

Hon. Rafael Mandelman
President, Board of Directors
San Francisco County Transportation
VIA E-MAIL

June 5, 2024

Subject: SUPPORT for Prop L allocation for Japantown Buchanan Mall Improvement

Dear President Mandelman:

I write in strong support for the \$100,000 Prop L allocation for the Japantown Buchanan Mall Improvement requested by the Department of Public Works. The Japantown Task Force has been working very closely with DPW, the Planning Department, the Japantown Community Benefit District, the Nihonmachi Parking Corporation, the merchants along Osaka Way/Buchanan Mall, and the family estate of Ruth Asawa on the Osaka Way/Buchanan Mall Upgrades Project. The goal of the renovation is to restore the two iconic Ruth Asawa origami fountains to working order after a decade of inoperation, improve surfaces and informal seating in compliance with ADA requirements, and beautify the space with culturally appropriate greenery and lighting. The proposed design reflects considerable public input. A public participation plan for this project was developed collaboratively as early as April 2023 and vigorously pursued. Here is a sample of the outreach activities.

- Outreach booth during the 2022, 2023, and 2024 Cherry Blossom Festivals
- Japantown community meetings (hybrid format)
 - May 31, 2023, 63 registrants
 - October 3, 2023, 45 registrants
 - February 6, 2024, 89 registrants
- Osaka Way/Buchanan Mall Merchant Focus Groups
 - September 12, 2023, 10 registrants (virtual)
 - September 13, 2023, 6 registrants (in-person)
- Happy Hour with Nakayoshi Young Professionals and Dear Community (in-person): November 2, 2023, 45 registrants

Outreach materials, including fliers and surveys were made available digitally and by hard copy in Chinese, English, Japanese, Spanish, Filipino, and distributed throughout Japantown. By collaborating with Japantown organizations and facilities serving seniors and low-income clients, the project team garnered feedback from 100+ written and online surveys on the proposed design.

The Prop L funding allocation is necessary to ensure that the community-driven design can be fully realized. I urge the full Board of Directors to approve the request.

Yours very truly,



Emily M. Murase, PhD
Executive Director

cc: D.T. Chang, SFCTA
R. Hiatt, SFCTA
G. Horikiri, Japantown Community Benefit District
R. Sakai, Nihonmachi Parking Corporation
H. Weverka, V. Tong, Family Estate of Ruth Asawa
T. Tieger, SF DPW
M. DeAlva, SF Planning
P. Ting, California State Assembly



SFCTA Clerk <clerk@sfcta.org>

June 11th, SFCTA Board meeting, Item 6: Appropriate \$601,000 in Prop L Funds, with conditions for the Fillmore-Geary Underpass Community Planning Study

1 message

Cyrus Hall <cyrusphall@gmail.com>
To: clerk@sfcta.org

Sun, Jun 9, 2024 at 6:49 PM

Clerk Saeyang, Commissioners,

I write in support of Item 6, the allocation of \$600k to the Fillmore-Geary Underpass Community Planning Study. This money would match \$2M from the Federal DoT Reconnecting Communities and Neighborhoods program, a limited but vital start to reconnecting communities driven apart by the racist urban renewal agendas of the post-war period.

Last year I worked on a campaign in support of the second-half of the installation of transit-only lanes along the length of Geary Boulevard. Over the course of that campaign, we learned more of the history of what we now call Japantown and the Fillmore, two regions of the city that used to be more connected and more integrated. World War II and Japanese internment opened a very tumultuous 30 years for the area, full of forced dislocations, the mass destruction of housing, and the creation of a six-lane intra-urban highway now known as Geary Boulevard.

The Fillmore-Geary Underpass is just one of many holes in connective in the middle of this community, but is one that offers the most immediate promise of a path forward. Since the city cannot conceive of ripping up Geary, we can at least bury this part of the street, and replace it with space that better serves the communities around it.

I urge you to vote yes on getting this project started. It will likely be many years before shovels hit the ground, but there is never a bad time to start to write a better history.

Thank you,
Cyrus Hall