite drivers that violate the law;
- investigate possible community enforcement techniques such as neighborhood speed watch, pace car, and the like; and
- use technology to supplement staff enforcement (for example red light-running cameras or cameras mounted on street cleaning equipment).

