



Minutes of September 30, 2013

Better Market Street Community Advisory Committee (BMS CAC)

Meeting convened by Simon Bertrang, DPW, at 6:09 pm and adjourned at 7:27 pm.

City department attendees: Michael Schwartz, (SFCTA), Miguel Hernandez (DPW), Mindy Linetzky (DPW), Andrew Lee (MTA), Neil Hrushowy (SF Planning), Marlo Isaac (SF Planning), Kelli Rudnick (DPW), Simon Bertrang (DPW)

CAC attendees: Robin Levitt, Kevin Carroll, Ralph Lee, Carolyn Lee, Lee Stickles, Riyad Ghannam

CAC absences: Ashley Langworthy, Julie Kim, Andrew Robinson

Public sign-in sheet: **SEE ATTACHED**

Presentations: **SEE ATTACHED**

Introductions

Simon introduced himself as the new project manager for BMS and presented the agenda for the meeting. He mentioned that the group has shrunk over time and that now that the BMS project is moving into the environmental phase, DPW would like to expand and revitalize the CAC.

BMS public workshops

Kelli presented a preliminary overview of the results of the third round of public workshops, which were held in July. She mentioned that printed copies of the boards presented at the public workshops were available for reference should anyone have any questions.

Kelli: We had a great turnout and had over 200 participants for the workshops and webinar. Surveys were collected in person and online. The results of the surveys are highlighted in the report for the Round Three of public workshops. The survey was a 12-question qualitative survey, and it has taken time to digest, as most questions were open-ended. Some of the key findings are:

- For placemaking, the most appealing features of the designs presented were the sidewalk and crosswalk improvements for simplifying intersections. Streetlife zones and plaza improvements were also popular.
- When asked what would strengthen Market Street as a destination, respondents answered similarly in support of pedestrian improvements and in support of creating active public spaces through streetlife zones and plaza improvements.
- The most popular cycling facility was the raised cycletrack (on Market St), which respondents stated was preferred for providing a buffer from vehicles. On Mission Street, the most appealing feature of the buffered bicycle lane was the ability to implement a “green wave,” or timing the signals at the pace of a cyclist.
- In responses to the transit question, it was clear the respondents supported and understood the tradeoffs of implementing the Rapid Transit option, which was not so well understood at the Round Two workshops.

- Again, we saw support for auto restrictions.
- Raising Hallidie Plaza was the most popular plaza improvement. Second in popularity after raising Hallidie Plaza were public realm improvements such as seating, cafes and art.

A draft of the report is available tonight for review. Questions?

Kevin: Was there anything surprising about the results?

Neil: What I noticed is that what gets people excited is the street life concept, the opportunities for activities to happen on Market Street. Professionally we know that the number one attraction for people is other people.

Carolyn: Did anyone mention a sense of security?

Neil: They didn't mention that specifically, but the responses seemed more aspirational than that.

Simon: A desire for security was embedded in the support for pedestrian improvements. Questions were open ended, so we can see the connections people are making—like the idea that the cycletrack will make improvements for pedestrians.

Ralph: Do you know a breakdown of the demographics of respondents?

Mindy and Simon: No, we did not ask where people live or work.

Kevin: Was there more information about auto restriction, like related to accessibility and about what it would do to businesses?

Andrew: Generally, there was support for auto restrictions, but the survey question was not necessarily specific.

Lee: Could you explain the transit question?

Simon explained what the rapid transit option is.

Simon: We were surprised at the strength of support.

Kelli: Respondents also stated that they would want it to be coupled with a good Next MUNI system.

Michael: People understood the benefit or support for four transit lanes. Much more challenging on other projects, but people understood that Market Street is special in that regard.

Simon: We had boards where people were very constructively engaged with the material. It was a very San Francisco crowd. People sometimes had strong opinions, but they were still very evenly divided. In fact, there was not much support for the status quo.

Carolyn: It's interesting that people are still interested in raising Hallidie plaza -- the idea has been around for a while/decades.

Kelli: A concept design was shown by the consultant.

Simon: We prompted them with those boards, but, yes, it's an idea that people are indeed still interested in.

Ralph Lee: What is the status of the recommendation for auto restrictions?

Simon: We can address that in our next item, environmental review.

Environmental review

Simon explained the environmental review process and gave an overview of the steps to come.

Simon: The next phase is environmental review. [Project timeline was presented.] An RFQ is up and an interview has been scheduled. We hope to have a consultant by the beginning of the year. In this first phase, we have come up with some conceptual design options.

Now we have to conduct environmental review, select a preferred option, and make a policy decision on which option to implement. [Slide 3 summarized the process.] Planning is the lead agency and we are doing a joint NEPA and CEQA document. DPW will hold contract and provide environmental review. DPW, Planning, and MTA will be still fully involved. In this second phase, we expect to do technical reviews, publish a scope of study, receive comments, then do another draft, with another public comment period, and finally issue a final report. Throughout, there will be a comprehensive assessment of the three design options, which represent different ways of combining all design elements. To go back to Ralph's question:

Ralph Lee: What is the status of the recommendation for auto restrictions?

Andrew: For auto restrictions, we have three levels of restrictions. Four options will be analyzed, which include removing cars between: 5th and 1st, 8th and 1st, Van Ness to the Embarcadero; and a "No project" option, which only accounts for plans that have already been approved and funding except for background growth, which ultimately is only the existing auto restrictions.

Simon: The impact of the maximum restrictions will be analyzed and disclosed in environmental review. Remember, para-transit, taxi, etc., would not be restricted vehicles.

Andrew: Hotel access and shuttles, which I know Ralph is concerned about, have not been analyzed and decided upon. The same goes for delivery vehicles.

Mindy: We should note that auto restrictions may also be set for different times of the day, too.

Andrew: What will drive the level of restrictions are the transit improvements. If transit is close to where it needs to be, in terms of efficiency, then we will probably allow more vehicles, but the environmental review studies will give us that information.

Lee: What about taxis?

Andrew: Taxis will likely be allowed, i.e., exempted from auto restrictions.

Lee: When I take taxis, they tell me that the preferred route is never to be Market Street. I would suggest analyzing if it even makes sense to allow them on Market Street.

Andrew: Transit lane would be opened up to taxis, to allow them to drive them, too. All proposals are great in the abstract, but enforcement is difficult. So we will be looking at enforcement—where it works, where it does not. Not only will we enforce vehicles in motion, but also those that are double parked or those who stop for too long. Technological aides could also help with this.

Kevin: It would be good to be a part of that before anything is introduced. Personal cars, too, come to our hotels. Keep that in mind for us.

Simon: While formal comments will be accepted as part of the environmental review process, the new CAC could be the forum for comments in parallel/conjunction with the environmental review.

Michael: An alternatives analysis will be done, and a framework and criteria will be set up to select options that will get public comment and technical input from city agencies.

Ralph: What's in the process after all of this—the Board of Supervisors?

Simon: The Board of Supervisors, perhaps, but the path is unclear to a certain point, as this is a complicated project.

Andrew: To clarify, during environmental review the public will comment, but staff will give policy makers something to consider.

Riyad: What about the new CEQA law changes?

Simon: None of those changes will likely affect this project, as the current laws will likely apply. Rulemaking for those new laws will probably take two years or so, and our project will be underway by then.

Michael: Yes, state laws don't move quickly and we don't want the project to be held back waiting for those regulations.

Carolyn: Do auto restrictions apply to motorcycles?

Andrew: Yes, motorcycles would be restricted, too. Technically, they are considered private vehicles. Enforcement, however, is trickier. If enforcement is done through technology, it is easier to enforce, if done manually, it is much more difficult.

Future of the BMS CAC

Simon restated that DPW will be expanding and revitalizing the CAC. He asked the members for their

comments on the existing CAC and ways to make the CAC better.

Robin: The meetings were sporadic at best. We waited several months for a meeting then it'd be canceled. People lost interest and it seemed their input was not important. As a CAC member I felt our input was limited to responding to notions rather than coming up with ideas that would be incorporated into the design. We want to feel like we have something to contribute, and it's worth our time to participate.

Simon: Was that because you were involved at the wrong time, or was it something about how the material was presented?

Robin: It seemed our input was a foregone conclusion.

Simon: Was consultation at the end?

Robin: We weren't partners, only there to legitimize the process. I think our impact was minimal.

Neil: Would you have wanted to see more working session type of meetings? Like a charette with the stakeholders that we held? Is that more like what you were thinking of?

Robin: Not specifically. It seemed parameters were set. Preconceived ideas were set in stone, tweaked slightly but it was like we were there to give the ideas some legitimacy.

Simon: Some decision making process is made on a technical level by staff, but it sounds like you want to be involved early enough in the process to have an impact on the result. I think that's a legitimate comment.

Ralph: It seemed there was a bit of input on design, but we never knew what the whole vision was. We would be told staff was not ready for us. What is the big thing we are trying to accomplish? We didn't know that from the beginning. It wasn't until the public workshop that we had a clearer vision. For the first two years, we didn't have that, we were just sitting. And at the public workshop, there was so much information—is that really a contribution? There should be a bigger version shared in the beginning. Maybe if we also had a distinction between the roles of CAC and the public workshops, which are complementary.

Lee: I agree with some of this. What was helpful was the charette and early-on volunteering. A "presentation and comment" format does not work well for me. I come from design, so maybe that's why I think a charette format works better for me. At first it seemed contributory, but at the end, it seemed like it switched. We want to feel like we are useful and helping the project along.

Carolyn: I agree with what has been said. In the beginning, the meetings were inconsistent. There was a point at which the city team met with the CBDs, and it seemed we were not consulted first. That makes us wonder if we should really be invested in this. Sometimes I did feel like it was already done. There were already certain things done and I was embarrassed to ask if I had missed something about that. But I know how difficult that is. Sometimes I felt like I wasn't engaged and didn't know how go back to my membership.

Kevin: I want to be able to reach out to a big group of people, but I didn't feel well equipped, so if we got to know more about the how and why, we could better be able to inform our own groups when we are asked about the project.

Riyad: I have no additional comments.

Simon: The frequency of meetings is important to address. We think a quarterly basis is regular enough to consult meaningfully but would not put us in a situation in which we won't have something to report.

Simon: Public meetings will be held for environmental review, but we do need a forum in which to present the results of our group. We need to do a better job at getting enough comments citywide and from the local neighborhood. Mission Street is also a new stakeholder. We have a preliminary idea of the types of CAC members we hope to attract, but would like to know from you which categories of members you think we should have.

Kelli: We generally used to have a representative for businesses per location, residential, bike, pedestrian, disability, advocacy interest groups or professional expertise members.

Simon: We want to keep the membership local, but we want more than just those because Market Street is a citywide, civic street. What categories make sense to you? I think we have a clear message on wanting to be engaged more.

Kevin: Quarterly makes sense. When meeting were every six months, it seemed you could lose a whole year if you missed a single meeting. Just set the date well ahead of time.

Robin: As staff, you should think about what you want the CAC to do, and that will inform the categories of CAC members.

Simon: As staff we think quarterly is good.

Robin: Ten minutes to get past security is intimidating, let's consider a different location. It's hard enough for city staff and for the CAC members. Imagine how that's intimidating for the public.

Michael: We are working closer to get this resolved.

Neil: The schedule with environmental review could influence when we schedule meetings, perhaps we could schedule around when a batch of technical reports is completed.

Simon: Predictability and when input is most useful could influence scheduling. With enough advance warning, we can schedule around that.

Ryad: Does setting a predictable schedule make the preparation of the technical studies go faster?

Simon: It couldn't hurt. Mini deadlines could be involved.

Carolyn: It is very important for Mission Street to get involved. I always felt that they would be involved. I could help find businesses. Not sure what the residential people would be. Homeowner's associations could be a source, perhaps. There are a lot of apartments, too.

Ralph: Maybe a CBD or CBO organization could be included, especially because it'll be important to include people from every part of Market Street.

Carolyn: Lower Market Street doesn't have much representation.

Simon: Yes, we are currently lacking those. We'll be sure to fill out geographically.

Neil: What's your sense of socioeconomic diversity?

Ralph: CBO could represent that respective group. Even within the CBOs it might not be the executive director, but a community organizer from those CBOs.

Carolyn: Or someone from their board.

Michael: A CBO is very formal, but may be worth looking into. Do you think emails in lieu of or in addition to meetings may help? This is a little formal, so maybe other types of communication could help to keep the conversation going.

Kevin: Some benefits came of that format, too, though.

Lee: I agree we need someone to represent the homeless demographic.

Simon: This has been helpful. We'll take that back, and get going on environmental. We will regroup to figure out how we get going on the CAC.

Carolyn: I like monthly updates. A note saying, we selected the consultant, etc., would be good. I don't want to wait to find out who the consultant is at the meetings.

Al (general public): Microphones would be helpful to fully hear what discussion is.

Recognition of your CAC service

Mindy presented members of the staff a certificate of recognition, signed by Mohammed Nuru, Director of the Department of Public Works.