

March 23, 2006

Jose Luis Moscovich  
Executive Director  
San Francisco County Transportation Authority  
100 Van Ness Avenue, 25<sup>th</sup> Floor  
San Francisco, CA 94102

Dear Mr. Moscovich:

We are writing to express both our support for rapid transit on Geary and our concerns about the Geary Corridor Bus Rapid Transit Study. We all strongly support a comprehensive study of rapid transit alternatives in the Geary corridor; however, we feel that the current study needs to be expanded in scope to fully assess the range of alternatives, to better understand life-cycle operating and capital costs, and to design Geary as a "complete street," which integrates pedestrian, bicycle, and streetscape improvements with the transit alternatives.

Geary is one of the most important transit corridors in the city, and we believe that efforts to improve transit capacity and performance on this street are central to citywide efforts to make a transit renaissance that can attract large numbers of riders. Geary was one of the centerpieces of the Proposition K expenditure plan, which was approved in 2003 by over 70% of San Francisco voters.

We believe the study has been prematurely limited in scope in ways that undermine its utility and legitimacy. The case has not been clearly made that Bus Rapid Transit is preferable to rail from either a cost-effectiveness or performance perspective, yet rail alternatives are not currently being studied. In addition, too much focus has been given to initial capital costs rather than long-term operating and capital costs. We believe the scope needs to be adjusted in several critical areas in order for this study to have full legitimacy:

**1. The study needs to include fully-developed rail alternatives. Much of this work has already been done as part of the 1995 Merrill Report titled "Geary Corridor System Planning Study."** The alternatives from this report should be re-examined and updated to reflect current cost estimates. At a minimum the following rail alternatives need to be examined:

- A surface rail line on the outer part of Geary, with a subway under the downtown portion of the route under Geary Boulevard from Market Street to Laguna or Masonic streets);

- A surface rail line on the outer part of Geary, with a subway under the downtown portion of the route under Post St. from Market Street to Laguna or Masonic streets);
- Surface light rail in a dedicated right-of-way from Market to the outer part of Geary (with no subway).

The feasibility of connecting all the above alternatives to the future Central Subway project should be examined as well.

The study should also explore the feasibility of a scenario where the City of San Francisco commits to a two-phased upgrade of Geary Boulevard to rapid transit. The first phase is fully rail-ready BRT project. The second phase would be an upgrade from BRT to Light-Rail service. Funding strategies for such a two-phased option should be identified and examined for their feasibility.

2. The study needs to rigorously explore the capacity limitations in terms of passengers per hour for each alternative, with accommodations for significant capacity increases over the next few decades.
3. The study needs to calculate the lifecycle costs of each alternative (including initial capital costs, annual operating costs, and equipment replacement costs) over 30 - 40 years.
4. For all of the alternatives, the study should propose a full complement of pedestrian, bicycle, and streetscape improvements in order to make Geary a “complete street” while maintaining the integrity of two *dedicated* transit lanes for all surface rapid transit operations, whether BRT or Light-Rail.
5. Due to a lack of consensus in the community on the current alternatives being proposed, we are also requesting that additional designs be considered for the Fillmore/Geary intersection as it relates to either BRT, Light-Rail or both. Design alternatives for this intersection should also include the accommodation of a two-phased upgrade to rapid transit as described above.
6. The study needs to include a robust analysis of the economic impacts on the merchants and adjacent land owners, both positive and negative, along with options for either mitigating negative impacts or increasing economic benefits. In addition, the economic analysis should explore measures for potentially recapturing the value that will accrue to property owners (as distinct from merchants who may be renting space). We understand that the study is well underway and that additions to the scope are disruptive and will require additional funding. However, we believe that no community consensus can emerge from the study process unless the study takes in these broader concerns. To foreclose these questions now would be “penny wise and pound foolish” and will decrease the likelihood of attaining a buildable, fundable project.

Although some of us are more supportive of BRT and others of us are more supportive of rail, **we are all excited about and committed to rapid transit on Geary that will improve mobility for everyone who lives, works, or shops in the Geary corridor.** In order to understand how to best achieve rapid transit, we believe the study needs to include a broader scope, as outlined above.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response.



Emily Drennen  
Walk San Francisco



Dan Krause  
Rescue Muni



Gabriel Metcalf  
SPUR



Tom Radulovich  
Transportation for a Livable City



Leah Shahum  
San Francisco Bicycle Coalition

Cc:

Mayor Gavin Newsom  
Board of Supervisors  
MTA Board of Directors  
Mr. Nathaniel Ford  
Geary CAC