



# Memorandum

**Date:** 07.13.15 **RE:** Plans and Programs Committee  
June 21, 2015

**To:** Plans and Programs Committee: Commissioners Tang (Chair), Christensen (Vice Chair), Breed, Farrell, Yee and Weiner (Ex Officio)

**From:** David Uniman – Deputy Director for Planning *DUE*

**Through:** Tilly Chang – Executive Director *TC*

**Subject:** **ACTION** – Recommend Adoption of the Chinatown Neighborhood Transportation Plan Final Report

## Summary

The Chinatown Neighborhood Transportation Plan (NTP) is a community-based transportation planning study led by the Transportation Authority, in partnership with community organizations in the Chinatown neighborhood. The NTP was funded by Prop K sales tax and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Community-Based Transportation Planning program. The NTP focuses on strategies to improve pedestrian safety on two high pedestrian-injury corridors in Chinatown: Broadway Street between Van Ness and Columbus Avenues, and Kearny Street between Bush and Jackson Streets. On Broadway Street, the study finds that safety improvements are planned for each intersection between Van Ness Avenue and Columbus Street, and will be delivered within the next two years. The study encourages consideration of additional changes to signal timing to further enhance pedestrian safety. On Kearny Street, the study recommends immediate implementation of near-term pedestrian safety treatments at the intersection of Clay and Kearny Streets, where an elderly pedestrian was killed in June. It also recommends that the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) identify and implement a plan for improving safety all along the corridor, which is in the top 10 percent of pedestrian high injury corridors in the city. For Kearny Street, the study recommends that SFMTA consider a series of pedestrian scrambles, a road diet, or systematic signal timing and striping treatments to eliminate pedestrian injuries and fatalities while meeting other objectives for the street including implementation of Muni Forward and the SFMTA Bicycle Strategy. Commissioner Christensen requested that we accelerate adoption of this report to address the need for urgency in implementing safety treatments on Kearny Street. We are working with her office and SFMTA to explore the possibility of Neighborhood Transportation Improvement Program funding to advance implementation of some of the study's recommendations. SFMTA staff will attend the Plans and Programs Committee meeting to discuss how existing and planned SFMTA efforts will build upon the report's recommendations.

## BACKGROUND

The Chinatown Neighborhood Transportation Plan (NTP) is a community-based transportation planning study led by the Transportation Authority, in partnership with community organizations in the Chinatown neighborhood. The NTP was funded by the Proposition K half-cent sales tax for transportation, and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's Community-Based Transportation Planning program, which directs planning funds to low-income and minority communities to help them

build consensus on transportation issues and identify solutions to address high-priority needs. The NTP focuses on strategies to improve pedestrian safety on two high pedestrian-injury corridors in Chinatown: Broadway Street between Van Ness and Columbus Avenues, and Kearny Street between Bush and Jackson Streets.

## **DISCUSSION**

Community outreach conducted during the study revealed two top community objectives for improving transportation conditions in Chinatown. These included reducing traffic volumes and improving pedestrian safety on Broadway Street, and improving pedestrian safety on Kearny Street. Both Broadway and Kearny Streets are high injury corridors (HICs) designated through the city's Vision Zero initiative, which seeks to eliminate traffic fatalities in San Francisco by 2024. High injury corridors are street segments with very high concentrations of traffic related injuries and fatalities. High injury corridors make up just 12 percent of San Francisco street miles but encompass more than 70 percent of severe and fatal traffic collisions.

On Broadway Street, the study evaluates several concepts for reducing traffic volumes and improving pedestrian safety between Van Ness and Columbus Avenues and provides implementation recommendations. On Kearny Street, the study examines existing conditions between Bush and Jackson Streets and recommends spot intersection pedestrian safety improvements as well as several concepts for improving safety throughout the corridor.

### **Broadway Street**

**Existing Conditions:** Since the construction of the Robert C. Levy (Broadway) Tunnel in 1952, Broadway Street has served as a key conduit for commuter traffic from both inside San Francisco and regionally. Broadway Street east of the tunnel is also one of Chinatown's main streets, serving several schools and senior centers like the Jean Parker Elementary School and Chinatown Community Development Center's Bayside Elderly Housing.

Over the years, the community has worked to transform Broadway Street from a high-traffic arterial roadway to a more pedestrian-friendly environment that reflects the community character and promotes safety for Chinatown's large and vulnerable elderly population. Community outreach revealed that the community remains concerned about high traffic volumes on Broadway Street, and particularly concerned about the potential impacts of high traffic volumes on pedestrian safety. To address these concerns, the NTP investigated existing conditions on Broadway Street, focusing on traffic patterns and pedestrian safety; developed several concepts for meeting community goals for reduced traffic volumes on Broadway Street; and evaluated them according to an evaluation framework that included both community goals and other technical objectives developed by the study team.

**Recommendations:** The review found that each high pedestrian-injury intersection on Broadway Street between Van Ness and Columbus Avenues is already slated to receive pedestrian safety treatments within the next two years, such as high visibility crosswalks (Columbus Avenue, Stockton Street, Polk Street), bulbouts (Columbus Avenue, Stockton Street, Powell Street, and Polk Street), a protected southbound left turn lane at Broadway and Van Ness Avenue, among others. The review recommends that the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) consider implementation of additional signal timing changes such as leading pedestrian intervals along the corridor to augment benefits for pedestrian safety. It further recommends that Broadway Street be closely monitored to ensure that the planned safety treatments deliver expected reductions in pedestrian injuries and fatalities.

### **Kearny Street**

**Existing Conditions:** Kearny Street has the worst pedestrian safety record of any street in Chinatown. According to analysis prepared by the Department of Public Health, Kearny Street from Market to Pacific Streets is in the top ten percent of pedestrian high injury corridors citywide, ranked on the basis of severity-weighted injuries per mile. Top pedestrian safety issues on Kearny Street are high vehicle speeds, unsafe turning movements (particularly right turns), insufficient pedestrian crossing time, and unsafe pedestrian behavior. In addition to these issues, dual turn lanes at Bush and Pine streets and at the entry and exits to the Portsmouth Square garage may be reducing the visibility of pedestrians to turning vehicles.

The intersections of Kearny Street with Sacramento and Clay Streets stand out for their poor pedestrian safety records. The intersection of Kearny and Sacramento Streets has seen the most severe injuries, with one severe injury and one fatality from 2007 to 2012. Treatments to improve this intersection are already planned as part of the city's Vision Zero process. The intersection of Kearny and Clay Streets has seen the highest number of total injuries, including seven pedestrian injuries during the same period. Additionally, several community members mentioned the intersection of Kearny and Clay Streets as being of particular concern for pedestrian safety during community outreach.

**Recommendations:** To address these issues, the study recommends immediate implementation of pedestrian safety treatments at the intersection of Kearny and Clay Streets, to include:

- Leading pedestrian intervals (LPIs) on the east/west crossings (LPIs were already in place on the north and south crossings). Leading pedestrian intervals give crossing pedestrians a head start before vehicles begin to turn, and can reduce collisions involving pedestrians and turning vehicles.
- Advanced limit line at northbound Kearny Street. Advance limit lines encourage motorists to come to a full stop farther away from the marked crosswalk and can reduce the number of vehicles encroaching on the crosswalk.
- Extended red no-parking zones and a no left turn on red for eastbound Clay Street. Restricting turns on red will reduce conflicts between left-turning vehicles and crossing pedestrians.
- Improve pedestrian and vehicular circulation around the Portsmouth Square Garage in order to enhance pedestrian safety and reduce driver confusion regarding garage driveway operations.

Eliminating all severe injuries and deaths along Kearny Street, consistent with the city's Vision Zero policy, will require comprehensive corridor-wide improvements beyond the spot improvements at Clay and Sacramento Streets. To this end, SFMTA will be moving forward this summer with an analysis of all transportation modes with the goal of developing recommendations to improve conditions for all people using Kearny Street. The following three pedestrian safety improvement concepts are recommended for analysis during the next phase. These will need to be considered in conjunction with other corridor issues including slow Muni speeds and high concentrations of bicyclist injuries.

- **Pedestrian scrambles:** One concept would be to implement pedestrian scrambles at a series of intersections along the corridor, similar to how portions of Montgomery and Stockton Streets are designed today. Several community members requested pedestrian scrambles for the corridor during public outreach. Pedestrian scrambles involve creating an exclusive signal phase in which pedestrians can cross in all directions while vehicles wait. If pedestrians and vehicles understand and obey the scramble phase, the scramble can eliminate conflicts between pedestrians and turning vehicles. Scrambles can sometimes increase delay for transit and vehicles, but the amount of delay would need to be quantified with an operations analysis. Scrambles may require new signal hardware (e.g. signal poles and heads) and may trigger the need for curb ramp upgrades.

- **Road diet:** Another concept would be to remove a travel lane and repurpose the space for some other use, such as a protected bicycle lane or transit-only lane. This could improve pedestrian safety by reducing vehicle speeds due to lower vehicle throughput capacity and by reducing pedestrian exposure for pedestrians crossing the street. Depending on how the lane was repurposed, the road diet could provide a protected lane for bicyclists, improve transit performance, or enhance the pedestrian environment. Reduced capacity would likely increase delay to vehicles and transit, unless transit was provided with a protected lane or other transit priority features. The delay impacts would need to be quantified through an intersection operations analysis.
- **Systematic signal timing and striping treatments:** A final concept would be to systematically implement signal timing and striping treatments along the Kearny Street corridor including leading pedestrian intervals, retimed corridor signal progression to reduce traffic speeds, re-striped continental crosswalks, removal of dual turn lanes, and creation of temporary painted safety zones. This approach would require little to no new infrastructure and therefore could be implemented quickly at a low cost. By combining systematic implementation of leading pedestrian intervals with slowing signal progression, it would also help address two of the top contributors to pedestrian injuries on the corridor, namely conflicts between pedestrians and turning vehicles, and high vehicle speeds.

SFMTA will be analyzing these or other alternatives to determine which will best meet the agency's multiple objectives for the corridor including implementation of the Muni Forward initiative, Walkfirst, and the SFMTA Bicycle Strategy. Kearny Street is identified as a priority corridor under all three initiatives.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

1. Recommend adoption of the Chinatown Neighborhood Transportation Plan Final Report, as requested.
2. Recommend adoption of the Chinatown Neighborhood Transportation Plan Final Report, with modifications.
3. Defer action, pending additional information or further staff analysis.

## **CAC POSITION**

Adoption of this final report was accelerated at the request of Commissioner Christensen to address the need for urgency in implementing safety treatments on Kearny Street, particularly in light of a recent fatality at the intersection of Kearny and Clay Streets. This item has not yet been considered by the CAC but will be included on the CAC's September 2 agenda.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACTS**

None.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Recommend adoption of the Chinatown Neighborhood Transportation Plan Final Report.

Enclosure:

1. Draft Chinatown Neighborhood Transportation Plan Final Report