# Caltrans Sloat Boulevard Pedestrian Safety Project
# Response to Community Questions, Comments & Concerns

Revised: May 10, 2016

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) is planning various pedestrian enhancements, including pedestrian signals and bulb-outs, along the Sloat Boulevard (State Route 35) corridor between 36th Avenue and 21st Avenue. Information about the project can be found at: http://www.sfpublicworks.org/sloat (note: San Francisco Public Works is undergoing a transition to a new web address, please use this new address and disregard any previous web addresses). Caltrans has worked in coordination with the San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (SFMTA) and San Francisco Public Works to develop the proposed project and to engage in community outreach.

During the outreach process, which included two public meetings and a survey, Sloat Boulevard neighbors provided feedback on the proposed project elements. In an effort to respond to this feedback, the project team has prepared this "Response to Community Questions, Comments and Concerns". Please note we have reorganized this document to make it easier to read and added additional information. Updated project proposal graphics are also posted online.

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## Project Modifications

Based on community feedback and further analysis, the following project modifications are proposed:

- Shorter red zones. This change maintains approximately three parking spaces previously proposed to be removed.
- SFMTA is no longer pursuing the bus bulb on 36th Avenue; a smaller pedestrian bulb is proposed to provide sidewalk space for Hybrid Pedestrian Beacon (HAWK) beacon equipment. This change maintains approximately two parking spaces previously proposed to be removed.

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## Project History

Sloat Boulevard is State Route 35 connecting Skyline Boulevard to the west with 19th Avenue (State Route 1) through a San Francisco residential area. Originally six lanes wide, with 40 mph speed limits, Sloat Boulevard has been identified as a location needing pedestrian safety enhancement, with eleven pedestrian-involved collisions in the past 10 years, including two fatalities in 2010 and 2013. Over the past decade Caltrans (the operator of Sloat Boulevard since it is a state highway) has worked in coordination with the City and County of San Francisco to develop and deliver projects to enhance the

pedestrian environment along the corridor. The following is a summary of milestones associated with the proposed project as well as previously complete projects.

- 2005 – Caltrans installed vehicle speed feedback signs.
- 2010 – Supervisor Carmen Chu requested Caltrans develop plans to improve pedestrian safety.
- 2012 – Caltrans redesigned portions of Sloat Boulevard by reducing the number of lanes, adding bicycle lanes, reducing the speed limit to 35 mph and adding "yield to pedestrian" signing/striping at all intersections with existing marked crosswalks.
- 2013 – The City of San Francisco secured funding for a project that constructed bulb outs and a HAWK beacon at the Sloat Boulevard/Forest View Drive-Vale Avenue intersection to further increase the safety of pedestrians by creating a controlled pedestrian crossing. The City worked in coordination with Caltrans to develop and deliver the project.
- 2013 – As part of a regional transportation safety project, a Project Initiation Document (PID) was approved to install HAWK beacons throughout Caltrans District 4 (Bay Area) on various State Routes, including Sloat Boulevard (Route 35).
- April 2015 – A Project Initiation Document (PID) was approved for a Pavement Rehabilitation Project on Sloat Boulevard between Skyline Boulevard and 19th Avenue.
- August 2015 – In an effort to minimize construction impacts along the corridor, the Sloat Boulevard portion of the regional HAWK beacon project was separated from the original project and was combined with the Sloat Boulevard Pavement Rehabilitation Project.
- Spring 2016 – San Francisco Public Works constructed bulb outs at Sloat Boulevard/ Everglade Drive-Constanso Way and a HAWK beacon at Sloat Boulevard/23rd Avenue
- Summer 2016 – Design for both the Caltrans HAWK beacon project and the Pavement Rehabilitation project will be completed.
- March 2017 – Construction of the Caltrans HAWK beacon and Pavement Rehabilitation project is scheduled to begin.

## Community Questions, Comments & Concerns

### TRAFFIC-RELATED COMMENTS, CONCERNS, AND QUESTIONS:

*Comment:* Installation of multiple HAWK beacons will cause congestion on Sloat Boulevard and will cause negative impacts to the adjacent 19th Avenue/Sloat Boulevard intersection.

> *Response:* In order to enhance safety for pedestrians crossing Sloat Boulevard, HAWK beacons may add minor delays for vehicles. However, delays and associated traffic queues are expected to be small in comparison to full traffic signals for the following reasons:
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> - Under existing conditions, drivers are legally obligated to stop for crossing pedestrians.
> - HAWK beacons will only be activated when pedestrians wish to cross the street.
> - Drivers can proceed after coming to a stop when a HAWK beacon displays flashing red lights.
> - The HAWK beacons will be interconnected to minimize the likelihood of drivers needing to stop at successive HAWK-controlled intersections.

*Comment:* The installation of a HAWK beacon may cause traffic to shift to Ocean Avenue or other adjacent streets

> *Response:* It is unlikely that drivers will divert to Ocean Avenue or other adjacent routes due to the existing pattern of stop signs that require drivers to stop regardless if a pedestrian is present, unlike HAWK beacons which are only activated by crossing pedestrians. Approximately one-third of intersections along the parallel Ocean Avenue corridor are all-way STOP controlled. If there are concerns about traffic volumes and/or speeds along nearby streets, residents are encouraged to request a traffic calming evaluation at www.sfmta.com/calming.

*Comment:* Buses stopping at the proposed westbound bus bulb at Sloat Boulevard/21st Avenue will effectively shorten the merging distance available for the lane drop.

> *Response:* The pavement marking plans will be reviewed to determine if any modifications need to be made to the lane merge area based on the proposed bulb design

*Comment:* Request for a detailed queuing analysis.

> *Response:* A queuing analysis is typically not completed by Caltrans for safety enhancement projects. As previously stated in response to a question above: In order to enhance safety for pedestrians crossing Sloat Boulevard, HAWK beacons may add minor delays for vehicles. However, delays and associated traffic queues are expected to be small in comparison to full traffic signals for the following reasons:

- Under existing conditions, drivers are legally obligated to stop for crossing pedestrians.
- HAWK beacons will only be activated when pedestrians wish to cross the street.
- Drivers can proceed after coming to a stop when a HAWK beacon displays flashing red lights.
- The HAWK beacons will be interconnected to minimize the likelihood of drivers needing to stop at successive HAWK-controlled intersections.

*Comment:* Bulb outs will not be seen by drivers, and will cause turning problems.

*Response:* The proposed bulb outs will extend no further into the roadway than parked vehicles. Turning movements have been analyzed at all proposed bulb outs to ensure large vehicles, including emergency response vehicles, will be able to make turns. This analysis has been reviewed and approved by the San Francisco Fire Department.

*Comment:* The intersections will become too complicated with too many signs.

*Response:* All intersection markings and signs will be consistent with State and Federal requirements published in the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (CA-MUTCD). The designs will be similar to the HAWK beacons installed at the intersection of Sloat Boulevard/Forest View Drive.

**DESIGN ALTERNATIVE COMMENTS, CONCERNS, AND QUESTIONS:**

*Comment:* What alternative analysis was completed?

*Response:* The primary goal of the project is to enhance safety for pedestrians crossing Sloat Boulevard. The proposed pedestrian crossing improvements were developed by the Caltrans Traffic Safety branch in coordination with the SFMTA. The project is planned to be constructed along with the upcoming repaving of Sloat Boulevard in order to minimize overall construction time and to future disruptions following the paving. The following alternatives were considered during the project's planning, but are not being pursued:

- The "no project" scenario is not being pursued because it does not meet the goal of enhancing pedestrian safety.
- Installation of full traffic signals at all intersections with marked crosswalks is not being pursued because the intersections do not meet warrants established by the State for installing traffic signals.
- Installation of HAWK beacons without pedestrian or bus bulbs is not being pursued because it does not provide as much benefit to pedestrians. In addition to shortening pedestrian crossing distances and slowing turning vehicles, the added sidewalk space provided by the bulbs is needed for installation of the HAWK beacon equipment.

- Installation of HAWK beacon equipment within the median instead of within bulbs is not being pursued due to the presence of underground utilities within the median.

*Comment:* Other solutions such as traffic calming, streetscape and narrow lanes should be considered. Sloat Boulevard could be made safer through better enforcement - no physical modifications are necessary. Consider amber warning lights instead of HAWK beacons.

> *Response:* Given the wide, high-speed nature of Sloat Boulevard, controlled crosswalks using HAWK beacons and/or traffic signals are recommended. Features such as amber crosswalk lights serve only as a warning device and not a regulatory "stop" device. Enforcement is an important tool to enhance pedestrian safety, but it is not feasible for police to always be present. The goal of the project is to enhance pedestrian safety at all times by providing clear messages to drivers, including when police are not present.

*Comment:* Prefer full traffic signals over HAWK beacons.

> *Response:* Caltrans has determined that traffic conditions do not warrant installation a full traffic signal based on criteria published in the California Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices. The intent of the HAWK beacons is to provide a controlled pedestrian crossing where a full traffic signal is not warranted.

*Comment:* The proposed project is too complicated and more study should be completed.

> *Response:* Caltrans has developed the planned HAWK beacon installation project in an effort to enhance pedestrian safety along the corridor, while minimizing impacts to vehicular traffic when pedestrians are not present. As discussed in the responses above, alterative projects or solutions have been considered to enhance pedestrian safety, but were not selected as they did not meet the project goals.

**DESIGN DETAILS COMMENTS, CONCERNS, AND QUESTIONS:**

*Comment:* Will the road be repaved curb to curb?

> *Response:* As part of the project, Sloat Boulevard will be repaved from curb to curb between 19th Avenue and Skyline Boulevard.

*Comment:* Will the HAWK beacons provide adequate time for a pedestrian to cross the street?

> *Response:* The pedestrian crossing time provided at the HAWK beacons will follow State and Federal guidelines for walking speeds.

*Comment:* High speed drivers won't see pedestrians. The design will encourage speeders to pass vehicles stopped at crosswalk.

> *Response:* Bulbs are proposed to shorten pedestrian crossing distances, improve visibility between pedestrians and approaching vehicles, and to slow turning vehicles. Motorists who do not see pedestrians waiting to cross will be provided with a strong visual cue by the proposed HAWK beacons. At uncontrolled crosswalks crossing multiple lanes of traffic, a driver who sees a pedestrian waiting to cross and stops can block the view of a driver in adjacent lane who may not see the pedestrian. HAWK beacons provide a clear signal to drivers in all lanes of the need to stop for pedestrians.

*Comment:* Bulb out on the northeast corner of Sloat Boulevard/El Mirasol Place is too large.

> *Response:* El Mirasol Place is the widest side-street crossing along the Sloat Boulevard project corridor, and the proposed bulb out is intended to shorten the pedestrian crossing and slow the speed of vehicles turning right from westbound Sloat Boulevard. The proposed bulb out is designed to accommodate the turning movements of emergency response vehicles and has bene reviewed and approved by the San Francisco Fire Department.

*Comment:* Currently the intersection of Sloat Boulevard/El Mirasol Place floods during heavy rain and there is concern that the proposed bulb out will worsen flooding.

> *Response:* Caltrans is working in coordination with San Francisco Public Works and the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission to evaluate current conditions and develop design details that address storm water flow at El Mirasol Place.

*Comment:* The eastern crosswalk could be removed at Everglade Drive-Constanso Way to reduce the amount of HAWK beacon equipment necessary.

> *Response:* In order to prioritize pedestrian connectivity and ease of travel, SFMTA and Caltrans avoid closing crosswalks except in situations where there is a demonstrated safety concern. At the intersection of Everglade Drive/Constanso Way, there is an opportunity to widen the median on the eastern side of the intersection to further enhance safety in conjunction with installing HAWK beacons.

*Comment:* Improvements are not necessary at the Sloat Boulevard/Everglade Drive-Constanso Way intersection since pedestrians can utilize adjacent traffic signal at Lakeshore Plaza.

> *Response:* It is the goal of the project to provide pedestrians with convenient paths and crossings, while accommodating various origins/destinations. The existing traffic signal at Lakeshore Plaza provides for a controlled crossing of Sloat Boulevard, but may be a circuitous route for some pedestrians who would travel further east. As such, Caltrans plans to install HWAK

beacons at uncontrolled crossings of Sloat Boulevard, including the Sloat Boulevard/Everglade Drive-Constanso Way intersection.

*Comment:* The proximity of the proposed El Mirasol Place signal to Middlefield Drive will cause congestion on Middlefield Drive. Concern was expressed that drivers turning off of Middlefield Drive may not see a pedestrian in the El Mirasol Place crosswalk.

*Response:* The HAWK beacon or traffic signal at El Mirasol Place will be visible to drivers turning from Middlefield Drive onto Sloat Boulevard and will improve safety by providing pedestrians with a controlled crossing location.

*Comment:* The lack of bicycle connections between 19th and 21st avenues presents a barrier to bicycle connectivity.

*Response:* The SFMTA is working with Caltrans to develop roadway striping design details, including examining strategies to improve enhanced bicycle facilities where bike routes connect to Sloat Boulevard and 20th Avenue and 21st Avenue.

**MUNI SPECIFIC COMMENTS, CONCERNS, AND QUESTIONS:**

*Comment:* Bus zones should be relocated to another intersection or fully removed.

*Response:* Bus stops are proposed to remain at intersections where safety improvements are being made for pedestrians, thereby enhancing safety for transit customers crossing Sloat Boulevard. At this time no bus zone removals are being considered.

*Comment:* Bus zone relocation requires more people to cross streets, potentially conflicting with turning traffic.

*Response:* The relocation of bus stops to the farside of intersections will require passengers walking to/from the nearside of the intersection to cross the side street, but will similarly reduce crossings for people walking to/from the farside of the same intersection.

*Comment:* Prefer bus bulbs instead of pedestrian bulb outs.

*Response:* Bus bulbs were considered in place of pedestrian bulbs, but at most locations with proposed improvements, geometric or Muni operational considerations prevented bus bulbs from being selected.

*Comment:* Muni operators do not always pull fully into the existing bus zone.

*Response:* SFMTA trains Muni operators to pull fully into bus zones, but not all bus zones are appropriately sized to allow buses to maneuver in and out easily. The relocated bus zones will be long enough for operators to pull fully to the curb.

*Comment:* Can the Muni Line 57 Parkmerced adequately complete a U-turn movement at El Mirasol Place?

> *Response:* The SFMTA has tested and confirmed the ability of buses to complete U-turn movements at the Sloat Boulevard/El Mirasol Place intersection.

*Comment:* It is not appropriate to install a bus bulb and relocate the bus stop at 36th Avenue.

> *Response:* Based on feedback received from the community, SFMTA is no longer proposing the bus bulb and associated bus stop relocation at 36th Avenue. A smaller pedestrian bulb is proposed to provide sidewalk space for HAWK beacon equipment.

**PARKING AND DRIVEWAY SPECIFIC COMMENTS, CONCERNS, AND QUESTIONS:**

*Comment:* Intersection day lighting zones (red zones at intersection corners) results in too much parking loss.

> *Response:* The intent of the day lighting zones at intersections is to increase visibility between pedestrians crossing the street and approaching drivers. This is a pedestrian safety treatment being implemented throughout San Francisco as part of the City's Vision Zero Program. SFMTA has reviewed the proposed daylighting plan and has determined that is possible to reduce the length of proposed red zones at some locations while still providing the same pedestrian safety benefit. This has resulted in restoring three parking spaces.

*Comment:* Bus stops near driveways will restrict sight lines and create blind spots.

> *Response:* Relocated bus stops are proposed where on-street parking is currently permitted. Buses will serve the stops a few times per hour for short periods of time, leaving the area clear at all other times.

*Comment:* Difficult to pull out of driveways and will be worse with the proposed bulb outs.

> *Response:* The proposed bulb outs will extend no further into the roadway than parked vehicles. Pulling out of driveways adjacent to bulb outs may be easier due to the improved sight lines created by the removal of parked vehicles.

# Community Outreach

Meeting Notification

At San Francisco Public Works, we use a variety of platforms to inform the public about upcoming and ongoing projects in the neighborhoods. As a courtesy, we mail notices to neighbors who live within the project boundaries – in this case Sloat Boulevard – and within a 300-foot radius (typically a block). The target was the neighbors in the heart of the impact zone.

In addition, it is our procedure to notify via email neighborhood associations, merchants groups and other organizations on the SF Planning's list of list of relevant neighborhood groups around the project areas. We also inform the district supervisor's office and post meeting notices on NextDoor and our own social media platforms.

It came to our attention that many of neighborhood residents did not receive notice of our first community meeting, held Wednesday, January 13, 2016. Our goal is to keep neighbors informed so we scheduled a second meeting on Tuesday, February 9, 2016.

Meeting Minutes

The purpose for meeting with the community was to review concepts for the proposed safety enhancements on Sloat Boulevard between Skyline Blvd. and 19th Ave. Residents were asked to provide input on project concepts including streetscape amenities and Muni Forward bus bulb-outs.

The questionnaire we provided was created for this purpose. The deadline for returning the questionnaires was set for February 12th. There were no "meeting minutes" taken at either meeting however, the project team members created their own notes.