



Memorandum

Date: 06.08.15 **RE:** Plans and Programs Committee
June 16, 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 Potrero Hill Neighborhood Transportation Plan Final Report

Summary

The Potrero Hill Neighborhood Transportation Plan (NTP) is the result of a community-based planning effort in the southern Potrero Hill neighborhood of San Francisco, and was funded by a California Department of Transportation Environmental Justice Planning grant, a Metropolitan Transportation Commission Community Based Transportation Planning grant, and the Transportation Authority's Proposition K sales tax program. The technical team, led by the Transportation Authority, collaborated with community stakeholders to identify multimodal transportation priorities at the neighborhood scale, prioritizing near-term improvements to improve connectivity across the site and to the broader neighborhood, city, and region. The final recommendations focus on low-cost improvements that could be implemented before the site is redeveloped wholesale through the Rebuild Potrero project. Prioritized projects include pedestrian safety and transit stop enhancements, including transit bulbouts that would be built using non-infrastructure materials (i.e., construction that does not require regrading the street or moving sewer catchbasins). If successful, this innovative feature could be replicated throughout the city, bringing benefits to transit riders more quickly and cost effectively, particularly on streets that are not scheduled for near term repaving. The NTP includes complete funding plans for these enhancements, with allocations from all sources (including Lifeline Transportation Program funds from the Transportation Authority) anticipated by July 2015 and implementation anticipated by early 2016. The NTP also studied a potential shuttle route to improve access across the site and to connect residents with nearby amenities.

BACKGROUND

The Potrero Hill Neighborhood Transportation Plan (NTP) is the result of a community-based planning effort in the southern Potrero Hill neighborhood of San Francisco, and was funded by a California Department of Transportation Environmental Justice Planning grant, a Metropolitan Transportation Commission Community Based Transportation Planning grant, and the Transportation Authority's Proposition K sales tax program. The technical team, led by the Transportation Authority, collaborated with community stakeholders to identify multimodal transportation priorities at the neighborhood scale, prioritizing near-term improvements to improve connectivity across the site and to the broader neighborhood, city, and region. The final recommendations focus on low-cost improvements that could be implemented before the site is redeveloped wholesale through the Rebuild Potrero project.

DISCUSSION

Project Site and Existing Conditions: The plan study area is bordered by US 101 to the west, I-280 to the east, Cesar Chavez Street to the south, and 22nd Street/20th Street to the north (see Figure 1-1), wholly encompassing the Potrero Annex and Potrero Terrace public housing sites, with approximately 1,200 people living in 606 homes on the steep, south-facing slope of the hill. The sites were developed in the middle of the 20th Century, during a period in which accommodating cars was the highest transportation priority. A product of its time, the Potrero Annex and Terrace are characterized by wide roads and narrow sidewalks interrupted by curb cuts that provide access to ample off-street parking. While traffic volumes through the site are relatively low, street widths encourage cars to travel at high speeds, and intersection design prioritizes efficient vehicle movement rather than safe and comfortable pedestrian crossings. The circuitous internal street grid and the area's steep topography further reduce pedestrian accessibility.

The public housing sites are also isolated from the rest of San Francisco with relatively few and challenging connections to the surrounding neighborhoods. A number of these connections require crossing the I-280 and US 101 freeways, which form major barriers just east and west of the site. While there are multiple transit lines that stop along or within the housing site, the lines do not connect residents from one end of the site to the other, forcing residents to undertake a steep walk or an untimed transfer to access many locations outside of the site.

Finally, there are few transit amenities on the site. Narrow sidewalks do not have the space to allow for Muni shelters. Stops are demarcated by painted lines on either the street or a light pole. This lack of amenities makes using transit a less desirable option.

BRIDGE Housing is the lead developer for Rebuild Potrero and also leads community building efforts such as the Healthy Generations Project, the sites' walking club, community gardening program, and the walking school bus. Using their intimate knowledge and relationships with residents, BRIDGE served as the outreach consultant for the project. Appendix A of the final report includes a summary of outreach conducted as part of the NTP.

Rebuild Potrero Project: The Rebuild Potrero project will demolish and re-build the public housing sites in their entirety as a mixed-use, mixed-income neighborhood, replacing all of the public housing units and adding up to 1,000 moderate-income and market-rate units and building a new gridded street network. The effort is currently undergoing environmental review and seeking funding for implementation. The groundbreaking is expected by 2016, but the project is broken into multiple phases that will not be fully completed for at least 10 to 15 years.

Previous Planning Efforts: Previous planning efforts led by community partners have identified important and urgent transportation needs before Rebuild Potrero can be completed; Potrero Hill NTP aimed to identify and prioritize projects to address those needs while advancing design, cost estimation, and funding and implementation strategies. The NTP built on the following studies: Baseline Conditions Assessment of HOPE SF Redevelopment: Potrero Terrace and Annex (San Francisco Department of Public Health), Potrero Hope SF Master Plan EIR, and Potrero Hill Traffic Calming Project (San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency).

Prioritized Projects and Plan Recommendations: Due to the extensive planning processes preceding the current effort as well as the anticipated redevelopment of the Potrero Terrace and Annex housing sites through the Rebuild Potrero project, this NTP was focused on developing low-infrastructure transportation solutions (i.e., construction that does not require regrading the street or moving sewer catchbasins) that

could bring benefit to residents in the very near term. Three priority projects emerged:

1. Building on the success of the neighborhood's walking school bus program, the team partnered with residents to design pedestrian safety improvements at five intersections throughout the project site where the program currently operates. These improvements call for the use of materials that do not require infrastructure changes. Therefore, they are lower in cost and can be reused in other parts of the city once development begins for Rebuild Potrero. They also will allow space for transit amenities such as shelters, allowing the city to test the use of non-infrastructure materials for a concept such as a bus bulb.
2. Complementing the intersection design improvements, the team also proposed a lighting project behind the Potrero Hill Recreation Center to improve security for the walking school bus participants as well as other residents using this key link in the dark.
3. Finally, the project team developed a potential shuttle route to enhance access for residents across the site and to other goods and services.

The Potrero Hill NTP includes cost estimates and a funding and implementation strategy for each of the projects described above. The first two pedestrian safety projects should be fully funded by the time the study is adopted, and implementation could be as soon as the end of 2015. In February, the Transportation Authority recommended the pedestrian improvement and traffic calming project for \$375,854 of Lifeline Transportation Program funds for final design and construction, and MTC approved this programming last month. SFMTA anticipated filling the gap with an in-kind match of staff time and \$60,000 in other funds, which could include Prop K. At its September 2014 meeting, the Eastern Neighborhoods CAC voted to recommend the allocation of \$150,000 in developer impact fees to the lighting project, thereby fully funding it. The shuttle project will require further refinement and identification of funding sources, and implementation is likely at least one to two years away.

ALTERNATIVES

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

CAC POSITION

The CAC was briefed on this item at its May 27, 2015 meeting and unanimously adopted a motion of support for the staff recommendation.

FINANCIAL IMPACTS

None.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommend adoption of the Potrero Hill Neighborhood Transportation Plan Final Report.

Enclosure:

1. Draft Potrero Hill Neighborhood Transportation Plan Final Report