

5

Balancing Transportation Choices

**OBJECTIVE 5.1
IMPROVEMENTS TO PUBLIC TRANSIT THAT MAKE IT MORE ATTRACTIVE, CONVENIENT, AND RESPONSIVE TO INCREASING DEMAND.**

**OBJECTIVE 5.2
PARKING POLICIES FOR AREAS WELL SERVED BY PUBLIC TRANSIT THAT ENCOURAGE TRAVEL BY PUBLIC TRANSIT AND ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION AND REDUCE TRAFFIC CONGESTION.**

**OBJECTIVE 5.3
THE LEAST POSSIBLE NEGATIVE IMPACT FROM PARKING ON THE PHYSICAL CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.**

**OBJECTIVE 5.4
EXISTING PARKING RESOURCES THAT ARE MANAGED TO MAXIMIZE SERVICE AND ACCESSIBILITY TO ALL.**

**OBJECTIVE 5.5
A BICYCLE NETWORK THAT PROVIDES A SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO DRIVING FOR BOTH LOCAL AND CITYWIDE TRAVEL NEEDS.**

**OBJECTIVE 5.6
IMPROVED VEHICULAR CIRCULATION THROUGH THE AREA.**

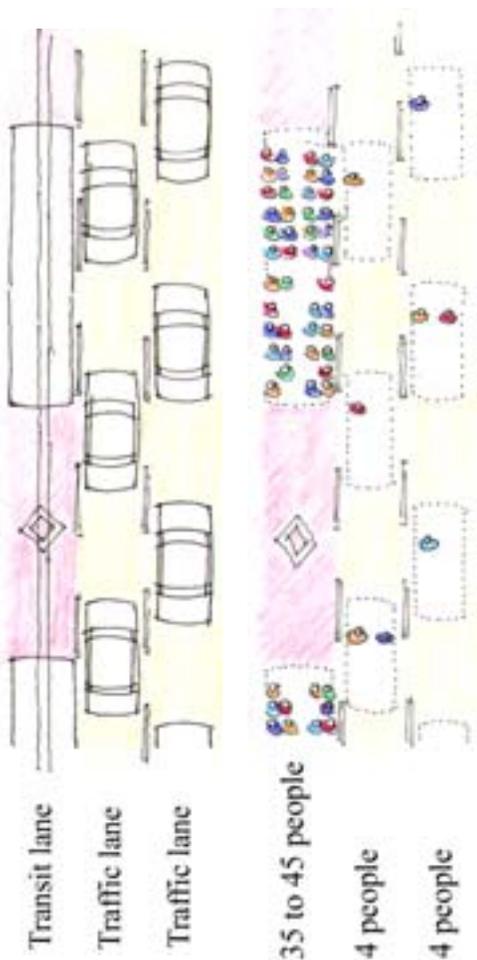
Historically, the Market and Octavia neighborhood has been an imminently walkable place with good access to public transit. Its dense fabric of streets and alleys, relatively gentle topography, and role as the gateway to downtown from neighborhoods to the west have made it an essential crossroads, supporting over time the development of strong residential districts interspersed by active commercial streets with good transit service.

Since the 1950's, these qualities have become increasingly fragile. With the proliferation of private cars in San Francisco and the region, the Market and Octavia neighborhood's role as a crossroads has led to the imposition of a major regional freeway and the channelizing of large flows of auto traffic on Fell, Oak, Gough and Franklin Streets. Because space in the area's dense physical fabric is limited, increasing auto ownership has meant more space dedicated to the movement and storage of automobiles.

- i. Making Public Transit Work
- ii. Managing Parking
- iii. Improving the Area's Bicycle Network
- iv. Improving Circulation



There is a limited amount of space on city streets. Ultimately, we have to find ways to move people more efficiently, or else everyone ends up stuck in traffic.



Given its own right-of-way, transit can move far more people within a limited space on the street.

This has resulted in less space for housing and more space devoted to parking—resulting in dead ground-floor spaces, overly-trafficked streets, and less room for safe sidewalks, bicycles and transit. Minimum parking requirements for new development, adapted from suburban jurisdictions and introduced in San Francisco in the 1960's, have forced parking here, where driving has the most negative impact, and other ways of getting around are attractive and viable.

Today, the Market and Octavia neighborhood is at a critical juncture. Over the last 40 years, this imbalance has created new and largely irremediable conflicts between cars and people, undermining our ability to provide housing and services efficiently, degrading the value of streets as the setting for public life, and crippling the potential of transit, bicycling, and walking to provide safe and convenient means of getting around. Ultimately, we can provide adequate, affordable housing and vital, healthy neighborhoods only as we restore a balance between the transportation choices available to people. How we allocate space on city streets and how much parking we provide become basic matters of geometry, not ideology: where travel demand is greatest, the allocation of street space must prioritize transit and other modes that move people more efficiently, even if it means reducing space for private autos. While autos will continue to have a place, keeping our streets running means giving priority to ways of getting around that make more efficient use of increasingly limited street space, and limiting the traffic-generating effects of parking where it is most harmful. At base, what this means is going back to a model of city building that strengthens neighborhoods like Market and Octavia, in keeping with its best traditions as an urban place.

To this end, this plan proposes policies to strengthen the area's accessibility by foot, bicycle, and transit, and to prioritize these modes as the long-term vision for how the area will grow. The plan discourages new parking facilities, recognizing that they generate traffic, consume space that could be devoted to housing, and have a negative effect overall on the neighborhood.

Principle:
 Prioritize the efficient movement of people and goods and minimize the negative effects of cars on neighborhood streets.

This plan aims to make transit, walking, and bicycling safe, convenient, and attractive alternatives to driving. In 1973, the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors adopted a "Transit-First" Policy, which prioritizes strong investment in public transit as the centerpiece of the city's transportation policy, along with street use and parking policies that discourage increases in auto traffic. In 1998, San Francisco residents voted to incorporate the "Transit-First" Policy into the city's Charter, mandating that all officers, boards, commissions, and departments implement the principles in conducting the city's affairs.



The "Transit-First" Policy envisions streets serving a variety of users safely and effectively.



More effective management of existing parking structures in the area will improve parking opportunities dramatically.

Responding to the "Transit-First" Policy means fundamentally changing the way we classify and plan for streets. This plan aims to make this change in the Market and Octavia neighborhood.¹ In keeping with the "Transit-First" Policy, this plan aims to improve the reliability, frequency, and overall dignity of transit, bicycle, and pedestrian service and amenities in the area while managing the parking supply to provide efficient and equitable access to a variety of users.

Principle:

Better management of existing resources is more effective in improving service than simply increasing capacity.

History has shown that adding capacity to the automobile system, such as parking lots and additional traffic lanes, does not solve the congestion problem. Rather, the additional capacity serves as an incentive for more people to drive, consuming the extra capacity almost immediately and increasing the magnitude of the problem. Fortunately, increasing capacity is just one way to increase the accessibility and availability of a particular transportation service. A lack of parking, for instance, does not automatically mean that the overall supply needs to be increased. Better management of existing resources can improve service dramatically. The easiest way to improve transit speed and reliability, for example, is to move existing transit vehicles faster by getting them out of traffic. A perceived lack of customer parking can be remedied by metering on-street spaces for short-term use. Management can effectively influence people's choice of travel mode, as the region has demonstrated with tolls on the Golden Gate and Bay Bridges that support regional transit service. Management can also be used to balance parking supply and demand, as the city has shown with short-term pricing at the 5th and Mission Garage and other city garages, which discourage all-day commuter parking and encourage short-term customer parking.

Pedestrian improvements are not discussed here. Element 4, Streets and Public Spaces, proposes specific improvements to the pedestrian environment on streets, including sidewalk widening and corner plazas, improved crosswalks, and better buffering from traffic. Element 4 addresses identified points of conflict between pedestrians and fast-moving traffic, especially on Market Street, commercial streets and streets that carry large volumes of regional traffic. It also proposes aggressive traffic calming to residential streets and alleys to provide spaces dedicated to pedestrian use and activity.

¹ Appendix 5 describes how a system of street classifications that prioritizes people movement could be applied to the Market and Octavia area.

"IT'S THE LAW"

Approved by the voters in 1998 as part of the City's Charter, the city's Transit-First Policy states:

SEC. 16.102. TRANSIT-FIRST POLICY.

The following principles shall constitute the City and County's transit-first policy and shall be incorporated into the General Plan of the City and County. All officers, boards, commissions, and departments shall implement these principles in conducting the City and County's affairs:

1. To ensure quality of life and economic health in San Francisco, the primary objective of the transportation system must be the safe and efficient movement of people and goods.
2. Public transit, including taxis and vanpools, is an economically and environmentally sound alternative to transportation by individual automobiles. Within San Francisco, travel by public transit, by bicycle and on foot must be an attractive alternative to travel by private automobile.
3. Decisions regarding the use of limited public street and sidewalk space shall encourage the use of public rights of way by pedestrians, bicyclists, and public transit, and shall strive to reduce traffic and improve public health and safety.
4. Transit priority improvements, such as designated transit lanes and streets and improved signalization, shall be made to expedite the movement of public transit vehicles (including taxis and vanpools) and to improve pedestrian safety.

5. Pedestrian areas shall be enhanced wherever possible to improve the safety and comfort of pedestrians and to encourage travel by foot.
6. Bicycling shall be promoted by encouraging safe streets for riding, convenient access to transit, bicycle lanes, and secure bicycle parking.
7. Parking policies for areas well served by public transit shall be designed to encourage travel by public transit and alternative transportation.
8. New transportation investment should be allocated to meet the demand for public transit generated by new public and private commercial and residential developments.
9. The ability of the City and County to reduce traffic congestion depends on the adequacy of regional public transportation. The City and County shall promote the use of regional mass transit and the continued development of an integrated, reliable, regional public transportation system.
10. The City and County shall encourage innovative solutions to meet public transportation needs wherever possible and where the provision of such service will not adversely affect the service provided by the Municipal Railway.

Behind the Transit-First Policy is an understanding of San Francisco's long-standing tradition of building good urban places. While many cities have recently picked up on the virtues of transit, of mixing uses and achieving a critical mass of people, most San Francisco neighborhoods have developed this way since their beginning. The vision behind the Transit-First Policy brings us back to this tradition.



Making transit work on core transit streets like Market Street is essential to creating convenient, reliable and attractive service citywide.

i. Making Public Transit Work

Transit riders, like all travelers, are rational decision makers. They are transportation consumers, and they are looking at what is the best value for their needs. Any given traveler will not select a travel mode if it is more time consuming, less convenient, less reliable, and equally costly. The primary factors that influence mode choice are:

- time and cost,
- convenience, reliability and flexibility, and
- availability of information.

Efforts to reduce the impacts of cars and parking proposed in this plan can only be as successful as are the plan's success in making transit a more attractive alternative to driving.

To this end, the plan prioritizes the frequent and reliable operation of transit on the city's core transit streets. For transit to truly be a viable alternative to driving, Muni must provide service to major destinations that competes favorably with the automobile. Achieving this level of transit service will require dedicating space to the movement of transit vehicles on the city's core transit streets.

The plan also calls for improving the function and design of essential transit facilities and nodes. Because many of the city's core transit lines converge in the Market and Octavia area, the plan emphasizes improvements to important transfer points where the ease, comfort, and 'seamlessness' of the system's operation are invaluable to the success of Muni as a citywide transit network.

Ultimately, making transit work is a matter of geometry and not ideology: we must decrease use of private automobiles and increase use of more space-efficient modes like walking, bicycling, and transit, if we are to keep our streets functioning for everyone. As more people come to the neighborhood, we have to give them good reasons to come without a car.

OBJECTIVE 5.1 IMPROVEMENTS TO PUBLIC TRANSIT THAT MAKE IT MORE ATTRACTIVE, CONVENIENT, AND RESPONSIVE TO INCREASING DEMAND.

For transit to meet the realistic needs of San Francisco's population, it must offer travel times and reliability that compete well against the private automobile. Unfortunately, congestion has a disproportionate impact on transit relative to cars, given transit's fixed routes and passenger boarding needs. Moreover, traffic-light systems that are timed to benefit autos often force transit vehicles to "bunch" together, decreasing reliability for passengers. These problems can be overcome by providing transit-preferential treatments, from traffic signal prioritization to complete dedicated transit rights of way, where buses and streetcars are removed from the traffic around them. If the goal of the transportation system is to maximize the movement of people, street improvements that give transit a clear priority are essential, including, in some cases, the reallocation of street space from automobiles to transit.

Policy 5.1.1 Implement transit improvements on streets designated as "Transit Preferential Streets" in the city's *General Plan*.

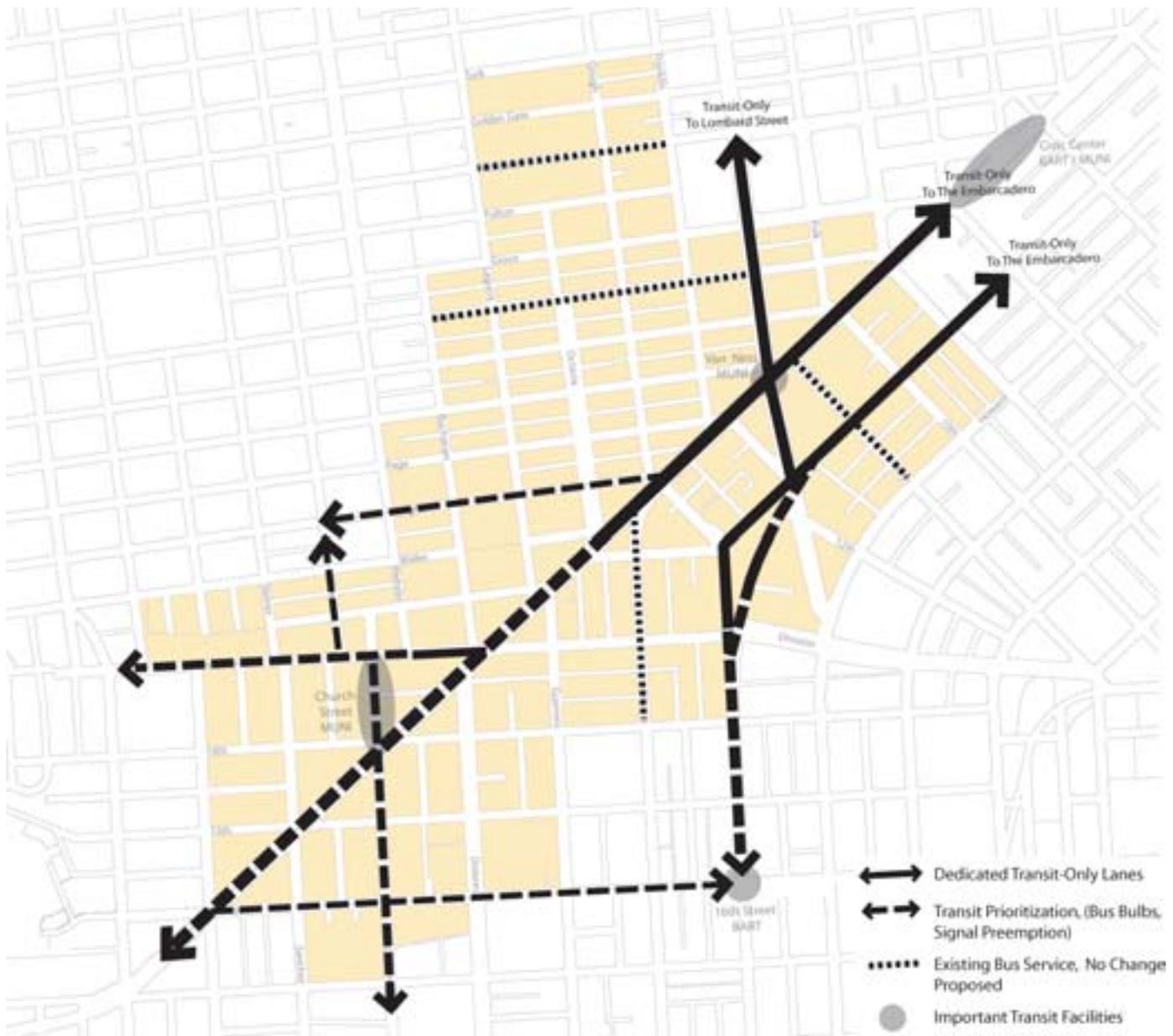
While all of San Francisco's transit lines are important, there are key corridors where the bulk of Muni's vehicle hours and ridership are dedicated, many of which converge in the Market and Octavia area. The streets that serve these corridors, called "Transit Preferential Streets," must be designed to move transit effectively, even at the expense of other modes. Key streets for transit preferential improvements include the following streets:



Transit vehicles on Market Street suffer delays from a variety of sources. These problems have never been resolved, despite the street's role as the backbone of the city's transit system.

Market Street

At the confluence of San Francisco's three main grids, a significant share of all Muni lines converge on Market Street. At Market Street at Van Ness Avenue, five lines come together to run an average of every two minutes in each direction, not counting subway service underground. Closer to downtown, thirteen Muni lines are scheduled every 40 seconds in each direction. With so many lines in one place, seemingly insignificant delays can quickly compound through the system. For example, a continuous one-minute delay for all Muni vehicles on Market Street at Sansome Street quickly adds up to a 2,300-minute daily delay. That is equal to 38 hours of service. Over the course of a year, the extra cost to the city would exceed \$1 million. Market Street's importance to the success of the whole transportation system cannot be overstated.



Proposed Transit Improvements

In addition to urban design improvements to make Market Street more friendly to pedestrians, it is critically important that the operations of Market Street do everything necessary to eliminate delays for Muni. Two important ways of achieving this are by refining signal timing and creating enforceable transit-only lanes.

In order for signal timing to work without creating unnecessary red time for the cross streets, it is critical that other vehicles do not impede Muni's progress. Currently, so many cars use Market Street in the downtown that it may take several light cycles for the buses and streetcars to move to the next block - delays occasionally in excess of 10 minutes. The existing "bus only" lanes are not clearly marked, are generally not enforced, and are thus ignored by motorists.

Consider the following means to improve transit speed and reliability:

- Time the lights from Duboce Avenue to The Embarcadero precisely according to the length of time it takes for Muni to board passengers then travel to the next intersection. Consider reverting to the signal timing prior to the Loma Prieta earthquake.
- Use a colored asphalt overlay, typically red, and signage to make transit lanes clearly identifiable.
- Introduce a penalty for driving in transit-only lanes and post it clearly.
- Use projects similar to San Francisco's red light camera project, as well as video enforcement on the buses themselves.
- Direct motorists to use other streets, without negatively affecting transit service on Mission Street.

Van Ness Avenue

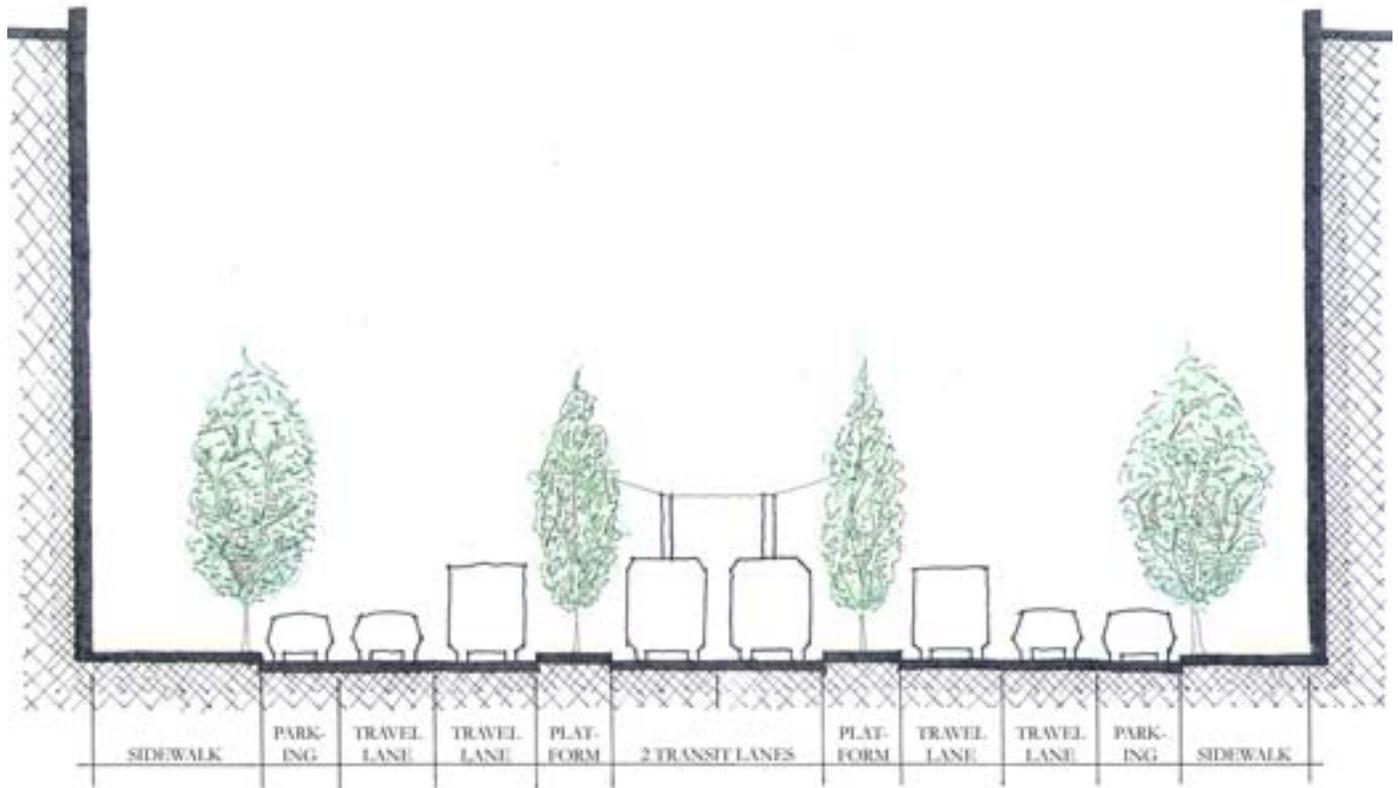
Along with Market, Mission, Geary and Stockton Streets, Van Ness Avenue is one of the most critical links in the city and regional transit system. Besides the core Muni lines that run the length of it, it is also served by seven Golden Gate Transit lines, connecting San Francisco to points throughout Marin and Sonoma counties. It is also U.S. 101, a state highway and major auto route. As a result, it experiences severe peak period congestion, which in turn creates equally severe reliability problems and travel time impacts for the transit routes that serve it.



Transit vehicles on Van Ness Avenue are often delayed by peak-period auto congestion.

Van Ness should be thought of as part of the core Muni Metro system. While it is not a candidate for light rail at this time because of its lack of connectivity to the rest of the system, the number of rubber-tire vehicles that come together here suggest that it would be better developed with “bus rapid transit” (BRT): an at-grade, rubber-tire version of a subway line. Such systems have been highly successful all over the world. In North America, Ottawa has a network of high-quality buses that operate as subways, Los Angeles has implemented Phase 1 of such a program on the Wilshire/Whittier corridor, and AC Transit has recently decided to implement such a system on the Telegraph/Broadway/International Boulevard corridor in Berkeley and Oakland.

Such a BART treatment is highly feasible; buses would run in their own right-of-way along the median, with high quality stations spaced every few blocks.



Section of the Proposed Van Ness Avenue Transitway



Commercial activities, awkward passenger loading, and customer parking complicate the movement of transit vehicles along Mission Street.

Mission Street

Another corridor of critical citywide importance, Mission Street serves the southeast corner of the study area and connects to the Downtown, Mission District, the Excelsior, and Daly City. As a vital commercial street over its entire length, the operations of Mission Street are complicated by the need for extensive loading and customer parking.

Mission Street should be striped with bus-only lanes from 16th Street to The Embarcadero and it should receive traffic-signal preemption along its entire length. These lanes should be enforced using video and camera enforcement techniques, and the penalty for driving in the transit-only lane should be clearly signed. Bus stops should receive bulbouts, as have recently been installed between 16th and 25th Streets. In addition, key transit stops such as the intersection of South Van Ness Avenue and Mission Street should receive special treatments, with improved shelters, lighting and passenger amenities.

Haight Street

Though secondary to critical streets such as Mission and Market Streets and Van Ness Avenue, Haight Street is a designated primary transit street with four lines serving it. Transit on Haight Street is delayed by congestion in the commercial sections and by stop signs placed along its entire length. Muni should work to reduce these delays by removing all the stop signs and replacing them with preempted traffic signals if necessary. In addition, DPT should consider reducing through-traffic on Haight Street and enforcing laws against double parking more strictly.

As with the 21-Hayes and the 5-Fulton buses, an additional transit-only signal phase should be considered where Haight Street meets Market Street, allowing the eastbound Haight Street buses to not have to detour at Laguna Street to Page Street.

Church Street

Like Haight Street, most of the length of Church Street is designated as a primary transit street, and transit suffers significant delays along portions of it due to congestion, stop signs, and signal timing, particularly at the Market Street intersection. Several improvements are necessary along Church Street - particularly the four-lane segment between Duboce and 16th Streets -- in order to make transit function better:

- At the Church/Duboce intersection, the stop signs should be replaced with a transit-operated traffic light. In addition, left turns should be banned for autos.
- Transit-only lanes should be created on Duboce Avenue just west of Church Street to speed passenger boarding at the stops there.
- Transit-only lanes should be created along the four-lane segment of Church Street between Duboce Avenue and 16th Street, ensuring that the J and 22 lines will not have to wait more than a single traffic-light cycle.
- Signal preemptions for transit should be created along all of Church Street.



Because almost all of the city's light rail lines converge here, it is essential that their reliable and effective movement through the plan area is prioritized.

The Light Rail Network

Delays throughout the Metro light rail system affect the performance of the Muni Metro in the study area. Unlike most other cities in the world, San Francisco forces most of its streetcars to run in mixed flow with other traffic. Unlike buses, streetcars cannot turn to avoid backups, left-turning vehicles, or double-parked vehicles. The result is both long travel times and a general lack of reliability.

The most cost-effective method to increase person capacity in the Muni Metro is to improve travel time on all light rail vehicles throughout the system. If the vehicles move more quickly, they can be turned around more quickly, increasing frequency at no additional cost. With increased frequency, more people can be served.

Portions of the streetcar network that perform especially poorly include the N-line through the Inner Sunset and near UCSF; the K-, L-, and M-lines in West Portal, and the K-line along Ocean Avenue. To the greatest extent practicable, the streetcars should be given their own rights-of-way throughout the system. In any event, stop signs should be removed along their routes and replaced with traffic signals where necessary. All traffic signals should be outfitted with preemption technology for the streetcars.

The performance of the subway itself may be able to be improved further with newer versions of the Advanced Train Control System (ATCS) installed in 2000. Additional capacity can also be created by adding more, or longer, Castro Shuttle 'S' trains, which were recently made permanent.

Policy 5.1.2**Do not allow curb cuts on transit-preferential streets.**

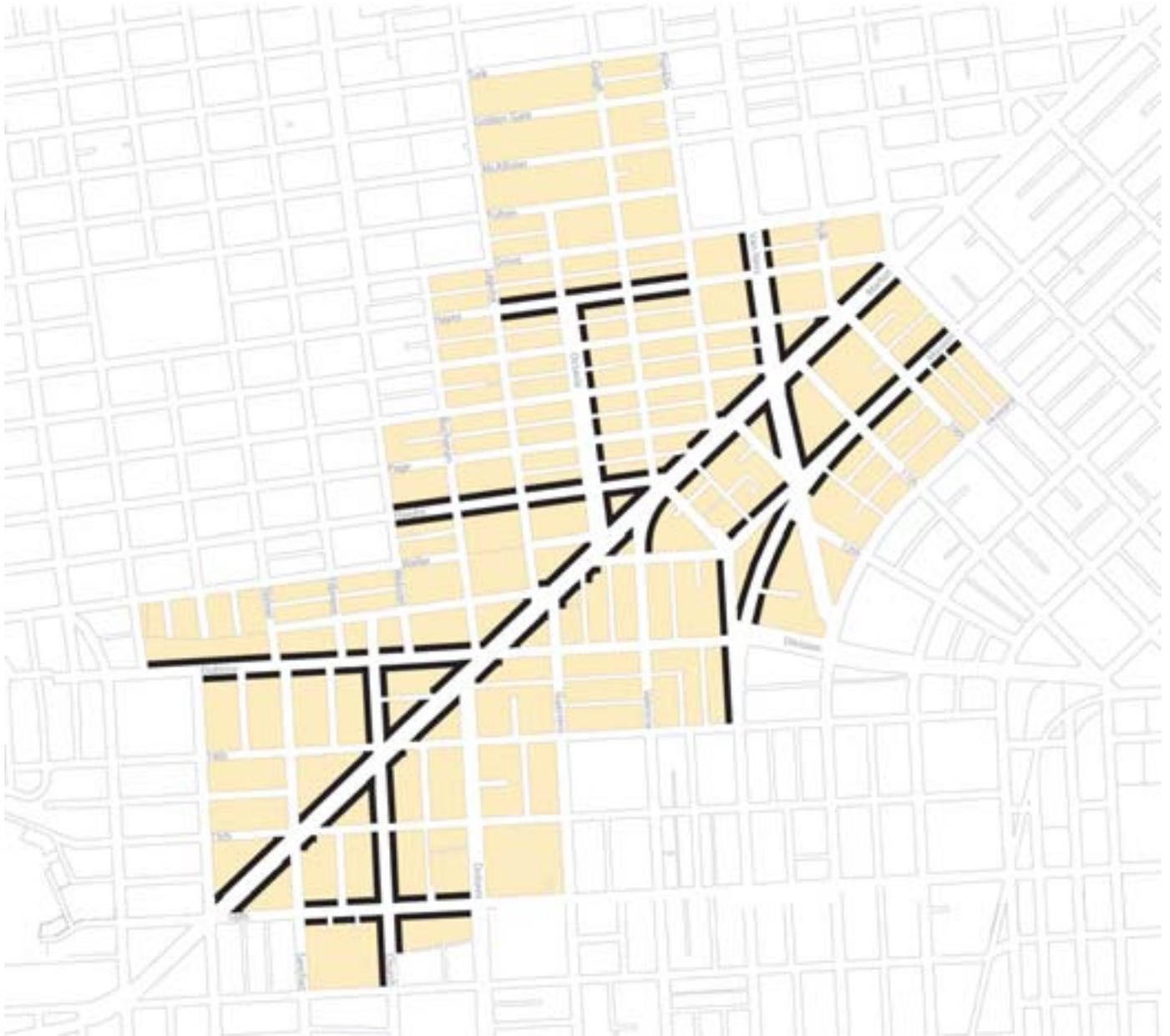
To maintain transit running time, it is critical to limit the number of turning movements made by autos on transit-priority streets. Left turns into off-street parking areas, in particular, have a significant negative effect on transit. New curb cuts should therefore not be allowed on transit preferential streets. If off-street parking is necessary for a development project on a transit preferential street, access should be from the side street, back alley, or other adjacent street.

Policy 5.1.3**Establish a fee for residential development to fund transit, pedestrian, and bicycle improvements in the area.**

Every effort should be made to maximize housing opportunities where there is fast and reliable transit, close to convenient neighborhood shops and services, and served by streets and open spaces that are safe and attractive for pedestrians and bicyclists. Adequate funding is essential to this effort. Transit impact development fees (TIDF) have successfully been established for commercial development in the downtown area, providing a substantial source of funding for the extensive transit improvements that have enabled the downtown to grow largely on the back of transit over the past 20 years. The same model should be applied to the full range of new development anticipated in the Market and Octavia area, including residential development.

Policy 5.1.4**Support innovative transit solutions that improve service, reliability, and overall quality of the transit rider's experience.**

In addition to improvements that increase transit running speeds, real-time passenger information systems, "proof-of-payment" policies that expedite ticketing and boarding, and other innovations should be explored and applied in the plan area.



Frontages Where Curb Cuts Will Not be Permitted

Recommended actions to improve transit service:

- Implement dedicated bus lanes on Van Ness Avenue for Muni and Golden Gate Transit. (DPT, Muni, Caltrans).
- Implement transit preferential treatments, such as stop sign removal and signal preemption/prioritization, on bus route streets such as Haight/Page, Hayes, Fillmore/Church and Mission Streets. (DPT, Muni)
- Implement enforceable transit-only lanes on Market Street east of Octavia Boulevard and Mission Street north of 16th Street. (DPT, Muni) Seek legislation for video enforcement of transit-only lanes. (State legislative delegation)
- Implement transit preferential treatments outside the neighborhood along the J, K, L, M and N lines, 22 line, and entire Haight Street and Mission Street corridors to improve frequency and capacity within it. (DPT, Muni)
- Introduce new transit services outside the neighborhood that will reduce the need to drive from the west side of the city into downtown, such as all-day express-bus service from the Sunset and Richmond neighborhoods to the downtown and a new dedicated bus way on Geary Street. (DPT, Muni)
- Consider the establishment of a transit impact development fee (TIDF) to assist in funding the proposed transit improvements.
- On the streets indicated on the preceding map, prohibit new curb cuts and encourage the elimination of existing curb cuts where opportunities arise.
- A fee for residential development that funds a range of transit, pedestrians, and bicycle improvements should be established, and commercial fees should be extended from the downtown to include the Market and Octavia neighborhood. Proceeds should go to an "Alternative Transportation Improvements Fund" for the Market and Octavia area. Funds should be used exclusively to implement the transit, pedestrian, and bicycle improvements outlined in this plan.



Because space is at a premium in the plan area, the choice to provide parking comes at a cost.

ii. Managing Parking

No great city is known for its abundant parking supply. Established long before the advent of the automobile, neighborhoods like Market and Octavia are close-knit, dense urban places that have evolved over time to serve a lifestyle that takes place primarily on foot. The neighborhood has been built on a critical mass of people and activity clustered in a relatively small area: shops and services densely interwoven with where people live and work, served by safe and inviting streets for getting around in a variety of ways. This critical mass gives the Market and Octavia neighborhood its compact and walkable character, and has enabled it to work well for people for more than a century.

Looking forward, this plan proposes new housing and services that strengthen this critical mass and make the neighborhood a more vital place. Ultimately, carefully managing the neighborhood's parking supply is essential to keeping the place vital. Every choice to give up scarce space in the neighborhood for parking comes at a cost - it dilutes the critical mass of housing and services that makes the place work well for people, and encourages more driving on streets that are reaching capacity and bogging down transit. While new development has often meant more cars on crowded neighborhood streets, this plan requires new development to build on the area's accessibility by foot, bicycle, and by transit, and discourages driving. To this end, the objectives and policies that follow limit parking in new development and call for the more effective management of existing parking resources. These objectives and policies, working together with the land use, housing, and public improvements proposed elsewhere in the plan, are the key to realizing Market and Octavia neighborhood's potential as an urban place.

The Market and Octavia neighborhood has some of the richest transit service in the country. The amount of parking provided here should be driven primarily by the values of the community. Through the community planning process, people expressed a clear desire to find ways to reduce the need for parking and to realize the savings in terms of space and cost that reduced parking offers.

For the past four decades, San Francisco has required new development to provide off-street parking with the assumption that every household will, inevitably, own a car. Citywide parking requirements have resulted in the proliferation of parking and a dramatic increase in vehicle ownership rates in the face these parking requirements, throughout the city. Neighborhoods like Market and Octavia, however, have retained remarkably low vehicle ownership rates and ultimately have the most to lose if large amounts of new parking are permitted. *Places like the Market and Octavia neighborhood work well for people precisely because they support a lifestyle less dependent on cars, and adding parking undermines their ability to support such a lifestyle.*

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH PARKING?

In neighborhoods with good access to transit and services, parking works against their advantages as urban places—it encourages driving, takes up space and makes things more expensive. As parking is built where real alternatives to driving exist, more people are encouraged to drive and those San Franciscans that must drive find it ever more difficult and expensive to do so.

IT DEGRADES THE QUALITY OF URBAN PLACES

Our best urban places have streetfronts unbroken by garage doors and parking. Storefronts line shopping streets without interruption. Sidewalks are undisrupted by drive-ways and curb cuts. Streetfronts, even in residential areas, are given to active uses, not parking, and made to feel lively and safe. Large amounts of parking challenge all of these things, making it nearly impossible to build great streets and wonderful urban neighborhoods.

IT GENERATES TRAFFIC

People are rational: they get around by the most convenient and reliable means. Every parking space we create makes it more attractive to drive. The problem is that our streets are reaching capacity. There is no room to expand them, short of knocking down buildings. By encouraging people to drive, parking puts more cars on our streets—and further degrades their quality, worsening traffic and delaying transit service. We can never build enough parking, because the more we build, the more people will choose to drive.

IT TAKES UP VALUABLE SPACE

San Francisco has a housing crisis and has a limited amount of land for new development. Parking reduces the amount of housing a parcel can accommodate by as much as 25 percent.* If we build just one parking space for every new dwelling unit needed by 2020, we will need 130 acres of land just for parking. If parking is provided on-site, we will need to build higher.

IT MAKES HOUSING LESS AFFORDABLE

A parking space adds \$20,000 to \$30,000 to the cost of building a unit of housing—upwards of \$50,000 in some parts of the city. These costs are very real; they are passed directly on to residents. Forcing people to rent or buy parking raises the cost of housing—which means fewer units get built. That’s money that people could use for other things, especially lower income San Franciscans who struggle with the rising costs of living here.

The buildings below both have a density of 100 units to the acre.



The building above, built before parking requirements, provides one parking space for every four units. It has a scale that is typical of San Francisco.



This building provides one parking space for every unit. It is four stories taller than the other building. At street level, the building offers little aside from views to parked cars.

5



In areas well-served by transit, the city's "Transit First" Policy calls for carefully managing parking supply to discourage all but the most necessary driving trips.

OBJECTIVE 5.2 PARKING POLICIES FOR AREAS WELL SERVED BY PUBLIC TRANSIT THAT ENCOURAGE TRAVEL BY PUBLIC TRANSIT AND ALTERNATIVE TRANSPORTATION AND REDUCE TRAFFIC CONGESTION.

This objective is taken directly from the City's "Transit First" Policy. Parking availability and pricing, because it determines the availability of parking and thereby influences peoples' mode choices, is a key tool in encouraging travel by public transit and other modes. The power of this tool to discourage auto use has been demonstrated by the Downtown Area Plan, which limited the development of new parking in the downtown and enabled more than 14 million square feet of commercial space to be built and thrive on the back of transit and with very little parking. Because the Market and Octavia neighborhood is one of the city's most transit-served areas, it affords the opportunity to create a similarly transit-oriented place. In keeping with the "Transit First" Policy, every effort should be made to manage parking supply and pricing to encourage the use of public transportation and alternative ways of moving about.

Policy 5.2.1

Eliminate minimum off-street parking requirements and establish parking caps for residential and commercial parking.

Eliminating parking requirements will support the creation of housing and increase the affordability of housing, as well as encourage new space for small-scale commercial uses and services, in keeping with the scale of existing commercial streets. Limiting the total amount of residential parking is a necessary compliment to improving the accessibility of transit and services in the plan area. Parking maximums should allow varying amounts of parking depending on a site's proximity to transit and services and the overall intensity of use expected in the future.

- Revise the planning code to eliminate minimum residential and commercial parking requirements in the Market and Octavia Plan Area.
- Introduce a new planning code control for the Market and Octavia plan area, limiting the total amount of new parking that may be built as part of new residential development as follows:

* "Planning for Residential Parking: A Guide For Housing Developers and Planners." Non-Profit Housing Association of Northern California., <http://dcrp.ced.berkeley.edu/students/russo/parking/Developer%20Manual/index.htm>

- In DTR districts: 0.25 spaces per unit, up to 0.5 spaces by CU
- In NCT districts: 0.5 spaces per unit, up to 0.75 spaces by CU
- In named NCT districts: 0.5 spaces per unit, up to 0.75 spaces by CU
- In RTO and all other districts: 0.75 spaces per unit, up to 1 space by CU

- Introduce a new planning code control limiting the total amount of new parking that may be built as part of new commercial development as follows:

- In DTR districts: Parking may equal no more than 7.5 percent of total building square footage, (approximately 1 parking space per 4,500 sf)
- In NCT districts: No more than 1 parking space per 2,500 sf
- In named NCT districts: No more than 1 parking space per 2,500 sf
- In RTO and all other districts: No more than 1 parking space per 2,500 sf

- Establish a Planning Commission policy strongly discouraging parking above what is permitted and adopting the following criteria that must be met for a CU:
 - Parking must be entirely below street grade, or in no way displace other uses above grade,
 - Parking will be provided as a separate cost from the specific uses provided within the building, in a manner that optimizes the potential for shared use of the additional spaces to users both within and outside of the building, and
 - Parking must accommodate carsharing programs, should the location be desirable and feasible for such a program.
 - Limit the dimensions of a parking stall to the typical dimensions cited in Planning Code Section 154.

Policy 5.2.3

Make the cost of parking visible to users.

No one should be required to rent parking they do not want nor need. The cost of parking is often aggregated in other costs, however, especially in rents for residential and commercial property. This forces people to lease parking, with no consideration of need or the availability of alternatives to driving. This could be avoided if, for all types of development, city policy was to require parking costs to be made visible and disaggregated from residential or commercial rents. Similarly, employer subsidies for employee parking should be limited as much as possible, and equal subsidies offered to employees who do not drive to work.

- Require parking developed as part of new development on the Central Freeway parcels to be leased separately to tenants and be made leasable to third parties in projects that provide new off-street parking.
- Enforce existing state laws forbidding employers from subsidizing employee parking on land leased from third parties, or requiring that the cash value of the subsidized parking be given to employees who do not drive to work.



City-owned parking structures in transit-served areas should be priced to encourage short-term use by a variety of users.

Policy 5.2.4

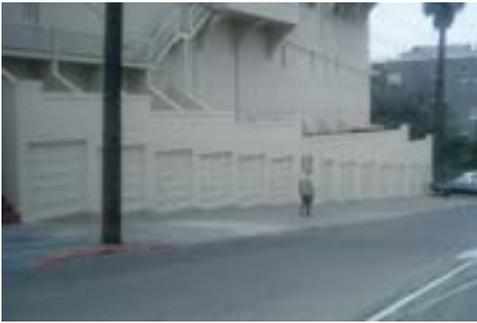
Establish parking pricing in city-owned facilities that supports short-term use.

A wide range of tools can be used to manage congestion. Many of these - such as gasoline taxes and charging for the use of road space - are not available to the city. Parking policy is one of the key management tools under the city's control.

- Adopt a general pricing structure that benefits short-term users similar to that used for the city's garage at Fifth and Mission Streets and other downtown garages. Make this type of pricing structure mandatory for city-owned parking facilities.



Streets free of curb cuts and garage doors are proportioned at a more human scale.



Curb cuts and garage doors create dead walls that are not comfortable and discourage people's use of the street.

Policy 5.2.5

Strongly discourage new public parking facilities.

In accordance with Section 8A.113 of Proposition E (2000), new parking facilities can only be constructed if local excess parking demand is so high that motorists are willing to pay prevailing downtown rates for parking. Cheaper parking, or an oversupply of parking, would shift demand away from public transit, reducing ridership on Muni and regional transit providers.

- Establish a clear Planning Commission policy discouraging new parking structures in the Market and Octavia area.

OBJECTIVE 5.3

THE LEAST POSSIBLE NEGATIVE IMPACT FROM PARKING ON THE PHYSICAL CHARACTER AND QUALITY OF THE NEIGHBORHOOD.

Automobile parking and the traffic that it generates have clear negative effects on the quality of life and public and environmental health of neighborhoods. Parking has a significant, direct effect on quality of life and place, resulting from the land resources it consumes, the degraded streetscapes its over-accomodation produces, and its costs, which drastically affect housing affordability.

Policy 5.3.1

Encourage the fronts of buildings to be lined with active uses and, where parking is provided, require that it be setback and screened from the street.

Throughout the plan area every effort should be made to maintain an active street front. Off-street parking and the dead spaces created by garage doors discourage use of the adjacent street and are uncomfortable to pedestrians.

Actions:

- Adopt the required parking controls and limits to garage door size outlined in Element 3 of this plan.



Consuming more space for parking does not necessarily make it more accessible.



On-street parking is a limited resource that must be carefully managed.

**OBJECTIVE 5.4
EXISTING PARKING RESOURCES THAT ARE MANAGED TO MAXIMIZE SERVICE AND ACCESSIBILITY TO ALL.**

Existing parking resources should be optimized before considering any substantial increase in parking supply. Increasing supply is just one way, arguably the most costly and time-consuming, to increase the availability of parking. More effective pricing, more efficient management of supply, and better information can all result in dramatically improved parking availability in an area without adding a single parking space.

**Policy 5.4.1
Consider revisions to the Residential Parking Permit (RPP) program that make more efficient use of the on-street parking supply.**

One of the most significant threats to new development in San Francisco is the fear that it will mean scarcer on-street parking. Many San Franciscans live in older neighborhoods where parking for existing residences and businesses is scarce and they rely on a limited amount of on-street parking. While requiring off-street parking spaces gives the appearance of a solution in the short-term, over time it only exacerbates the problem, which would be more directly addressed by limiting the issuance of parking permits based on the availability of parking spaces, and through increasing fees for on-street permits to more closely reflect their true market value.

The following revisions to the Residential Parking Permit program should be considered by the Department of Parking and Traffic and other relevant policy bodies for the Market and Octavia neighborhood:

- Limit the issuance of new RPPs based on available on-street parking capacity.
- Price new RPPs at market rate, allowing for only a short waiting list, if any. Revenue in excess of the administrative fee could go to Muni.
- Extend the hours of RPP zones beyond the current 9 AM to 6 PM, if residents desire.
- Allow RPP residents to sell excess daytime parking capacity to businesses and commuters, with revenue (less an administration fee) going into the alternative transportation fund, described earlier.
- Consider automatically establishing or extending an RPP zone when parking occupancy exceeds a certain percentage.



Priorities for on-street parking should be based on need.

Policy 5.4.2

Prioritize access to available publicly-owned parking (on- and off-street) based on user needs.

Like most public assets, public parking is a limited resource that, if appropriately allocated, can serve a broad variety of everyday needs. Access to public parking should be allocated based on need and should maximize accessibility to the most appropriate users. There is a clear, demonstrated need, for instance, for dedicated parking space for those with physical disabilities, for required deliveries, and for short-term users. A commuter parking space, by contrast, encourages peak-period driving trips, which negatively impact the street system when it is the most congested, and which could be most easily accommodated by transit.

The following priorities should be used to allocate on-street and public garage spaces, in this order:

- 1) Adequate parking space should be reserved at all times for the handicapped and the disabled.
- 2) Sufficient high-turnover spaces for short-term shopping and errand running trips should be made available at all times through the provision of time-limited, metered parking, and pricing policies that discourage all-day parking and support turnover.
- 3) Sufficient parking should be maintained for the major arts and educational institutions in the area, but these spaces should be priced at rates comparable to those in the Downtown, and these prices should be made visible to individual users. Access and personal safety improvements should be made to the Civic Center Garage to serve patrons of area cultural institutions.
- 4) Residential parking should generally be provided along the curb, and curbside parking should be managed by limiting the number of curbside parking permits and allocating these permits by market pricing.
- 5) Commuter parking should generally be discouraged and should only be provided to the extent that other goals are met. In any case, all commuter parking spaces should be priced according to the prevailing Downtown rates, and these prices should be made visible to users.

Policy 5.4.3

Permit off-street parking only where loss of on-street parking is adequately offset, and recover the full costs of new curb cuts to the city.

While the provision of new off-street parking may relieve some limited, private demand for on-street parking in the short term, the curb cuts required to access it usually require removing public on-street parking spaces. The giving over of public parking for private parking should be carefully considered in every instance and permitted only where a case can be made that the new off-street parking spaces offsets the loss of public on-street parking. A fee should be required for all curb cuts, especially those that would result in the loss of public on-street parking.

- Do not allow new curb cuts in the Market and Octavia area where they would remove on-street parking and result in less than two or more fully-enclosed, off-street spaces.
- Establish a fee for new curb cuts, based on the long-term value of the street area no longer available for public use.

Policy 5.4.4

Recover the full costs of new parking to the neighborhood and use the proceeds to improve transit.

Located at the center of several regional traffic corridors, as well as the city's transit network, the Market and Octavia neighborhood's street system is fast reaching capacity. Because parking generates traffic on streets that have limited capacity, it isn't possible to add parking for some users of the system without encouraging others to choose more space-efficient travel modes. In keeping with the goal of moving more people through the overall transportation system, the costs of encouraging other users to shift to alternatives to driving should be borne by new parking facilities built in the plan area.

- Establish an impact fee for new residential and commercial off-street parking, the proceeds from which will be used to improve transit access and pedestrian safety as part of the alternative transportation fund.



Management and safety improvements can make the Opera Plaza Garage more of a resource to local residents and visitors.

Policy 5.4.5

Improve the safety and accessibility of city-owned parking structures.

An extensive analysis of parking supply, demand, and management was undertaken in spring 2001 to help develop the parking program for the Market and Octavia area. The study identified 1,040 off-street surface parking spaces in the plan area, including 537 spaces on the parcels formerly covered by the Central Freeway. One of the primary findings of the study is that there is much excess capacity in the Civic Center Garage during the evening - even when the Opera, Ballet and Symphony are running simultaneous performances - and that the needs of the performing arts institutions can be accommodated even with the removal of parking and development of new housing on the Central Freeway parcels.² There is also excess capacity in the Performing Arts Garage during the daytime, which could be better managed to address the parking needs of the neighborhood, shoppers, and commuters.

- Improve personal security for evening parkers at the Civic Center Garage through significant urban design changes at Civic Center Plaza, and security personnel stationed there during evening events.

² These findings are described in full in the "Civic Center Parking Survey", San Francisco Planning Department, 2001.

- In keeping with the city's downtown parking policies, eliminate discounts offered at the Civic Center Garage.
- Adjust pricing structures at the Civic Center and Performing Arts Garages in line with those at the 5th/Mission Garage, including the elimination of the early-bird rate offered at the Performing Arts Garage.
- Increase parking supply available for public use by optimizing the city vehicle fleet or, more efficiently, by contracting out with a carshare program or similar enterprise.
- Offset parking demand by implementing bicycle, pedestrian, and transit improvements recommended elsewhere in this plan.
- In accordance with state law, phase out parking subsidies for the performing arts, school district, and International School staff, or provide an equivalent cash subsidy to staff who do not drive to work.
- Relocate and reduce reserved on-street parking around City Hall.
- Implement real-time information regarding parking availability in area parking garages.
- Introduce evening valet parking at the Civic Center Garage as appropriate.
- Provide a parking shuttle to and from the Civic Center Garage for events at cultural institutions in the area.
- Only once these actions have been taken should the city consider allowing new parking in the area.



Surface parking lots are common in the Civic Center area, just north of Market Street and east of Van Ness Avenue.

Policy 5.4.6

Require annual permitting for surface parking as a temporary use.

Surface lots have an additional blighting effect on neighboring properties. Throughout the city, surface parking is routinely used as a temporary land use while waiting for real estate conditions to change. The resulting increase in parking supply encourages a shift to driving, often in those parts of the city where transit is most frequent and accessible. Surface parking should be permitted as a temporary use only and an annual fee should be established for it. New approvals for parking as a temporary use should have strict time limits associated with them.

- Require annual review of temporary use permits for surface parking. Permits may be extended for no more than two years.



In recent years, carsharing programs have met with resounding success in the plan area.

Policy 5.4.7

Support innovative mechanisms for local residents and businesses to share automobiles.

Carsharing programs enable local residents to use a car for everyday needs without the need to own or maintain their own car. In recent years, carsharing programs have been introduced with tremendous success in San Francisco as well as several other cities, providing people with the freedom and mobility of a car when they need one, without the everyday burdens of owning a car in the city. As carsharing reduces the need for individual car ownership, it can be an effective tool in reducing the total number of cars in the area and freeing up on-street parking spaces.

Facilities for carshare programs should be encouraged in convenient, visible locations in the plan area for the use of local residents and businesses.

- Exempt parking spaces dedicated to carsharing programs from parking maximums and parking impact fees throughout the area.³

³ A long-term lease to a carshare program would be required for a parking space to qualify for the exemption. If the carsharing program were to end its lease of the parking space, the parking impact fee would be assessed for the space.



Possibly the world's first bicyclist.

iii. Improving the Area's Bicycle Network

Bicycling is one of the oldest and most elegant ways of getting from place to place. Requiring nothing more than the most simple equipment, no licenses, or special training, people have been bicycling for centuries. Human settlements developed compact, urban forms in order to facilitate fast and easy access to daily needs on foot. Like walking, biking harnesses our own muscle power to allow us to travel larger distances within this same compact urban form. Only relatively recently have developed motorized transportation technologies been developed, encouraging people to move around far more quickly, cover far greater distances, and in turn encouraging cities to spread out.

The close knit urban fabric of the Market and Octavia neighborhood, along with its central location and relatively gradual topography, is well suited to bicycling, which offers a simple, inexpensive, and space-efficient means of getting from place to place. As part of a comprehensive approach to transportation, this plan promotes bicycling as a safe, equitable, and convenient form of transportation that increases the neighborhood's livability, enhances public life, and improves public and environmental health. The plan promotes bicycling as an invaluable alternative to driving.

To this end, the plan calls for creating a network of safe and convenient bike lanes, bike routes, and calmed traffic streets. It proposes several new bike facilities that would connect established bike lanes into a more complete bike system. The plan also proposes improvements to several extremely dangerous conflict points between bicycles and vehicular traffic.



Proposed Bike Network



As the city's most heavy-cycled street, every effort should be made to make cycling safe and attractive on Market Street.



Bold stenciling, along with bike lanes, is essential to making the rights of cyclists to share the road better known to drivers. *Milvia Street bicycle boulevard, Berkeley, CA.*

OBJECTIVE 5.5

A BICYCLE NETWORK THAT PROVIDES A SAFE AND ATTRACTIVE ALTERNATIVE TO DRIVING FOR BOTH LOCAL AND CITYWIDE TRAVEL NEEDS.

Policy 5.5.1

Improve bicycle connections, accessibility, safety, and convenience throughout the neighborhood, concentrating on streets most safely and easily traveled by cyclists.

In addition to being a major crossroads for transit and automobile traffic, the Market and Octavia neighborhood includes several of the most important and well-used bicycle routes in the city. All streets in the study area should be designed to be safe for bicycles, the following corridors merit special attention:

Market Street

Bicycle lanes have been striped on Market Street from Castro Street to Octavia Boulevard, but they are discontinuous at several key intersections where bicycles are forced to merge with through traffic. In most cases, additional space can be created for bicycles by trimming back corner bulbouts. In some places, removal of one or two on-street parking spaces is also necessary.

In locations where right-turn lanes are provided and sidewalks are 15 feet or less, it is acceptable to have bicyclists travel straight from the right-turn lane rather than providing a separate bike lane on the near side of the intersection.

On Market Street east of Octavia Boulevard, bicycle lanes should be continued as far east as 8th Street, where Market Street narrows and the sidewalks widen to accommodate larger subway portals. Along with necessary turn lanes, this stretch of Market Street should include one dedicated transit lane, one through automobile lane and one bicycle lane in each direction.

To accommodate bicycle lanes, on-street parking should be removed from eastbound Market Street between Gough and 12th Streets and westbound Market Street between Gough Street and Octavia Boulevard. Parking needs can be accommodated on adjacent blocks, such as 12th Street and the Brady Block south of Market Street, where substantial improvements are proposed. Loading and disabled parking bays should be created to serve businesses on these blocks.



Cycling has increased by more than 150 percent since striping bicycle lanes on Valencia Street. Bike lanes help people feel more comfortable sharing the road with traffic.



The Duboce bikeway, while heavily-used by bicyclists, is commonly littered with debris and is perceived as unsafe by many.

Detailed planning work should be undertaken to arrive at a better design for the entire length of Market Street. Included in that design should be an examination of moving the eastbound F-line platform between Valencia and Gough Streets. This structure is the only obstacle to continuous bike lanes from Castro Street to 8th Street, but there is no obvious place to which to relocate it.

Valencia Street and the Freeway Touchdown

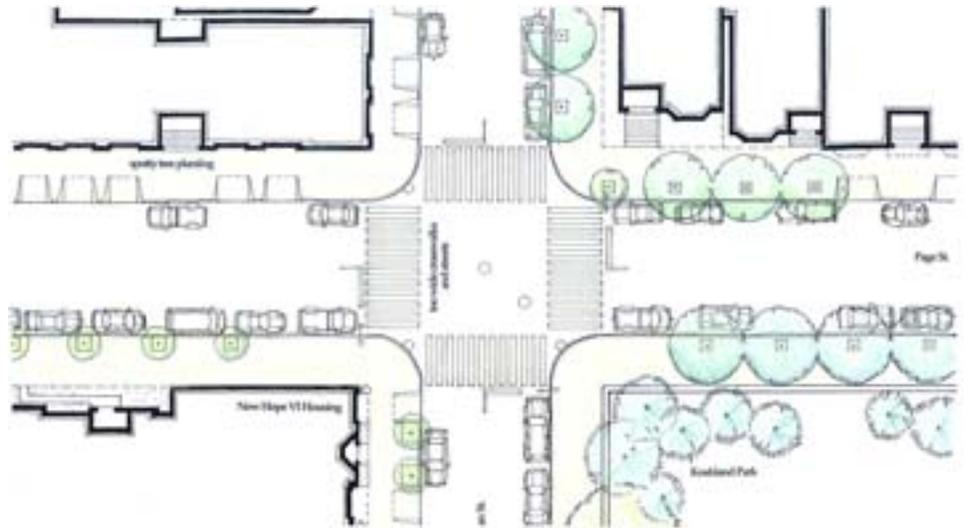
Valencia Street's bike lanes should be retained, and a connection should be made from them to Octavia Boulevard via a new bike path along the east side of the new freeway touchdown structure, linking both north- and south-bound bicycle traffic. The new bike path should be well-lighted and accessible to DPT's street cleaning equipment. A protected bicycle left-turn lane to this bike path should be created in the Valencia Street median.

Page Street

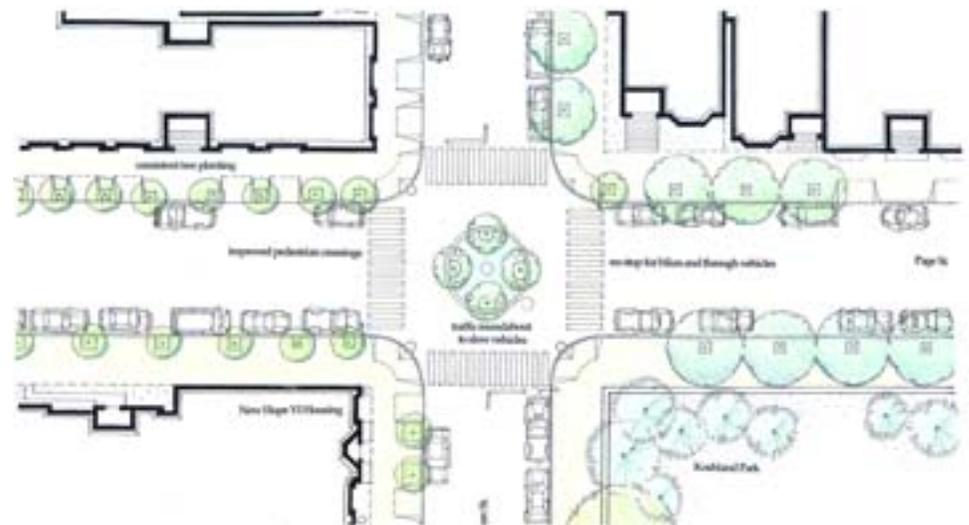
The entirety of Page Street has been designated a “Bicycle Priority Street,” and it should be treated as a bicycle boulevard. To the greatest extent practicable, stop signs should be removed from Page Street. Where necessary, stop signs can be replaced by traffic circles or roundabouts, as illustrated at right.

Duboce Avenue

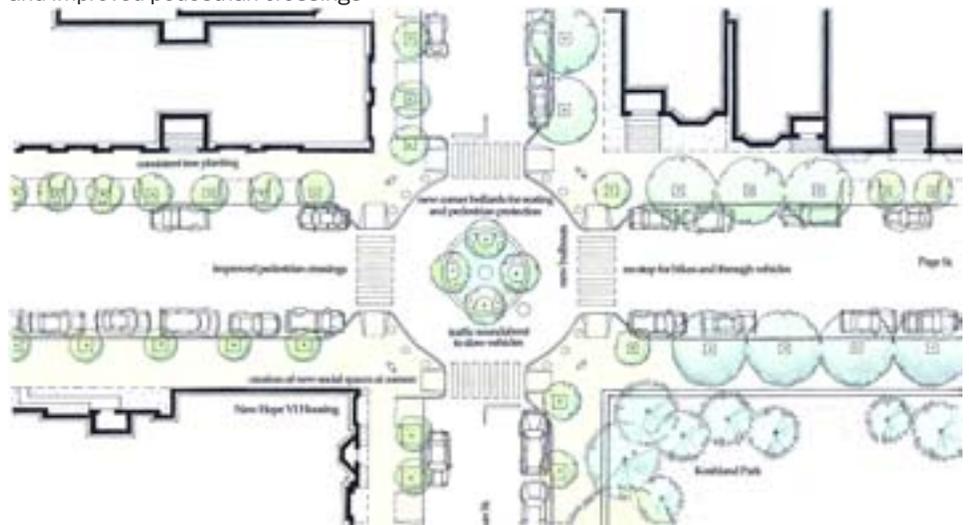
The existing Duboce Avenue bikeway should be maintained, but design improvements should be made to ensure that this important corridor does not become a magnet for antisocial activities. Set between the blank walls of the Mint and Safeway, there are currently no "eyes on the street" here to keep the bikeway safe at all hours, and street lighting is not what it should be. In addition, barriers prevent street sweepers from cleaning the street; besides other problems, broken glass and debris pose particular hazards for bicycle tires. New pedestrian-scaled light fixtures should be installed, and, in order to allow street sweepers to clean Duboce Avenue on a regular schedule, existing barriers should be replaced with hand-operated, lock-down bollards or automated pneumatic bollards.



Page Street and Buchanan Street: Existing Conditions



Page Street and Buchanan Street: with center traffic island and improved pedestrian crossings



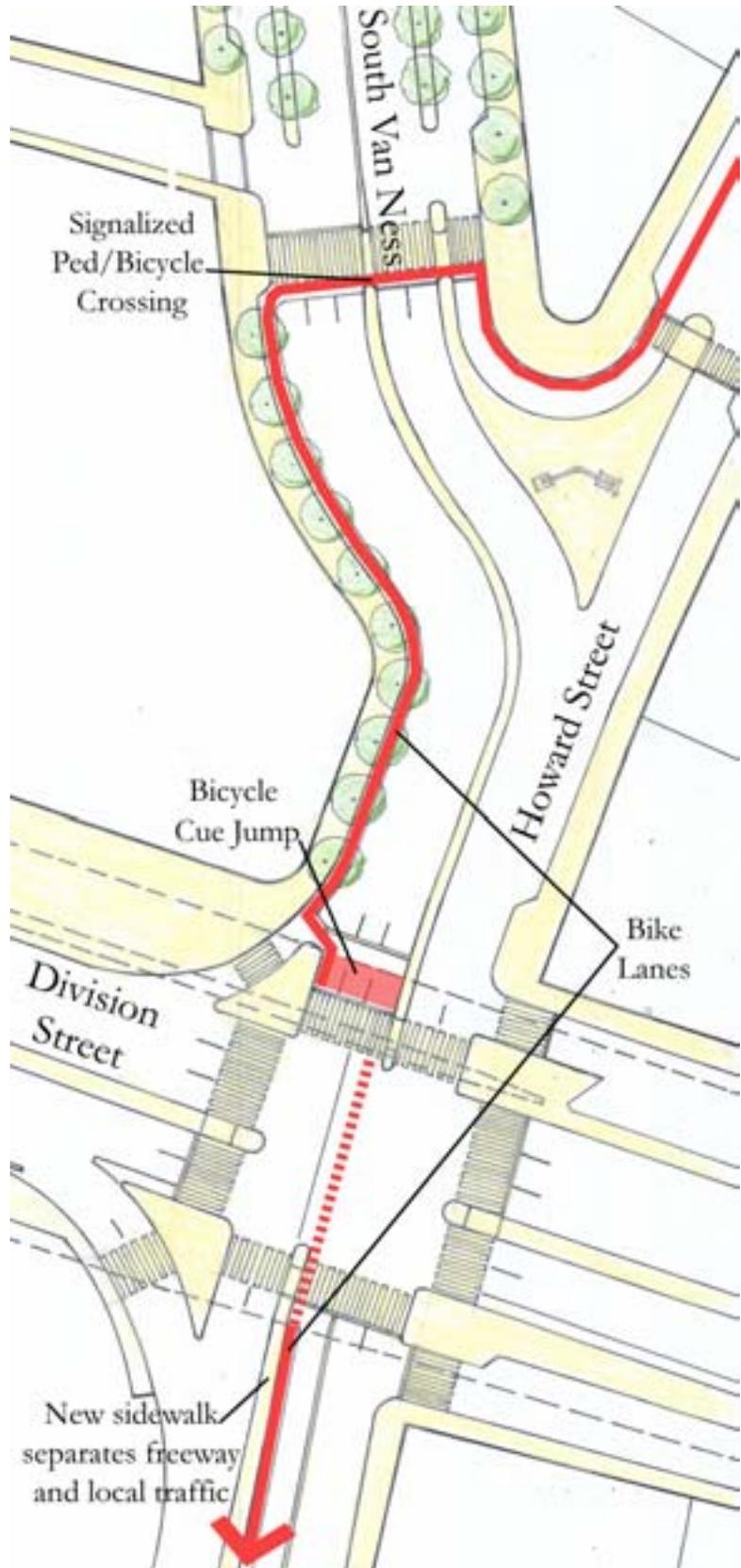
Page Street and Buchanan Street: with center traffic island, corner plazas, and improved pedestrian crossings

Howard Street

Bicycle lanes should be installed on both sides of Howard Street at least as far as 11th Street. If traffic analysis in the South Van Ness Avenue area determines it is possible, they should be extended to 14th Street.

South Van Ness Avenue

As part of the proposed extension of the Howard Street bike lanes, significant safety improvements to the intersection of South Van Ness Avenue and Division Street should be undertaken as part of the overall proposal to reconfigure South Van Ness Avenue as a surface boulevard. Innovative bicycle technologies such as colored bike lanes and cue jumps should be applied where possible to maximize bicyclists' visibility and minimize conflicts with large volumes of traffic.



Bicycle route proposed through the South Van Ness Avenue and Division Street intersection.



Secure and convenient bicycle parking encourages using a bike to meet a variety of “around town” travel needs.

Policy 5.5.2

Provide secure and convenient bicycle parking throughout the plan area.

Providing bicycle parking is important to "closing the loop" in making cycling an attractive alternative to driving. In urban areas like San Francisco, secure and convenient bicycle parking, placed in appropriate locations, is an essential amenity for everyday cyclists. Such bicycle parking reduces theft and provides a needed sense of security.

- Building on DPT's bicycle parking program, ensure that adequate bicycle parking is provided in centers of activity such as Hayes Street, Market Street, and the new Octavia Boulevard.
- Require a minimum amount of bicycle parking on-site for any new development that includes automobile parking.



Increasing the safety and functionality of BART, Caltrain and other regional transit providers for bicycles is one important way to offset peak-period traffic congestion.

Policy 5.5.3

Support and expand opportunities for bicycle commuting throughout the city and the region.

Bicycle commuting reduces peak-period commutes by car and has a markedly positive effect in reducing traffic congestion. From a citywide and regional perspective, every effort should be made to support peoples’ commute by bicycle. The largest obstacle to bicycle commuting, aside from unsafe streets, is the difficulty in taking bicycles on regional transit and the lack of secure bicycle parking at transit facilities. To support bicycle commuting, bicycles need to be permitted on all regional transit operators at peak commute times and secure bicycle parking needs to be provided at regional transit stations.

- Encourage SamTrans, Golden Gate Transit, and other regional bus transit operators to provide bicycle racks on their buses.
- Allow bicycles or provide bike racks on all Muni vehicles.
- Assess the possibilities of allowing bicycles on BART at peak periods, including a "bike car" on peak-period trains and programs to encourage the use of folding bicycles. Develop the means to allow bicyclists to use the BART system without conflicting with other riders (e.g. dedicated locations for bicycle storage on trains, or dedicated "bike cars".)
- Provide secure, convenient, and supervised bicycle storage facilities at regional transit stations.

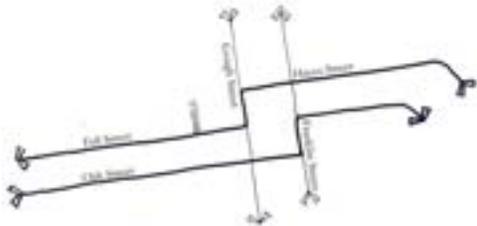
iv. Improving Vehicular Circulation

OBJECTIVE 5.6 IMPROVED VEHICULAR CIRCULATION THROUGH THE AREA.

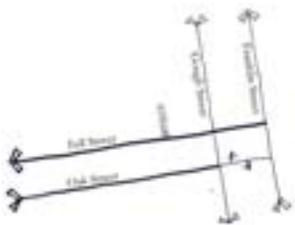
With the completion of Octavia Boulevard, there are important opportunities to improve vehicular circulation through the plan area, most notably by eliminating the "jog" of one-way traffic on Fell and Oak Streets, thereby minimizing the negative effects of these major regional traffic flows on the plan area.

Policy 5.6.1 Reorganize east-west traffic in Hayes Valley to reduce pedestrian conflicts and eliminate confusing Z-shaped jogs of one-way traffic.

One-way streets encourage fast-moving traffic, disrupt neighborhood commercial activities, and negatively affect the livability of adjacent uses and the neighborhood as a whole. Construction of Octavia Boulevard makes it unnecessary for one-way Oak Street traffic to be routed east of Van Ness Avenue via Franklin Street, or westbound Fell Street traffic to come from the east via Hayes Street and Gough Street. This reorganization will greatly simplify traffic patterns, make street crossings for pedestrians safer, and return Hayes Street to a two-way local street, which is best suited to its commercial nature and role as the heart of Hayes Valley.



East - west through traffic currently "jogs" up and down Franklin and Gough Streets on its way through the area, creating excessive peak period congestion on portions of Hayes Street.



Construction of Octavia Boulevard will make this jog unnecessary, allowing traffic to be taken off Hayes Street and portions of several streets to be returned to two-way traffic flow.

5



Major Routes for Vehicular Circulation