

**NOTES FROM THE
LAND USE/TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING
OF THE JAPANTOWN TASK FORCE**
1765 SUTTER STREET
TUESDAY, AUGUST 8, 2017

BOARD MEMBER PRESENT:

Paul Wermer, Robert Sakai

STAFF PRESENT:

Greg Marutani, Coco Tando

OTHERS PRESENT:

Richard Hashimoto, Karen Kai, Robert Rusky, Justin Hu-Nguyen, Linda Walsh

The meeting began at 6:05 p.m.

PRESENTATION:

Justin Hu- Nguyen, Outreach Coordinator for Motivate has a contract with the City and County of San Francisco to promote the installation of the Ford GoBike stations throughout the City. He explained that the charge for use of the bicycles is \$3.00 for one trip, \$10.00 all day, \$149.00 on an annual basis. The rider would simply swipe their Clipper card to unlock a bike, ride for free for 30 minutes or 45 minutes with an annual pass. Bicycles are rather heavy to make them sturdier and less likely to be stolen, wheels are a unique size to make them less likely to be stolen, cleaned twice a month, and scheduled for monthly maintenance (Attachment A)

Paul distributed his notes from the Pacific Heights Residence Association where Ford GoBike made a similar presentation (Attachment B).

There are proposals to install a rack by the Konko Church as well as Union Bank. The racks require 50 to 70 feet.

When asked if a station could be installed inside the Japan Center Garage, Justin explained that each rack is powered by a solar panel.

When concern was raised about the proposed Post Street installation impacting the Cherry Blossom Festival and Nihonmachi Street Fair, Justin stated the station would be removed for the duration of the events and re-installed, but did not know what the cost would be and who would be responsible for the move.

When asked about the potential for attracting visitors to Japantown, Justin said he did not have any data to say yes or no.

Based on the concerns and questions raised at the meeting, Justin indicated he would see if it would be possible to arrange a meeting with Paul and one of Ford/GoBike engineers

UNFINISHED BUSINESS:

Geary BRT Landscape Update

Karen Kai reported that she has been working with Paul and representatives from SF Municipal Transit Agency (SFMTA) to host a community meeting on August 14, 2017 that would begin at 6:30 p.m. in the Community Room of Union Bank to update those in attendance about the possible design of the proposed streetscape for the Buchanan crosswalk on Geary. A follow up meeting will be scheduled in September.

NEW BUSINESS:

Olle Lundberg and Caroline Nassif from Lundberg Design were referred to the Japantown Task Force by Blackstone, the owner of the Hotel Kabuki, shared renderings of proposed relocation of the entrance to the Hotel Kabuki restaurant from Post Street to the front entrance to the hotel as part of their work for the future restaurant that will occupy the space. They explained that their design would include taking advantage of the glass windows by adding green plantings on the inside of the restaurant as well as the outside where the current entrance exists.

Comment from those in attendance were positive; Paul thanked them for sharing the redesign plans

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

None at this time.

The meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

The next meeting will be at 6:00 p.m., Tuesday, September 12, 2017 at the JACL HQ.

Ford GoBike/Motivate

Current understanding of the proposals and site assessments

The following understanding is based on e-mail exchanges, review of the Ford GoBike site, and discussion at the Monday, 7 August Pacific Heights Residents Association and August 8 Japantown Taskforce Land Use meetings with Ford GoBike to consider the proposal for sites north of Japantown.

1) Station design:

- a. Station sizes are 50 (minimum size)– 100 ft long, with “approx 4 docks per 10 feet”. Most are in the 50 – 70 ft range, with 20 docks in a 50 ft stand.
 - i. note: a standard marked parking space is 20 ft long, so a 50 ft length removes 3 marked spaces. In neighborhoods where parking spaces are not marked, given a range of full size and compact cars, the average space is less than the marked space.
- b. Stations are solar powered, so not connected to any power source, and not bolted or fixed to the pavement, so they can be removed.
 - i. This means that rental stands could be removed or relocated for the duration of a street fair (e.g. Japantown Cherry Blossom Festival or Fillmore Street Jazz Festival).
 - ii. By relying solely on solar power, rental stations cannot be in areas without direct sunlight – eliminating locations in garages, for example.
- c. Ford GoBike does not plan to support small (4 – 12 ft installations) that would fit in curb spaces between driveways that are not big enough for cars.
- d. With respect to a question on clearances from driveways, crosswalks, etc. the sole response is that “Our stations maintain the requirement set forth by SFMTA”
Note that meeting the requirements is the worst you can do before triggering penalties – it is not evidence of a high standard or an assessment of needs and risks
- e. There are SFMTA requirements on station locations (clearance from driveways, etc.) The outreach team was unaware of what the requirements are, or what purpose they serve
 - i. Unduly strict SFMTA requirements may make it impossible to develop a “small site” strategy, yet provide no safety benefit.
- f. The outreach team is unable to provide any installation engineering drawings – just renderings of proposed installations or pictures of existing installations.

2) Station Selection:

- a. Station selection was based on input at community meetings – but it is unclear how effective the outreach was. Many in the community were unaware of the meetings.
- b. The goals are to have rental stations within a 5-minute walk of start/finish trip destinations.
- c. Locations are designed to avoid hills (see section re usage)
- d. Ford GoBike has contracted with a third party to conduct assessments of potential impacts of their expansion plans. However, the outreach team does not know if

the 3rd party has conducted traffic engineering studies of proposed sites. The outreach team does not know what traffic volumes are, or anything about related factors such as parking demand, overall pedestrian and vehicle densities, or potential interactions such as loading zones, delivery vehicles, parking garage entrances, etc., or how those might impact the neighborhood.

- e. Immediate outreach has been to immediately abutting properties. Ford GoBike will also to meet with neighborhood associations/merchant groups IF invited.
- f. Ford GoBike will provide notifications as required per SFMTA once permit applications are submitted, but has yet to provide clear details on what the specific notice process is, or how they will identify who is to be noticed.
- g. The formal notice process as planned will occur after detailed plans are submitted, rather than early in the process when it is easier to modify plans to deal with concerns/problems.

3) Expected usage:

- a. Bikes are intended to be used for short (less than 45 minute/30 minute) one-way trips between rental stations. For example, they are not intended to be ridden to a café or restaurant for a coffee or meal UNLESS there is a nearby rental station.
 - i. There does not appear to be any provision to lock the bicycle to a bike rack for brief time for quick errands.
- b. Ford GoBike assumes that the bicycles will be used by residents for short errand trips or commute to work.
 - i. Bicycles are 38 lb. “commuter” bicycles, designed to withstand heavy use/abuse
 - ii. Bicycles have a small “basket” at the handlebars, but no rack on the rear wheels. Luggage capacity is negligible – suitable for a small bag or briefcase, but not suitable for e.g. groceries or a package greater than 12” on a side. This reduces utility for neighborhood errands.
 - iii. The bicycles have low gearing, so it should be possible to ride them on most hills.
 - 1. However, the outreach team also made the point that they considered hills in developing the expansion plan, and that areas with many hills were not suitable. For example, there are fewer locations in the Marina, because of the hills on most routes out of the Marina area.
- c. Ford GoBike assumes that the bicycles in this area will not be used by tourists/out of area visitors.
- d. Ford GoBike consulted with a third party to assess demand. However the outreach teams do not have any demographic data or surveys identifying demand in this area
 - i. They are unaware of transportation services such as the Mollie Stones Shuttle
 - ii. They do not know usage patterns in other cities.

1. Last mile from public transit to/from school/workplace vs neighborhood errand use
 - e. **They were unable to provide any information about how the proposed stands in the Japantown area might bring more visitors/business to Japantown, or how the loss of on-street parking might reduce visitors and business.**
- 4) Public Notice/Notice Process/Permit application
- a. Ford GoBike maintains that they provide notice to JTF and PHRA, yet neither organization has any recollection of receiving such notices for the general public meetings, such as the meeting at Hamilton Recreation Center.
 - i. Outreach team was unable to or did not explain the notification/invitation process, other than to claim a robust public outreach process.
 - ii. Both the PHRA and Japantown meetings occurred because of specific asks from the neighborhood, not from outreach by the Ford GoBike team.
 - b. Present outreach on specific sites is exclusively to properties immediately adjacent to a proposed installation (e.g. Konko Church, Union Bank), but not adjacent property owners, or those across the streets, nearby merchants, etc.
 - c. Ford GoBike plans to proceed with permit applications for specific sites, and only after permit applications are filed will they notify neighbors of the permit approval hearing
 - i. Permits will be approved through SFMTA
 - ii. Only proposed notice is the SFMTA “tape a sheet to the light pole on the corner” notice.
- 5) Paul Wermer observations/research:
- a. Bike rental services such as this are known as Bike Share Services (BSS)
 - b. Successful programs tend to be clustered around high use/demand/attraction areas
 - i. “There is also evidence that some of the most recent systems, such as City Bike in New York City, have used the experience of other more established schemes to position stations in strategic locations (e.g. areas with intense cultural, social and economic activity) to maximise use.”ⁱ
 1. This is like the existing downtown SF implementation
 - ii. Last mile services (transit to Job/School, dense urban home/ work commute) appear to be successful, but user demographics are still unclear. It appears younger, more affluent males who already cycle are the most probable users.
 - iii. There is very little data about where BSSs work and where they don’t.
 1. Impact of hills/urban topography not discussed.
 2. No significant discussion of/data on what types of usage occur outside of commute and campus applications.
 3. Usage and utility of BSS is critically dependent on rental stations proximity to journey’s origin and destination.
 - iv. Overall BSS benefits are less clear:
 1. BSS appears to drive mode shifts from walking and public transit to bicycles, but not reduce vehicle use.

2. “There is currently no evidence suggesting that bike sharing produces significant reductions in urban congestion levels and CO2 emissions, or improvements in air quality, at least in the short-medium term. The available evidence on mode substitution is established and consistent: rather than substituting for car journeys, bike sharing is predominantly used instead of walking and public transport. Moreover, when the effect of using motorised fleets for bike maintenance and re-distribution is accounted for, bike sharing can increase rather than reduce overall motor vehicle usage and emissions, with associated negative environmental and air quality impacts.
Rebalancing the bike network has also been identified as a key operational challenge.”ⁱⁱ

c. Specific Concerns:

- i. Lack of any information or knowledge about projected use in the N of Geary area (Japantown, Pacific Heights)
- ii. Insistence on using large (50 ft, effectively 3 parking spaces) curb space
 1. No willingness to consider modified designs to work e.g. in the Japan Center garage.
 2. No willingness to design smaller stands that take advantage of small street spaces.
- iii. Lack of sensitivity to merchant concerns and existing visitation patterns.
 1. No data provided on how Neighborhood Commercial Districts would be impacted.
- iv. Ignorance of traffic engineering studies re high use/congestion intersections such as Clay/Webster, or high demand loading/commercial loading areas such as the Union Bank location.

ⁱ Mátrai, T. & Tóth, J., Transportation Research Procedia 14 (2016) 2344 – 2351

ⁱⁱ Ricci, Miriam, (2015) “Bike Sharing: A review of evidence on impacts and processes of implementation and operation”, Centre for Transport & Society, Department of Geography and Environmental Management, University of the West of England

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