



SAN FRANCISCO PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Certificate of Determination Exemption from Environmental Review

Case No.: 2013.1721E
 Project Title: SFMTA Polk Street Improvement Project
 Project Sponsor: Paul Stanis, San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency
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PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Polk Street Improvement Project proposed by the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) aims to improve safety, aesthetic qualities, and economic vitality along Polk Street while making it an inviting place to walk and bike. To address these goals and objectives, the proposed project includes changes to parking, bike facilities, pedestrian facilities, intersection lane configurations, loading, and traffic signal operations along Polk Street between McAllister Street and Union Street. In addition to the streetscape changes, the proposed project includes sewer and water main replacement and repair along Polk Street between Grove Street and Beach Street, and up to one block east and west of Polk Street at selected cross streets (see below for a complete list of locations). Sewer and water main replacement would be performed by the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) and the San Francisco Department of Public Works (SFPDW).

EXEMPT STATUS:

Categorical Exemption, Classes 1, 2, and 4 (California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Sections 15301, 15302, and 15304)

REMARKS:

See next page.

DETERMINATION:

I do hereby certify that the above determination has been made pursuant to State and local requirements.

Sarah B. Jones
 Environmental Review Officer

January 15, 2015
 Date

cc: Paul Stanis, SFMTA
 Barry Pearl, SFPUC
 Pilar LaValley, Preservation Planner
 Supervisor Farrell, District 2 (via Clerk of the Board)

Supervisor Chiu, District 3 (via Clerk of the Board)
 Supervisor Kim, District 6 (via Clerk of the Board)
 Distribution List
 Virna Byrd, M.D.F.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION (continued):

The utility replacement/rehabilitation and streetscape work would be implemented as part of a combined and concurrent construction process in order to comply with City regulations to implement infrastructure and streetscape projects consistent with the Complete Streets policy¹. To reflect the full combined construction effects of these improvements, they are evaluated in this document as a single project. This document analyzes the maximum foreseeable project, though a smaller project may ultimately be approved.

Streetscape Improvements

SFMTA would perform streetscape improvements along Polk Street from McAllister Street to Union Street. The proposed streetscape improvements vary along the Polk Street corridor, and can be described in four segments based on roadway width and configuration: McAllister Street to Turk Street, Turk Street to Post Street, Post Street to Pine Street, and Pine Street to Union Street.

McAllister to Turk Street

The existing Polk Street roadway width from McAllister to Turk Streets is 48'-9" with 10' wide sidewalks on each side. Northbound Polk Street has a 5' wide Class II (dedicated lane) bike lane adjacent to the curb and an 11' wide traffic lane. In the southbound direction, Polk Street has an 8' wide curbside parking lane, a 5' wide Class II bike lane, and two traffic lanes (9'-9" and 10' wide). Crosswalk striping exists at all signalized intersections. Crosswalk striping is also present across the minor streets at unsignalized intersections. Metered on-street parking is available on the west side of the street between Turk Street and Golden Gate Avenue. On-street parking is not permitted on the east side of Polk Street between Turk and Golden Gate Avenue or on either side of the street between Golden Gate Avenue and McAllister Street. Designated curbside loading zones are present along the west side of the street between McAllister Street and Golden Gate Avenue. No Muni service is present along this segment of Polk Street.

The proposed project includes a road diet² on Polk Street between McAllister Street and Golden Gate Avenue, which would remove one of the two southbound travel lanes. As shown in **Figure 1**, with the removal of one lane of traffic, a raised green 7'-9" wide cycletrack with a 2' wide buffer would be installed in the northbound direction adjacent to the curb. The northbound and southbound directions would each have one 11' motor vehicle travel lane. In the southbound direction, a green 6' bicycle lane with a 2' buffer would be constructed adjacent to a 9' parking lane. Northbound and southbound left turns would be restricted at the intersection of Polk and McAllister Streets.

¹ To minimize disruption to surrounding neighborhoods, whenever multiple city departments propose excavation on the same block within a five year period, Section 2.4.12 of the San Francisco Public Works Code requires the work to be combined and performed as a single excavation.

² A "road diet" is a type of street improvement that reallocates roadway space from parking and vehicular travel lanes for bicycle, transit, and pedestrian improvements.

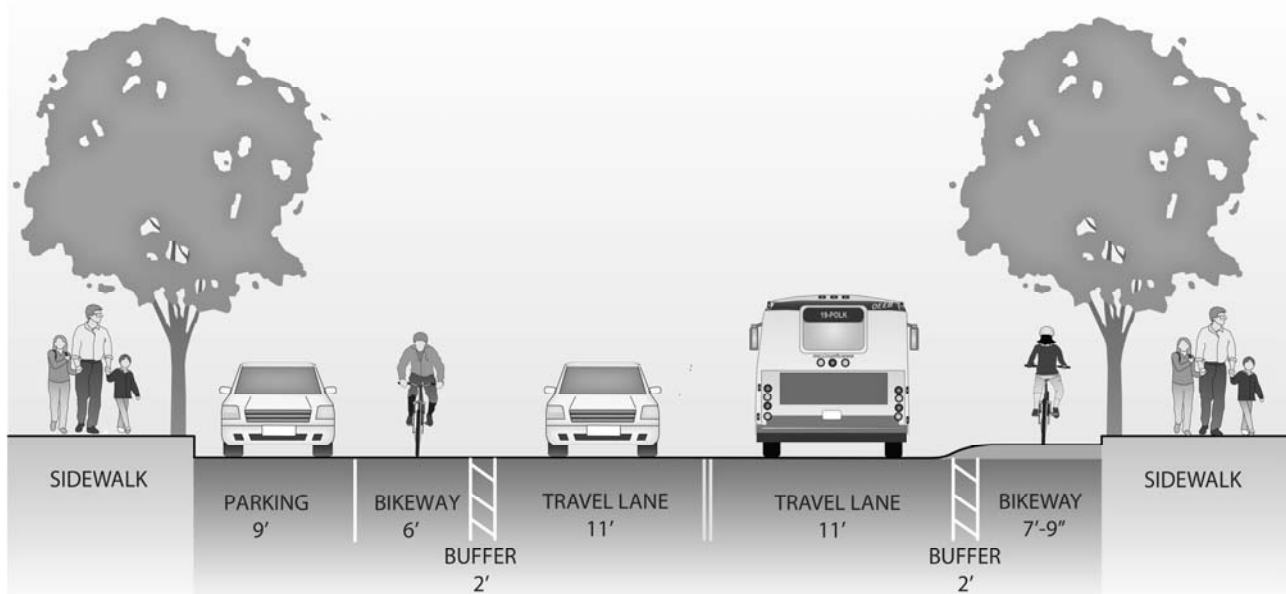


Figure 1: Proposed Northbound Section View between McAllister Street and Golden Gate Avenue

Between Golden Gate Avenue and Turk Street, the proposed Polk Street roadway configuration would differ. The southbound approach to Golden Gate Avenue would include one left turn lane and one through lane. The northbound approach to Turk Street would include one left turn lane and one through lane. This block would have a 5' wide bike lane on the east side, an 11' wide northbound through lane, a 9'-9" wide turn lane (southbound left at Golden Gate and northbound left at Turk St) and 10' wide southbound through lane, a 5' wide bike lane, and an 8' wide parking lane on the west side of the street. This proposed lane configuration is shown in **Figure 2**.

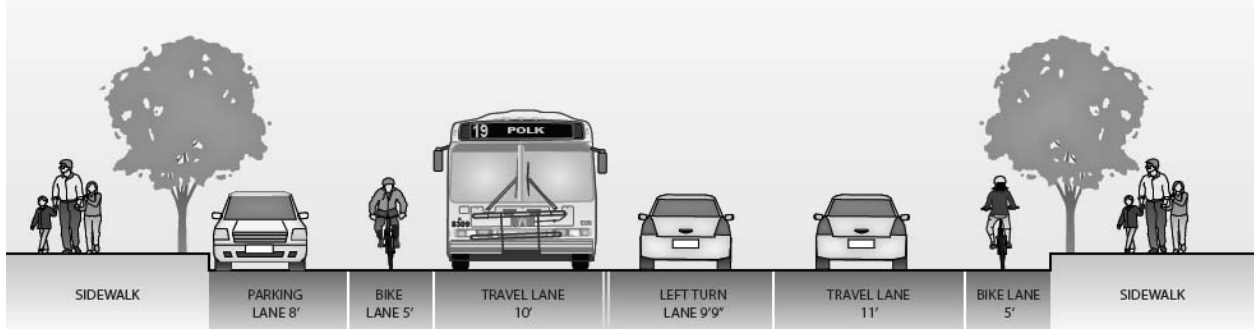


Figure 2: Proposed Northbound Section View between Golden Gate Avenue and Turk Street

Turk Street to Post Street

The existing Polk Street roadway width between Turk and Post streets is 48'-9" with 10' wide sidewalks on each side. Northbound and southbound traffic lanes have the same configuration with an 8' wide curbside parking lane, a 5' wide Class II bike lane, and an 11'-4.5" wide traffic lane. Crosswalk striping exists at all signalized intersections but does not exist at unsignalized intersections. Metered on-street

parking is generally present on either side of the street for the entire segment. Designated commercial loading zones are generally present on each block on either side of the street (one or two spaces per block in most locations). 19-Polk Muni bus service operates in the southbound direction between Geary and Eddy Streets, and two-way service of the same Muni line operates between Geary and Post Streets. Bus stops are located approximately every one to two blocks along this segment of Polk Street.

Traffic collision patterns on Polk Street between Turk and Post Streets indicate distinct and reoccurring collisions involving bicycles, pedestrians, and motor vehicles. These collision patterns indicate that left and right turn collisions between the above-noted modes occur more frequently than other types of collisions. To address these patterns, right-turn-only lanes would be installed on Polk Street in the southbound direction between the proposed bicycle lane and the through travel lane at Geary, Ellis, Eddy, and Turk Streets.

At these four intersections (Polk Street at Geary, Ellis, Eddy, and Turk Streets), a northbound left turn lane would be added on Polk Street at Geary Boulevard and at Turk Street (mentioned above), and northbound left turns would be restricted on Polk Street at Eddy Street and Ellis Street. These measures would provide additional protection for pedestrians and southbound bicyclists, and would potentially improve northbound Muni travel time. At approaches with a southbound right turn pocket or a northbound left turn pocket, the existing bicycle lane would be relocated adjacent to the curb resulting in removal of on-street parking spaces (see "Transportation" remarks below). Traffic signals would be modified to provide a dedicated right turning phase and a dedicated left turning phase separate from through traffic, pedestrian, and bicycle crossing phases. Southbound left-turn pockets would be installed on Polk Street at Golden Gate Avenue, and O'Farrell Street, and southbound left turns would be restricted at the intersection of Polk and Ellis Streets.

As shown in **Figure 3**, on Polk Street between Turk and Post Streets, a northbound raised 7'-9" wide green cycletrack with a 2' wide buffer, and a southbound 6' wide green bike lane with a 2' wide buffer would be constructed. Pedestrian improvements would include continental (ladder-type) crosswalk striping at all intersections, red curb zones near intersection approaches to improve visibility (fewer parked cars in motorists' line of sight), and corner bulbout sidewalk extensions. A bulbout would be constructed into Geary Street at the northwest corner of Geary and Polk Streets. Bus stop consolidation would occur on this segment of Polk Street and would result in consolidating the southbound 19-Polk bus stop at Post Street with other nearby stops.

To accommodate the above-mentioned changes, on-street parking removal and loading zone relocation would occur along the entirety of the east side of Polk Street between Turk and Post Streets where the raised cycletrack would be constructed. Parking removal and loading zone relocation would occur on the west side of Polk Street on approaches to intersections to accommodate right or left turn only lanes (see "Transportation" remarks below).

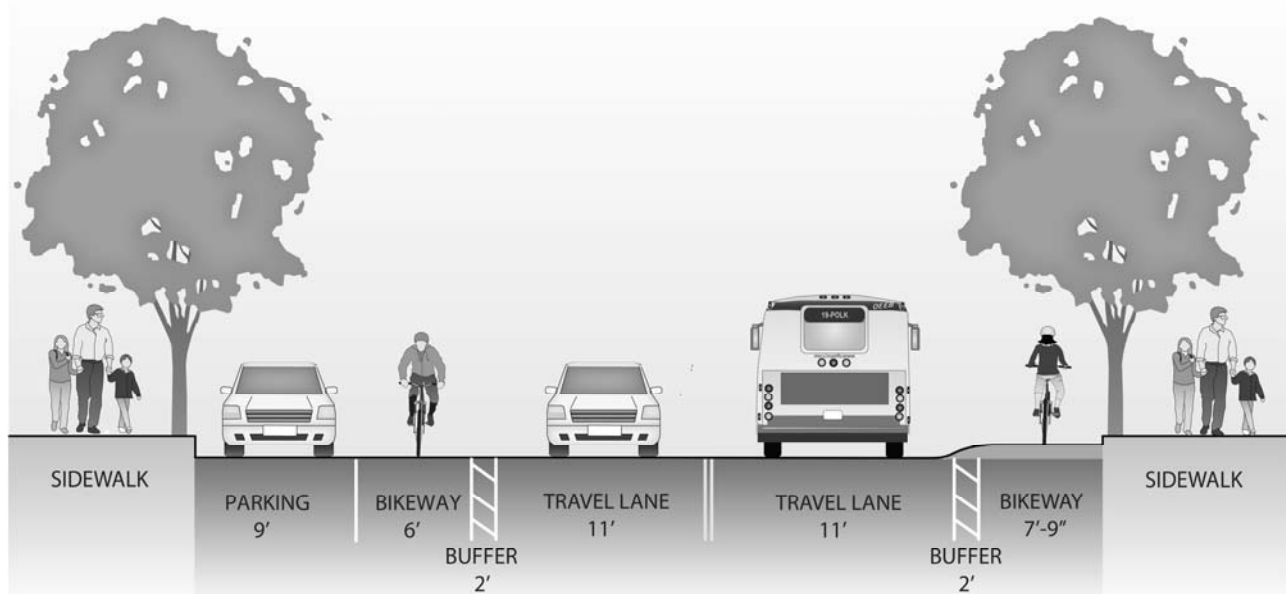


Figure 3: Northbound Section View between Turk and Post Streets

Post Street to Pine Street

Polk Street from Post to Pine streets is 44'-9" wide with 12' wide sidewalks on each side. The northbound and southbound directions each have a curbside parking lane and a single shared traffic lane for motor vehicles and bicycles, which is striped with shared lane ("sharrow") markings. Each travel lane is 13'-4.5" wide and each parking lane is 8' wide. Crosswalk striping exists at all signalized intersections. Metered parking is present on both sides of the street for the entire segment. Designated commercial loading zones are generally present on each block along either side of the street. The 19-Polk bus operates in both directions on this segment of Polk Street. Two bus bulbouts are present on the west side of this segment of Polk Street. Bus stops are located approximately every one to two blocks along this segment of Polk Street.

As shown in **Figure 4**, between Post Street and Pine Street, a northbound raised 7'-9" wide green cycletrack and a southbound 6' wide green bike lane would be constructed. Between Post Street and Pine Street, the available roadway width is four feet narrower than the segment of Polk Street to the south. As a result, the northbound raised cycletrack and southbound bike lane would not have a painted buffer separating them from motor vehicle traffic between Post Street and Pine Street. A southbound left-turn pocket would be installed on Polk Street at Bush Street.

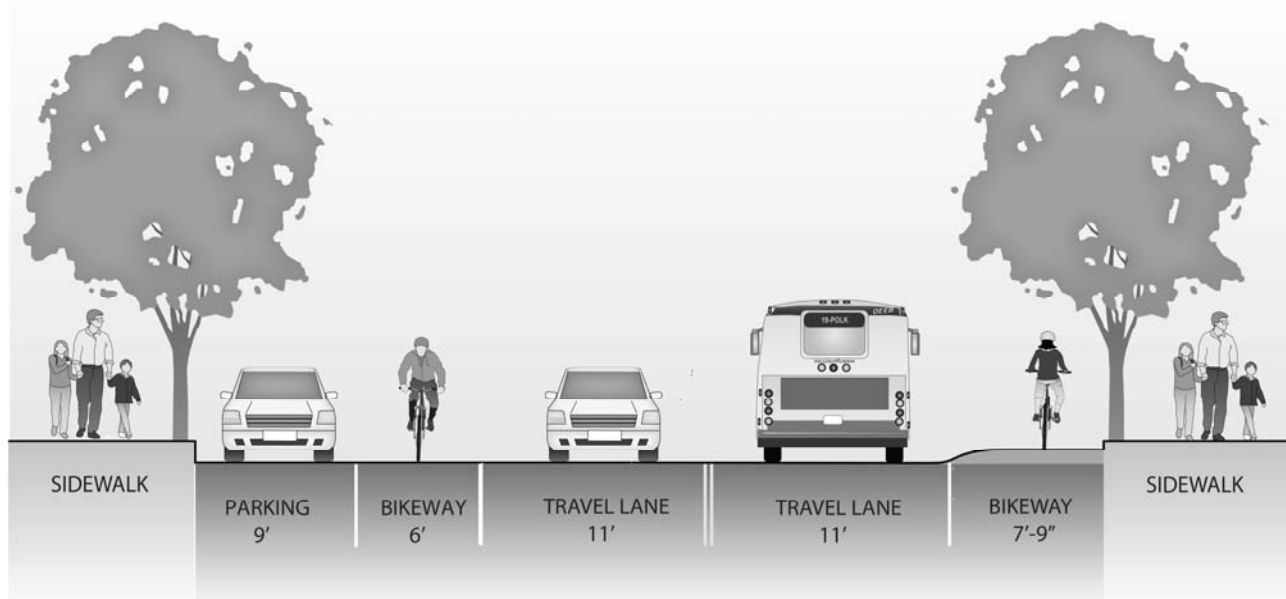


Figure 4: Northbound Section View between Post and Pine Streets

Pedestrian improvements would include continental crosswalk striping at all intersections, red curb zones near intersection approaches to improve visibility (fewer parked cars in motorists' line of sight), and corner bulbout sidewalk extensions at key locations. Bulbouts will be constructed into Bush Street at the southwest and southeast corners, and into Pine Street at the northwest and northeast corners. A raised crosswalk would be constructed at Fern Street along the east side of Polk Street. Loading operations have been analyzed for effectiveness, and relocation of existing zones and establishment of new zones would be included as part of the project.

Bus stop relocation from the near side to the far side of an intersection would occur at Post Street and Pine Street in the northbound direction and at Sutter Street in the southbound direction. Bus stop consolidation would occur for this segment of Polk Street and would include consolidating the northbound stop at Sutter Street with other nearby stops. A far side bus bulbout in the southbound direction at Sutter Street would be constructed. Parking removal and loading zone relocation would occur along the entirety of the east side of Polk Street between Post Street and Pine Street where the raised cycletrack will be constructed. Parking removal and loading zone relocation would also occur on the west side of Polk Street at approaches to intersections to accommodate right or left turn only lanes.

Pine to Union Streets

Polk Street from Pine to Union Streets is 44'-9" wide with 12' wide sidewalks on each side. Northbound and southbound traffic each have a curbside parking lane and a single shared traffic lane for vehicles and bicycles, which is striped with shared lane ("sharrow") markings. Each travel lane is 13'-4.5" wide while each parking lane is 8' wide. Crosswalk striping exists at all signalized intersections. Crosswalk striping is not present at the unsignalized intersection of Polk and Bonita Streets, but is present at the stop-controlled intersections at Green Street, and Vallejo Street. Polk Street between Union Street and Broadway has higher pedestrian demand than other segments of the project corridor.

On-street metered parking is present on either side of the street for the entire segment. Designated curbside loading zones are generally present on each block along either side of the street. Double parking by personal or commercial motor vehicles is frequently observed between Post and Union Streets. The 19-Polk bus operates in both directions on this segment of Polk Street. Three bus bulbouts are present on the west side of this segment of Polk Street. Bus stops are located approximately every one to two blocks along this segment of Polk Street.

Though it is anticipated that a part-time (7AM to 10AM – parking would be prohibited on the east side of Polk Street during these times) northbound bicycle lane would be provided between Pine Street and Broadway, improvements on the northbound side of Polk Street could ultimately include a full-time raised cycletrack similar to the segment between Post and Pine Streets shown in Figure 4 above. In order to describe the maximum possible environmental effects of the proposed project, a raised cycletrack is assumed for the purposes of this environmental analysis. The intersection of Polk Street and Broadway would be restriped to have one through lane and a new right-turn-only lane. Under existing conditions, only a shared through-right lane is present on this approach. For the western approach of Broadway from Larkin Street to Polk Street, the project would include rescinding the PM peak period tow away zone located on the north side of Broadway (parking would be permitted during the PM peak period on this part of Broadway). The proposed project would relocate yellow zones from the east side of Polk Street to the west side, and to nearby locations on side streets to compensate for the loss of loading on the east side of Polk Street.

Pedestrian improvements would include continental crosswalk striping at all intersections, red zones near intersection approaches to improve visibility, and corner bulbout sidewalk extensions at key locations. Bulbouts would be constructed into Broadway at the southeast corner, into Broadway and Polk Street at the northwest corner, and into Green Street and Polk Street at their northwest and southwest corners. A bulbout into Green Street at the southeast corner of Green Street and Polk Street would also be constructed. Loading operations have been analyzed for effectiveness and recommendations for changing the time of operation, relocation of existing zones and establishing new zones are included as part of the project. Existing bus zones of substandard length along this segment of Polk Street would be lengthened.

Bus stop consolidation would occur on this segment of Polk Street, and would include consolidating the northbound stops at California Street, Pacific Avenue, and Green Street; and the southbound stops at Vallejo Street and California Street with other nearby stops. A far side and near side bus bulbout in the southbound direction would be respectively constructed at Broadway and at Union Street. Parking removal for pedestrian improvements, and loading zone relocation evaluation would occur at locations along both sides of this segment of Polk Street.

Streetscape Improvement Construction Activities

Construction would occur in intermittent phases over the course of 18 months. Streetscape work would not require excavation below the existing roadway sub-ballast, though the proposed sewer and water main work would require deeper excavation as described below. Equipment to be used would include excavators, loaders, backhoes, skid steers, rollers, sawcutting machines, paving equipment (grinders), pavers, supply trucks, concrete mixer trucks, demolition dump trucks, materials delivery trucks, and roadway striping vehicles. Temporary street, sidewalk, and lane closures and detours would be necessary. Work would be performed on a block-by-block basis. On each block, streetscape construction

work would generally occur after excavation and backfilling activities for the proposed sewer and water main repairs/replacement have been completed.

Sewer and Water Main Repair and Replacement

In order to maintain the sewer and water systems in a state of good repair, and to expand sewer and water capacity as necessary to bring aging infrastructure up to current minimum standards to serve existing development, SFPUC would perform repair and replacement of several sewer and water main line segments in conjunction with SFMTA's streetscape construction work. The additional water main capacity would also support the provision of fire protection services for existing development. Work would be performed along Polk Street and up to one block east or west of Polk Street along selected cross streets. All work would occur within the existing paved street right-of-way. Temporary street, sidewalk, and lane closures and detours would be necessary. On each affected block, sewer and water main work would generally be performed prior to SFMTA's streetscape construction work.

Sewer Repair and Replacement

Approximately 4,400 linear feet of sewers would be replaced (or repaired, as noted) at the following locations within the street right-of-way³:

- Polk Street from Grove Street to McAllister Street (combination of repair and replacement)
- Polk Street within the Geary Boulevard intersection (replacement of culverts)
- Polk Street from Geary Boulevard to Cedar Street
- Polk Street from Post Street to Sutter Street (repair/re-mortar existing brick sewer)
- Polk Street from Pine Street to California Street
- Polk Street from Pacific Avenue to Broadway
- Polk Street from Union Street to Filbert Street
- Polk Street from Greenwich Street to Lombard Street
- Polk Street from Lombard Street to Chestnut Street
- Polk Street from Chestnut Street to Francisco Street
- Polk Street from Francisco Street to Bay Street
- Olive Street from Polk Street to Van Ness Avenue
- Frank Norris Street from Polk Street to Larkin Street
- Austin Street from Polk Street to Van Ness Avenue
- Elm Street from Polk Street to Van Ness Avenue

Sewer trench dimensions at each location would range from 4 to 8 feet in width, and up to 11 feet in depth. Construction would occur in intermittent phases over the course of 18 months, with approximately 210 work days in total dedicated to sewer construction. Some of the sewer construction days would overlap with street improvement and water main replacement work. Equipment to be used would include sawcutting machines, excavators, loaders/backhoes, paving equipment (grinders), pavers, supply and delivery trucks, rollers, concrete mixers, and dump trucks.

³ Additional details and documentation regarding the proposed sewer improvements and associated construction activities are available for review at the Planning Department, 1650 Mission Street, 4th Floor, as part of Case File 2013.1721E.

Water Main Replacement

Approximately 12,000 linear feet of water main pipes would be replaced at the following locations within the street right-of-way⁴:

- Polk Street from Beach Street to Filbert Street
- North Point Street from Van Ness Avenue to Larkin Street
- Bay Street from Van Ness Avenue to Larkin Street
- Chestnut Street from Van Ness Avenue to Polk Street
- Greenwich Street from Van Ness Avenue to Polk Street
- Filbert Street from Polk Street to Larkin Street
- Union Street from Van Ness Avenue to Larkin Street
- Golden Gate Avenue from Van Ness Avenue to Larkin Street
- Grove Street from Van Ness Avenue to Larkin Street
- Within the intersections of Polk Street and the following streets:
 - Francisco Street
 - Pacific Street
 - Clay Street
 - Sacramento Street
 - California Street
 - Austin Street
 - Bush Street
 - Fern Street
 - Hemlock Street
 - Cedar Street
 - Geary Boulevard
 - Olive Street
 - Ellis Street
 - Eddy Street
 - McAllister Street

Water main trench dimensions at each location would range from 1.5 to 3 feet in width, and up to 5 feet in depth. Construction would occur in intermittent phases over the course of 18 months, with approximately 117 work days in total dedicated to water main replacement. Some of the water main construction days would overlap with street improvement and sewer repair/replacement work. Equipment to be used would include loaders, backhoes, dump trucks, flatbeds, cranes, pickup trucks, and utility trucks. In order to maintain potable water service to all retail customers along the project alignment the existing pipeline must remain in service while the replacement water mains are installed. Once the replacement water mains have been installed, the existing mains would be capped or slurried in place.

⁴ Additional details and documentation regarding the proposed water main improvements and associated construction activities are available for review at the Planning Department, 1650 Mission Street, 4th Floor, as part of Case File 2013.1721E.

Project Approvals

Approval Action: Pursuant to Section 31.04 of the San Francisco Administrative Code, the first decision by a City department or official in reliance on this exemption that commits the City to a definite course of action in regard to the proposed project would be approval of the proposed project by the SFMTA Board of Directors. Approval by the SFMTA Board of Directors is the Approval Action for this project. The Approval Action date establishes the start of the 30-day appeal period for this CEQA exemption determination pursuant to Section 31.04(h) of the San Francisco Administrative Code. Other approvals required include SFPUC and SFDPW approval to award construction contracts for the sewer and water main work.

REMARKS:

Archeological Resources

Planning Department archeology staff have reviewed the proposed sewer and water main work and concluded that no impacts to previously-undiscovered archeological deposits are anticipated based on the relatively shallow depth of proposed excavation (up to 11 feet) and previous soil disturbance caused by prior utility installations⁵. Nonetheless, the SFPUC and its construction contractor would implement SFPUC Standard Construction Measure⁶ Number 9 as part of the proposed project, which would require distribution of the Planning Department "ALERT" sheet to all workers participating in ground-disturbing activities and suspend soil-disturbing activities in the vicinity if there is any indication of the presence of an archeological resource. This standard construction measure is included in SFPUC projects' construction contract technical specifications to ensure that adverse effects to archeological resources do not occur in the event of an unanticipated discovery during construction. SFPUC would also require SFMTA to implement these standard measures, should SFMTA carry out any of the sewer or water main work.

Aside from the excavation needed to perform the proposed sewer and water main work, the proposed streetscape improvements would not otherwise require excavation below the existing roadway sub-ballast. As such, the streetscape work would not cause any significant impacts on archeological resources.

Historic Resources

Several properties, both individual buildings and districts, that are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or eligible for listing are located along the project corridor. With the exception of the Civic Center Historic District, these historical resource designations extend only to the edge of the

⁵ E-mail from Randall Dean, September 25, 2014. This document is available for review at the Planning Department, 1650 Mission Street, 4th Floor, as part of Case File 2013.1721E.

⁶ PUC requires the Standard Construction Measures issued February 7, 2007 to be implemented as applicable for all of its projects. These measures would be applies to this project. The Standard Construction Measures are on file at the San Francisco Planning Department, Environmental Planning Division.

public right-of-way and do not include features of the streetscape⁷. Since the proposed project and construction activities would be limited to the public right-of-way, no significant impact to these historic resources would occur.

The two-block portion of the Polk Street Improvement project between Grove Street and Golden Gate Avenue would be located in the Civic Center Historic District. Within the historic district, permanent streetscape changes would be made on the block of Polk Street between McAllister Street and Golden Gate Avenue. The block of Polk Street between McAllister and Grove Streets would undergo sewer and water main work, but would have no streetscape improvements as part of the proposed project.

Within the one block of the Civic Center Historic District (Polk Street between McAllister Street and Golden Gate Avenue) where reconfiguration and restriping of the roadway will occur, the only identified potentially significant streetscape elements are:

- One firebox in sidewalk at northwest corner of Polk and McAllister Streets, and
- Fire hydrants at the southeast and southwest corners of Polk and Golden Gate Avenue.

As the proposed work along this block of Polk Street would be limited replacement of three non-historic light standards and other construction activities within the roadway, no impact to streetscape or architectural features of the historic district is anticipated. The proposed work may slightly alter the integrity of setting within this block of the Civic Center Historic District, but it would not materially impair the significance of the historic district. Replacement light standards would match the single pendant fixtures that are prevalent throughout the historic district and would not impact the district in comparison to the current non-historic cobra-head light standards. Any sewer and water main work along the block of Polk Street (Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place) between McAllister and Grove Streets would be in the roadway, so no impact to the extant granite curbs or setting of the historic district is anticipated. Therefore, the proposed project would not have any significant impacts on historic resources.

Transportation

Traffic

The proposed streetscape changes would reduce the motor vehicle carrying capacity at some intersections along the Polk Street corridor. An intersection Level of Service (LOS) analysis was conducted for 20 intersections on Van Ness Avenue, Polk Street, and Larkin Street for the PM peak hour (5PM to 6PM). LOS analysis was conducted at intersections that would have changes to geometry, signal phasing, or vehicle volumes due to the Project. **Table 1** shows the PM peak hour analysis for the intersection with and without the proposed Project under existing and 2035 cumulative conditions.

⁷ Additional information about these resources is provided in the project file, which is available for review at the Planning Department, 1650 Mission Street, 4th Floor, as part of Case File 2013.1721E

Table 1: PM Peak Hour Existing and Cumulative LOS Analysis

Intersection		Existing Conditions			Existing Plus Project			2035 Cumulative No Project			2035 Cumulative Plus Project		
		Delay	v/c	LOS	Delay	v/c	LOS	Delay	v/c	LOS	Delay	v/c	LOS
Van Ness at Geary	1	25.3	0.79	C	25.3	0.79	C	35.4	0.94	D	35.9	0.95	D
Van Ness at Ellis	2	8.9	0.6	A	8.8	0.59	A	18.5	0.88	B	18.5	0.88	B
Van Ness at Eddy	3	18.8	0.76	B	18.7	0.76	B	44.3	1.06	D	44.4	1.05	D
Van Ness at Turk	4	20.7	0.79	C	20.8	0.79	C	31.0	0.87	C	31.1	0.88	C
Van Ness at Golden Gate	5	19.2	0.79	B	19.2	0.79	B	14.6	0.81	B	14.6	0.81	B
Van Ness at McAllister	6	12.9	0.79	B	12.8	0.79	B	22.8	0.92	C	22.8	0.91	C
Polk at Broadway	7	16.8	0.59	D	22.5	0.68	C	17.9	0.65	B	25.0	0.74	C
Polk at Pacific	8	15.1	0.56	B	15.2	0.55	B	23.6	0.83	C	24.4	0.85	C
Polk at California	9	28.0	0.81	C	29.0	0.82	C	31.4	1.00	C	32.0	1.00	C
Polk at Bush	10	22.6	0.84	C	23.5	0.81	C	54.2	1.10	D	42.9	1.02	D
Polk at Sutter	11	29.4	0.86	C	29.4	0.86	C	38.2	1.00	D	34.0	0.98	C
Polk at Geary	12	25.0	0.86	C	52.6	0.9	D	297.8	1.86	F	184.3	1.22	F
Polk at O'Farrell	13	33.3	0.92	C	30.9	0.75	C	53.6	1.06	D	49.7	0.89	D
Polk at Ellis	14	16.4	0.63	B	17.6	0.56	B	146.6	1.05	F	28.8	0.89	C
Polk at Eddy	15	38.4	0.95	D	31.8	0.96	C	100.5	1.07	F	52.0	1.11	D
Polk at Turk	16	19.0	0.73	B	22	0.78	C	20.6	0.89	C	21.9	0.93	C
Polk at Golden Gate	17	13.3	0.51	B	17.7	0.59	B	17.5	0.62	B	20.0	0.67	C
Polk at McAllister	18	12.2	0.56	B	17.5	0.75	B	40.3	0.95	D	29.8	0.91	C
Larkin at Ellis	19	20.4	0.56	C	21.8	0.56	C	28.8	0.89	C	21.8	0.65	C
Larkin at Eddy	20	14.3	0.69	C	14.4	0.69	C	26.0	0.98	C	28.2	0.98	C
Larkin at Golden Gate	21	15.3	0.71	B	17.1	0.72	B	27.6	0.89	C	27.8	0.89	C
Larkin at McAllister	22	7.2	0.77	A	7.2	0.77	A	27.8	1.04	C	28.0	1.04	C

Source: SFMTA, 2014.

Notes: Delay is measured in seconds per vehicle and v/c represents the volume-to-capacity ratio.

Future year 2035 Cumulative traffic volumes were developed in order to assess local cumulative developments which result in increases in traffic volumes. For the future year 2035, cumulative intersection traffic volumes for the PM peak hour were estimated based on growth rates developed for the study area from data taken from the City and County of San Francisco Transportation Authority (SFCTA) travel demand model for the weekday PM peak hour. These 2035 cumulative traffic volumes account for growth due to cumulative development in the City and the entire Bay Area. The 2035 Cumulative traffic conditions also consider the intersection geometry changes from the Van Ness Avenue Bus Rapid Transit project and associated traffic diversions.

The LOS calculations for the Existing Plus Project and 2035 Cumulative Plus Project scenarios indicate that all intersections, except Polk Street at Geary Street for the 2035 scenarios, would operate at

acceptable LOS (LOS D or better) during the PM peak hour. The intersection of Polk Street at Geary Street would operate at LOS F and 297.8 seconds of delay for the 2035 Cumulative No Project scenario. With the proposed project, this intersection would remain at LOS F but the delay would decrease to 184.3 seconds, thus improving operations at the intersection. Therefore, the proposed project would have no significant traffic impacts.

Transit and Pedestrian

Bus stop consolidation and relocation would occur on Polk Street for the 19-Polk bus route. These changes would be completed in an effort to improve on-time performance, running times, efficiency, and reliability for the 19-Polk bus route for the Existing Plus Project and 2035 Cumulative Plus Project conditions. Due to stop consolidation, passengers may need to walk further to access a bus stop, and some passengers may be inconvenienced. SFMTA recognizes that passengers, including the elderly and disabled, may have differing concerns with respect to transit stop location. Some may depend on transit to meet their needs for efficient travel, while others prefer more frequent stops to minimize walking distances. While stop removal or consolidation may increase the physical effort required to reach a particular transit stop location, the Polk Street Improvement Project would also include components to improve overall pedestrian and disabled access conditions, such as the installation of curb bulbouts and enhanced crosswalk markings. Despite the possible inconvenience, the proposed bus stop changes would not result in substantial overcrowding on public sidewalks, create potentially hazardous conditions for pedestrians attempting to access transit buses, or otherwise interfere with pedestrian accessibility to a particular site and adjoining areas. Therefore, the transit and pedestrian impacts of the proposed project would be less than significant.

Bicycle

The proposed project would include new bicycle facilities, including green bike lanes, raised green cycletracks, buffer zones to separate bicycles from motor vehicle traffic, and other safety and visibility improvements. Bicycles currently traveling on the east side of Polk Street in the northbound direction share a travel lane with vehicles between Post and Pine and are impeded by double-parked vehicles blocking the existing bike lane between McAllister and Post Streets. With the removal of all parking spaces on the east side of Polk Street between Turk and Union Streets, cyclists would have their own dedicated raised cycletrack along the majority of Polk Street. No general metered on-street parking or loading zones would be available for motorized vehicles in this street segment.

Though SFMTA policy would allow accessible disabled passenger loading in the bike lanes, the frequency of passenger loading activities in bike lanes is infrequent and short in duration. Accessible services loading in bike lanes would generally occur with less frequency than double parking currently does, and the proposed project would reduce conflicts with vehicles in a shared travel lane that occur under existing conditions. The raised cycletrack would have a mountable curb that would allow cyclists to pass any vehicles that may be loading or unloading passengers. Cyclists passing a loading or unloading vehicle would be required to merge into the vehicle lane to pass the loading vehicle, and then merge back onto the raised cycletrack. A small, mountable curb would separate the raised cycletrack and vehicle lane and would be traversable by cyclists and vehicles when necessary. Polk Street experiences low to moderate traffic volumes, with adequate gaps for bicyclists to occasionally enter the travel lane if need be. When compared to existing conditions on Polk Street, the proposed mountable curb and short-

term, infrequent loading by accessible services vehicles would not result in new or worse conditions for cyclists. The proposed bicycle lane additions and improvements would also enhance the safety and comfort of bicycling along the corridor. As such, the proposed project would not have significant adverse impacts on bicyclists. If SFMTA ultimately approves fewer improvements to bicycle facilities than described in this environmental document, the project would provide fewer transportation benefits for cyclists, but such reduction in project scope would not create any new hazards or other impacts compared to existing conditions.

Emergency Access

The proposed project would not close any existing streets or entrances to public uses, and emergency vehicles would not be impeded by the proposed street changes. The raised cycletrack would be designed to be mountable by vehicles, including emergency vehicles. Therefore, the project would not have any significant impacts on emergency vehicle access.

Construction

The overall project would include fully repaving the roadway and replacing water and sewer infrastructure. During the 18-month construction period drivers, transit riders, bicyclists, and pedestrians would encounter temporary lane reconfigurations along Polk Street, as well as temporary detours around sewer and water main construction closures. Parking spaces along Polk Street, beyond those being permanently removed for the proposed project, would be temporarily unavailable during construction. Detours would be temporary and limited to the construction period. Access to driveways and garages would be maintained during project construction activities.

As required, the City's Transportation Advisory Staff Committee (TASC) would determine feasible methods to reduce effects on traffic circulation, the transit system, loading, and pedestrian circulation during construction of the proposed project. TASC consists of representatives from SFMTA's Department of Parking and Traffic (DPT), the Fire Department, Muni Service Planning, and the Planning Department. The timing and location of detours would be coordinated with the nearby Van Ness Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Project, which may be under construction at the same time as the proposed project. Given the temporary and intermittent nature of the construction activities, the intermittent detours and closures associated with construction of the proposed project would not result in significant project-specific or cumulative transportation impacts.

Loading

The proposed changes to loading zones (addition of approximately 9 commercial loading spaces and removal of approximately 10 passenger loading spaces along the project corridor) as part of the Polk Street Improvement Project are based on SFMTA staff observations and conversations with Polk Street merchants about existing loading challenges and needs. Staff identified blocks with frequent double parking, loading zones that could not accommodate larger-sized trucks (resulting in double parking), and loading zones that are not adjacent to each other (limiting the length of trucks that can fit). The analysis recommended changes which consider project area loading patterns, adjacent businesses, and location. These changes include relocating scattered loading zones to adjacent spaces to allow for flexibility for different sized trucks, establishing new loading zones on blocks where additional spaces would reduce the frequency of double parking, and placement of loading zones to allow for easier truck

movements. The proposed changes would facilitate loading activities on Polk Street and potentially result in fewer double-parked vehicles. As such, the proposed project would not have a significant impact on loading activities. **Table 2** shows the maximum proposed extent of changes to colored curb spaces (loading zones and disabled parking spaces), and **Table 3** provides additional detail about the white passenger loading zones that would be affected.

Table 2: Existing and Proposed Colored Curb Spaces along Polk Street and Adjoining Blocks between McAllister and Union Streets

Zone Type	Existing Supply	Plus Project Supply	Change
Yellow (Commercial Loading)	183	192	9
White (Passenger Loading)	133	123	-10
Blue (Disabled Parking)	12	39	27

Table 3: White Zones Affected by the Proposed Project

Street	Adjacent Cross Streets	Side	Ft. Rem.	Notes
O'Farrell	Polk – Larkin	South	40	Relocate 20' to the east to accommodate new blue zone.
Polk	Union – Green	East	44	Accessible passenger loading allowed in bike lanes.
Polk	Union – Green	East	30	Accessible passenger loading allowed in bike lanes.
Polk	Broadway – Pacific	East	44	Accessible passenger loading allowed in bike lanes.
Polk	Bush – Austin	West	30	Accessible passenger loading allowed in bike lanes.
Polk	Bush – Frank Norris	East	22	Accessible passenger loading allowed in bike lanes.
Polk	Geary – Cedar	West	40	Accessible passenger loading allowed in bike lanes.
Polk	Olive – O'Farrell	East	41	Corner business also has frontage to a 40' white zone around the corner on O'Farrell.
Polk	Willow – Ellis	East	22	Accessible passenger loading allowed in bike lanes.
Polk	Turk – Eddy	East	45	Accessible passenger loading allowed in bike lanes.
Polk	Turk - Eddy	West	39	Accessible passenger loading allowed in bike lanes.

Parking

The existing on-street parking supply bounded by Van Ness Avenue, Union Street, Larkin Street, and McAllister Street is approximately 1,906 on-street parking spaces. The existing peak midday parking demand for this area is 1,341 spaces and the PM peak demand is 1,317 spaces, yielding respective utilization rates of 70% and 69%. The parking utilization rate for Polk Street between McAllister and Union Streets is approximately 72% for the midday peak period and 65% for the PM peak period. The Van Ness Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Environmental Impact Statement/Environmental Impact Report⁸ (EIS/EIR) determined that parking utilization in the area is 70% for the midday and PM peak periods. The SFMTA also collected parking occupancy data along Polk Street. For the purposes of this analysis, the parking utilization rates for Polk Street were used for spaces on Polk Street and Van Ness Avenue Bus Rapid Transit EIS/EIR rates were used for other parking spaces for an area bounded by Van Ness Avenue, Union Street, Larkin Street, and McAllister Street.

The proposed project and any variant would be expected to remove up to 250 parking spaces along the Polk Street corridor. With the proposed project, the parking supply capacity would be approximately 1,656 spaces. The resulting utilization for the midday and PM peak periods increase to 81% and 80% respectively (increases of 11% for both of these periods). The number of on-street parking spaces removed by the project would not result in a deficiency of capacity and the available parking supply would continue to accommodate the expected parking demand for the respective midday and PM peak periods.

The 2035 Cumulative Condition (without the Polk Street Improvement project) on-street parking supply would be reduced from approximately 1,906 parking spaces to 1,840 with the construction of the Van Ness Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Project. The proposed project and any variant would remove up to an additional 250 parking spaces for a cumulative capacity of approximately 1,590 spaces. The utilization for the 2035 Cumulative Condition would be 84% for the midday peak period and 83% for the PM peak period. The number of on-street parking spaces removed by the proposed project would not result in a deficiency of capacity and the available parking supply would continue to accommodate the expected parking demand for the respective midday and PM peak periods.

In addition to these on-street parking changes, the SFMTA-controlled parking garage at 1399 Bush Street currently has a capacity of 129 off-street parking spaces with a portion of these spaces reserved for monthly parking. The SFMTA has begun to phase out some of the monthly parking spaces, which will result in more hourly parking spaces. San Francisco does not consider parking supply as part of the permanent physical environment. Parking conditions are not static, as parking supply and demand varies from day to day, from day to night, from month to month, etc. Hence, the availability of parking spaces (or lack thereof) is not a permanent physical condition, but changes over time as people change their modes and patterns of travel.

Parking deficits are considered to be social effects, rather than impacts on the physical environment as defined by CEQA. Under CEQA, a project's social impacts need not be treated as significant impacts on

⁸ The Van Ness Avenue Bus Rapid Transit EIS/EIR is available for review at: <http://www.sfcta.org/van-ness-avenue-bus-rapid-transit-planning-and-environmental-studies#DOW>

the environment. Environmental documents should, however, address the secondary physical impacts that could be triggered by a social impact. (CEQA Guidelines § 15131(a).) The social inconvenience of parking deficits, such as having to hunt for scarce parking spaces, is not an environmental impact, but there may be secondary physical environmental impacts, such as increased traffic congestion at intersections, air quality impacts, safety impacts, or noise impacts caused by congestion. In the experience of San Francisco transportation planners, however, the absence of a ready supply of parking spaces, combined with available alternatives to auto travel (e.g., transit service, taxis, bicycles or travel by foot) and a relatively dense pattern of urban development, induces many drivers to seek and find alternative parking facilities, shift to other modes of travel, or change their overall travel habits. Any such resulting shifts to transit service in particular, would be in keeping with the City's "Transit First" policy. The City's Transit First Policy, established in the City's Charter Section 16.102 provides that "parking policies for areas well served by public transit shall be designed to encourage travel by public transportation and alternative transportation." Though the proposed project would result in on-street parking removal, it would enhance pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities, thereby improving the effectiveness and attractiveness of those modes. The project corridor would become more accessible by bicycle, transit, and walking, which would help offset the effects of parking removal.

The transportation analysis accounts for potential secondary effects, such as cars circling and looking for a parking space in areas of limited parking supply, by assuming that all drivers would attempt to find parking at or near the project site and then seek parking farther away if convenient parking is unavailable. Moreover, the secondary effects of drivers searching for parking is typically offset by a reduction in vehicle trips due to others who are aware of constrained parking conditions in a given area. Hence, any secondary environmental impacts which may result from a shortfall in parking in the vicinity of the proposed project would be minor, and the traffic assignments used in the transportation analysis, as well as in the associated air quality, noise and pedestrian safety analyses, reasonably addresses potential secondary effects.

Air Quality

Given that the proposed project consists of streetscape and utility work, the proposed project is not anticipated to generate substantial permanent additional emissions of air pollutants. Emissions of dust and air pollutants during the project construction are expected to be of short duration along individual blocks, given the limited nature of the project and the fact that ground-disturbing activities should also be minimized based on the widths of the pipeline trenches. The construction activities performed as part of the proposed project would also be subject to the city's Clean Construction Ordinance⁹, which requires diesel vehicles to be fueled with B20 biodiesel and the use of equipment that meets USEPA Tier 2 standards or best available control technologies for equipment over 25 horsepower. While compliance with the Clean Construction Ordinance would reduce construction-related air pollutant and ozone precursor exhaust emissions, individual projects may emit criteria air pollutants and ozone precursors that exceed the Bay Area Air Quality Management District's (BAAQMD) thresholds of significance. As such, based on construction estimates provided by SFMTA and SFPUC, Planning Department staff

⁹ Section 6.25 of Chapter 6 of the San Francisco Administrative Code, Ordinance Number 70-07, Approved April 2, 2007.

performed a CalEEMod assessment using conservative assumptions about the intensity and duration of construction activities. The resulting estimated average daily criteria air pollutants during project construction would be below the BAAQMD pollutant thresholds¹⁰. Therefore, no significant air quality impacts would occur.

Hazardous Materials

State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCP) Geotracker and State Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) Envirostor databases were reviewed by Planning Department staff. One leaking underground (fuel) storage tank (LUST) cleanup sites was identified in the vicinity of the proposed project: 401 Polk Street (File Number T10000005382), on the corner of Polk and McAllister Streets is identified with a cleanup status of "Open – Site Assessment" as of March 1, 1993. Construction would not occur on this site, and the site is not included in the proposed project. Excavation would be limited to the paved street right-of-way in the vicinity of 401 Polk Street.

If underground contaminated soils, groundwater, or soil vapor are encountered during excavation, the construction contractor would be required to comply with standard contract technical specifications related to the characterization, transportation, and disposal of hazardous materials and comply with applicable local, state, and federal regulations related to hazardous materials. The construction crews would be required to maintain a spill kit on site in the event fuels (gasoline or diesel) or lubricants are spilled during project activity. Therefore, significant adverse impacts related to potential exposure of construction workers or the public to hazardous materials are not anticipated.

CONCLUSION:

CEQA State Guidelines Section 15301, or Class 1, provides an exemption from environmental review for the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of an existing use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency's determination. This exemption applies to existing highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities (this includes road grading for the purpose of public safety). The proposed project consists of street and sidewalk modifications, new street trees and furniture, repaving, expanded crosswalks, new sidewalk bulbs, removal and relocation of parking and loading zones, consolidation and relocation of bus stops, and traffic lane configuration changes (lane reductions and turning restrictions on some blocks as noted in "Project Description" above) where no more than negligible increase in use of the street would result. Portions of the proposed bicycle lanes would be raised a few inches above the rest of the street pavement (raised cycletrack; see Figures 1, 3, and 4 for a graphical representation) to enhance safety. All changes would occur within the existing street and sidewalk right-of-way. The proposed project would therefore be appropriately exempt under Class 1.

CEQA State Guidelines Section 15302, or Class 2, provides an exemption from environmental review for the replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the new structure will be

¹⁰ Air Quality Memorandum, Polk Street Improvement Project. This document is available for review at the Planning Department, 1650 Mission Street, 4th Floor, as part of Case File 2013.1721E.

located on the same site as the structure replaced and will have substantially the same purpose and capacity as the structure replaced. This includes replacement or reconstruction of existing utility systems and/or facilities involving negligible or no expansion of capacity. The proposed project includes rehabilitation and replacement of existing water mains and sewers. The new structures would be located on the same sites as the existing structures, and would have the same purposes as the structures replaced. Water main and sewer capacity would be expanded as necessary to bring old infrastructure up to current minimum standards to serve existing development, and to provide adequate water main capacity to provide existing development with fire protection services. The proposed project would therefore be appropriately exempt under Class 2.

CEQA State Guidelines Section 15304, or Class 4, provides an exemption from environmental review for minor public or private alterations in the condition of land, water, and/or vegetation which do not involve removal of healthy, mature, scenic trees except for forestry and agricultural purposes. This exemption class includes new landscaping and the creation of bicycle lanes on existing right-of-way. The proposed project includes new streetscape plantings and furnishings, as well as new bicycle lanes within the existing right-of-way of Polk Street. Existing street trees would remain, and new street trees would be added. The proposed project would therefore be appropriately exempt under Class 4.

CEQA State Guidelines Section 15300.2 states that a categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances. There are no unusual circumstances surrounding the current proposal that would suggest a reasonable possibility of a significant effect. The proposed project would have no significant environmental effects. The project would be exempt under the above-cited classifications. For the above reasons, the proposed project is appropriately exempt from environmental review.