
Mayor's Disability Council



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Gary McCoy
San Francisco Department of Recreation and Parks

Dear Mr. McCoy,

We thank you for your presentation on January 19, 2018 to the Mayor's Disability Council regarding the proposed extension of the Saturday closures of John F. Kennedy (JFK) Blvd in Golden Gate Park. It is our understanding that the current arrangement has JFK closed between the Tea Garden and Transverse Drive on Saturdays from May to October and the proposed extension would increase Saturday closures to a year round basis, as well as closures on Sundays.

We have concerns about the impact these proposed changes would have on members of the public with disabilities. Some of those concerns are as follows:

1. Parking

Concerns:

- **The elimination of 284 free parking spaces.**
 - This includes a number of wheelchair accessible spaces.
 - These are the spaces closest to the main attractions in the park, specifically the DeYoung Museum and the California Academy of Sciences.
- **The proposed accessible parking spaces outside of the closure will not be sufficient to eliminate impact.**
 - Many individuals with disabilities do not have the allowed placards or ride with other family members and cannot take advantage of those specific spots.
- **The paid parking beneath the concourse is not a viable alternate option.**
 - Many people are unwilling to pay at \$6/hour, especially people with disabilities or seniors who are on a fixed income. This is evidenced by the amount of available parking in that garage even during the peak periods or park use.

Proposed Solution:

Allow those with disabled placards to park cost free in the parking lot. While this would not address all of the issues, it would free up more on Street accessible parking.

2. Shuttle

Concern:

- **There are problems with the Recreation and Parks shuttle that loops around the park.**
 - The shuttles are infrequent.
 - The stops and distance between them are too long.
 - The stops do not provide seating or shelter during inclement weather.

Proposed Solutions:

It is our understanding that the Recreation and Parks Department is looking into ways to address the wait times for the shuttle and establish additional shuttle stops. The Council requests specific information about these proposed remedies.

- If additional shuttle stops are proposed, there will need to be signage and wayfinding to alert the public of this availability. The signage should not be limited to the website since it is not always used by seniors and other members of the disability community to access this information. We recommend maps at the entrance of the closure along with maps at the designated shuttle stops. Furthermore, tactile maps should be provided for members of the blind community who may wish to independently access the shuttle stops.
- Shuttle stops should be sheltered and have seating available for people with disabilities. The proposed extension will involve the winter months and standing or sitting in a wheelchair in the rain waiting for a shuttle is not only unpleasant but presents health hazards for our community.

3. Paratransit

Concerns:

- **Paratransit vehicles would not be allowed in the closed areas.**
 - Many San Franciscans with disabilities rely on paratransit to get them from place to place.
 - Paratransit provides door-to-door service for those who utilize it and not allowing Paratransit vehicles access would make it more difficult for people with disabilities to get to their destinations.
- **The use of shuttle stops would not be a reasonable alternative.**
 - Having to unload and reload at a shuttle stop would be cumbersome, lengthen the trip, and interfere with Paratransit's promised door-to-door service.

Proposed Solution:

The amount of paratransit vehicles utilizing the closed off area would be minimal, and should be allowed use of the closed area to drop off in front of the museum and the Academy. Similarly, any private vehicle with a disabled placard should be allowed to drop off in front of those facilities.

4. Pedestrian Safety

Concerns:

- **The proposed extension will require people to walk farther from the limited parking within Golden Gate Park or the surrounding neighborhoods.**
 - Many with disabilities have difficulty navigating the streets at all times.

- **Seniors, or Pedestrians with visual or mobility disabilities are more at risk pedestrian bicycle collision.**
 - The closure will have a greatly increased number of cyclists of all ages and abilities which increases the danger for those pedestrians.
 - Those bicycles are not obligated to stop for pedestrians and as a general rule do not do so voluntarily in an uncontrolled environment.

Proposed Solution:

Designate crossing areas with crossing guards to protect the pedestrians, particularly for seniors and people with disabilities who need additional time crossing the street.

5. Weather

Concern:

- **The proposed changes will add the winter months to the closure which is problematic for several reasons.**
 - The lack of parking, covered shuttle stops, impact on paratransit, and pedestrian safety issues are all exacerbated when the weather is inclement.

Proposed Solution:

The Recreation and Parks Department indicated that inclement weather may result in less closure time, but the parameters for this are unclear. The Council would need to see a specific policy that the streets will not be closed in inclement weather and that there is a way to communicate this to the public.

6. Dissent

Concern:

- **There has been insufficient outreach to determine that there is little dissent for this proposal.**
 - There has been very little outreach to the members of the public with disabilities, or the surrounding neighborhoods, the very people most impacted by this proposal.

Proposed Solution:

- Conduct outreach to all San Franciscans, including members of the disability community and their families with the same vigor.
- Work with the facilities impacted by this closure, namely the Academy and Museum to identify proposed solutions.

We can never measure the effect this closure has to prevent visitors from even attempting to access these facilities on weekends or those who arrive and turn back for lack of parking or meaningful access. We do know that there are a number of employees at both the Museum and the Academy who have disabilities and simply cannot get to work on days the streets are closed because they either use paratransit or are being dropped off. The visitors with disabilities who attempt to do so, are being asked to do more than their share as citizens when they are in fact a protected class. They are being asked to take the brunt of the imposition when we are all supposed to be working to make things more accessible, not less so. As one member of the public pointed out, there is so little access for people with disabilities, and this road is now closed 75% of the time on weekends throughout the year (every Sunday and 6 months of Saturdays). We do not believe San Francisco is in a position to take away even more access.

In order for this Council to support this proposal, we need to know that the disability and senior communities that we represent are fully consulted and taken into consideration through a meaningful conversation between all parties involved and creative problem-solving.

Thank you for considering our concerns and exploring our proposed solutions. We look forward to having you come back to the Council with an updated plan before the closure goes in front of the Board of Supervisors.

Best regards,

Cc: Phil Ginsberg, Dept of Recreation and Parks
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Jodie Medeiros, Walk SF
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