



PRESIDENT

Erica Kwiatkowski (act)

VICE PRESIDENT

Eric Kwiatkowski

SECRETARY

Open

TREASURER

Ian Maddison

March 1, 2015

San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency

PAST PRESIDENT

Tina Moylan

San Francisco Department of Public works

DIRECTORS

Greg Carr

Tracy Jaquier

Steve Kendrick

Rahul Narang

Laurie Petipas

Carol Ann Rogers

Eric Schleelein

San Francisco Planning Commission

Re: Polk Street Improvements.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

COMMITTEE

CHAIRS

Design, Zoning, and Land Use

Richard Cardello

History

Al Greening

Communications & Marketing

Mike Moylan

Safety/NERT/AWARE

Tina Moylan

Social

Tina Moylan

Families with Children

Open

Sterling Park

Phoebe Douglass

Membership

Open

CSFN

Sarah Taber

Traffic and Transportation

Steve Taber

Neighborhood Improvement

Gregory Polchow

Merchant Liaison

Par Hanji

Russian Hill Neighbors, a long-established neighborhood association representing of residents and businesses on Russian Hill, has been a participant in the Polk Street improvement project undertaken by your agencies during the past two years. We appreciate the opportunity to be involved and to participate in making Polk Street better serve our neighborhood and are grateful that many of our suggestions have been integrated into the plan.

As the project moves toward the necessary public hearings, we felt that it would be best to summarize our principal concerns and how they have been addressed by what we believe is the current state of planning of the project.

1. Polk Street should be primarily a neighborhood-shopping street, not a thoroughfare. Polk Street serves the Western slope of Russian Hill as its primary neighborhood-shopping street. As such, it should be used primarily as a pedestrian-oriented street. Rapid speeds, for either transit or automobiles, should be discouraged and through traffic should be focused on Van Ness Avenue a block away. Thereby, the street becomes safer for bicyclists and pedestrians.
2. Retaining existing street parking is essential for neighborhood businesses. While we are supportive of other modes, we recognize that the automobile will be an essential element of our transportation system in the foreseeable future and parking is needed.
3. Traffic calming and pedestrian safety measures are our highest priority. These include bulb-outs and bus bulbs, distinctive pavement at intersections, narrowed traffic lanes and stop signs instead of stop lights at intersections. Even street parking, which visually narrows the street, has the effect of calming traffic.

ADVISORS

Lucretia Rauh, Chair

Michele Borges

Tim Covington

Helen Doyle

Judy Junghans

Jovanne Reilly



On this basis, we support the following measures that we understand are in the overall planning for our part of Polk Street (North of Pacific):

1. Lane Configuration. This involves retention of most existing parking, while creating an exclusive bike lane in the South-bound direction between the North-bound traffic lane and the parking. Northbound, there would be a shared lane, used by both cars and bikes.
2. Bus and Pedestrian bulbs. The current plan shows pedestrian bulbs and bus bulb at Green and Polk. In addition, we have suggested a bus bulb in the North-bound direction at Vallejo and Polk. We understand that SFMTA may be considering discontinuing the bus stop at Green and Polk. Whether or not this happens, we urge that the bus bulb be retained because this sidewalk is so constricted that it is needed for pedestrian circulation.
3. Crosswalk Paving. It is proposed that crosswalks be paved in distinctive materials. We support this idea as it promotes pedestrian safety and adds a distinctive character to the commercial district.
4. Other streetscape improvements. It is proposed that, as part of the re-paving project, other distinctive features be added, such as seating, planters, and special lighting features where the alley intersects with Polk Street. We generally support such efforts, although would need to consider whether it is appropriate to call attention to an alley on which there are no commercial establishments. These are ideas that we would like to continue discussions on.
5. Tow-away lane. At one point, there was a proposal for a tow-away lane on the East side of Polk Street that would operate as a bike lane between 7 and 9 a.m. We opposed this because it would provide virtually no benefit to bicyclists, while disrupting business deliveries and resident parking and precluding pedestrian and bus bulbs on that side of the street. We understand that this concept is no longer being considered for our part of Polk Street.

We will continue to participate fully in the planning process as it moves forward. Please feel free to contact us for additional feedback or support of these efforts.

Very Truly Yours,

Erica Kwiatkowski, President

Stephen Taber, Transportation Chair