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PROMOTING THE BICYCLE FOR EVERYDAY TRANSPORTATION

September 10, 2024

San Francisco County Transportation Authority
1455 Market Street, 22nd Floor
San Francisco, CA 94103

Dear Chair Mandelman and Commissioners,

Due to unforeseen circumstances, we were unable to attend the SFCTA Board meeting this morning. Here are our comments for items 10, 11 & 12 on the agenda.

ITEM 10: Quick-Build Program Update

We want to first thank SFMTA staff for their diligent work to make significant progress on the Quick-Build projects. In particular, it is of the highest importance that so many of these projects are on the High Injury Network. The Quick-Build toolkit has many important components that can significantly improve safety on our streets for people who walk, bike, and take public transportation.

As you're aware, there are two citywide initiatives in development now, both of which require a strong Quick-Build program for their success.

First, the next phase of Vision Zero, which we'll hear about shortly, can build on the learnings and challenges of the past ten years to make streets safer for everyone. While San Francisco did not reach zero traffic deaths within the strategy's first ten years, this is not a sign that the city needs to stop trying — rather, we must do more. We must commit to implementing rapid adjustments where they are most needed, at the locations and corridors with high rates of crashes, as well as where there is high risk.

A vital linchpin of our strategy for safe streets is the Biking and Rolling Plan, currently under development by the SFMTA. A recent survey by the SFMTA shows that 29% of residents, over 230,000 people, bike or roll at least once per week; 80% of residents report being interested in biking and rolling in SF. That's well over half a million people. If someone chooses not to bike or roll despite wanting to, the most likely reason is that they don't feel safe from cars. But it doesn't have to be that way. For actual and perceived safety, we need a citywide, interconnected network of dedicated mobility corridors.

For both these initiatives, we need a strong, well-funded Quick-Build program. We also need our elected leaders to show strong support and leadership for these initiatives, working with SFMTA staff to help communicate to constituents how they'll bring benefits to everyone in the city. We ask each of you to recommit to supporting rapid implementation and full funding of the city's Quick-Build program.

ITEM 11: What's next for VZ

Thanks again to SFMTA staff for this presentation. We're glad to see the themes that are emerging for the coming draft policy. I first want to point out that two of the four themes presented speak directly to the need for a visionary Biking and Rolling Plan. Passing and implementing such a plan that creates more interconnected, dedicated space for people biking and rolling would certainly improve transportation choices. And it would do so by protecting vulnerable road users who opt for those modes.

I'm also glad to see accountability highlighted. There are two important accountability aspects that I'd like to draw attention to. The first is urgency of executing the Biking and Rolling Plan once approved, including an ambitious but realistic timeline to put in place a strategic skeleton of complete east-west and north-south dedicated corridors within three years of passage, which can then be filled in in the coming years.

The second is better interdepartmental coordination and collaboration. Certainly SFMTA has a lead role to play, but other agencies must be held responsible for their important contributions. Our elected leaders must work with SFMTA staff, other agency heads, and the Mayor's office to draft commitments from each agency and create oversight and accountability processes.

And finally, we support rapidly implementing common-sense Vision Zero standards for the entire city that are already in process: daylighting, focusing first on the High Injury Network and then on schools; no turn on red across the entire city; and continuing to make speed reductions to 20 MPH as permitted by AB43. Thank you.

ITEM 12: Injury and Fatality Trends

Thank you to SFDPH staff for preparing this important analysis.

While the data shows important progress, particularly regarding incidents involving people who bike, it's not yet time to celebrate. This year to date is the deadliest year for pedestrian fatalities in the last five years. And this year, numbers of people who have been killed while biking are moving in the wrong direction. The city has distributed its safety improvements for people who use bikes, scooters, and other small devices very unevenly, and the impact of that uneven distribution can be seen in data trends.

This year has already seen two fatal crashes involving people biking. Both of these occurred in the southeast. First, a Bayview senior and longtime SF Bicycle Coalition member Steve Bassett was doored on his bike in late May, on a street with no separated infrastructure to ride on. He passed away in early June. And last month, a man whose identity hasn't been released was hit while biking, by a truck making a turn across an insufficient bike lane on Bayshore Blvd.

The deaths of these two men are deeply tragic. And I also think about how the lives of the people operating those vehicles are also changed forever. How could they not be? All of the people involved in these tragedies deserve better.

As more people are choosing to bike and, increasingly, use scooters in every neighborhood of the city, we must do more to provide safe, connected corridors for them to get where they need to go. This work must be done collaboratively, with input from local communities. As the Biking and Rolling Plan gets us closer to that goal, our elected leaders have an important role to play in their local districts, working proactively with the SFMTA, other agencies, and even safe-street advocates to communicate about the benefits of transformative infrastructure for the entire city.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris White". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Chris" and the last name "White" clearly distinguishable.

Christopher White
Executive Director