

Plan to slash 5 stops on 38-Geary at screeching halt

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Proposition K money for transportation, which voters approved November 2003 in extending the half-cent sales tax. The body, composed of all 11 supervisors, lacks authority to outright reject the bus stop cuts, but it could reject the entire plan, then require Muni to work on the cuts before returning the package for reconsideration.

The five-stop flap is the only major controversy in Muni's Inner Geary plan that was approved 4-1 by the Municipal Transportation Agency in September. The plan is considered Phase 1 of Bus Rapid Transit, supported by Proposition K, which has Geary and Van Ness as its main arteries. Geary, when all the changes are finally made, is to be a model for other corridors.

"Our people can be proud," said an elated Richard Allman, the community planner who has been leading the ad hoc Save the Bus Stops Coalition effort. "It shows that we will not suffer takeaways from the Tenderloin lightly. The (transit) committee acknowledged the depth of the problem."

Daly was not the only one with an alternative to the cuts. Allman and TL activists for months have fought the loss of two incoming stops on O'Farrell — at Larkin and Leavenworth — and outbound on Geary, at Mason, Jones and Hyde.

The altering of lanes and installation of passenger loading zones was to begin this month to coincide with DPW's repaving of O'Farrell. Geary Street was to be repaved in January. But, some days after the Oct. 19 meeting, a transit authority spokesman told The Extra that the DPW contractor couldn't complete O'Farrell by the holidays, so the repaving was rescheduled until after Jan. 1. Then, at Muni's request, Transportation Authority consideration of the Inner Geary plan was moved to the authority's Nov. 23 agenda.

Many view the delay as a fortuitous break, relieving the pressure of a deadline to possibly allow for more in-depth deliberations.

Senior Action Network, composed of 150 organizations representing 30,000 seniors, first approved the plan, then flip-flopped.

The nonprofit's Executive Committee overrode its Pedestrian Safety Committee. Bruce Livingston, executive director, said it was the first time he could recall that SAN had reversed itself so, and it was because Pedestrian Safety didn't have "all the information" about the ramifications of the cuts.

"Senior Action Network, through its Executive Committee, has taken the position of insisting that

Muni meet with neighbors in the Tenderloin to negotiate in good faith for a solution to the difference of opinion on bus stop removals on the Geary line," Livingston announced Oct. 22. "SAN cannot support the whole plan until such negotiations take place and progress is made."

"It seems like it would be wise for Muni to offer some concessions or mitigations to the neighborhood's (seniors and disabled) who are negatively impacted by the service changes."

On a rainy Tuesday in October, four of five committee members were present in City Hall Room 263, Daly, the former Plans and Programs chair, among them. He and a parade of activists challenged the wisdom of cutting the stops until finally the committee bowed to the barrage and said it could not bless the package it was weighing.

Chairman Dufty suggested "splitting the difference" on the five stops, thus cutting two, or at most three. But, bottom line, he was "too uncomfortable" with the plan.

Earlier, Daly had emphasized the neighborhood's high dependence on public transportation, and now he suggested that the 38-Limited might take on the five stops. "I don't see why that won't work," he said.

"We will review the service patterns," said Muni's Peter Strauss.

But Muni had dug in its heels for the entire plan. Special projects coordinator Joe Speaks said at one point, "I'm not sure if we're in a position to give something back."

As many favored as opposed the plan among two dozen people who offered public commentary on Oct. 19. But the magnitude of the opposition to removing the stops gave the committee additional pause.

Daly, who said his mail was running nearly 8 to 1 for keeping the stops, praised the rest of Muni's plan but said cutting the stops was "clearly a decrease in service" for the neighborhood. The proposed change added "another strenuous block" to walk for the frail and disabled. For some, he said, speaking to the committee around him, "it takes 15 minutes to walk a block, honestly."

Supervisor Sophie Maxwell asked Muni if other lines in the neighborhood such as the 19 (north and south on Polk and Larkin, Geary to Eddy) and the 31 (east and west on Eddy and Turk) could somehow make up the loss

of stops. But a Muni rep said the losses were worth it to enhance efficiency in the Geary corridor. "You haven't looked at other lines," Maxwell concluded. A Muni official then conceded that the idea was "a possibility" the department could look into.

A number of people spoke who had commented at previous hearings. Organizer Michael Nulty said he had invited many Tenderloin seniors to attend that day.

"But they won't come today because it's raining," Nulty said. "And they don't like things taken out of their daily routines. It leads to frustration. And to stress. And that puts them closer to death. This is taking away their hope."

Transportation Authority Executive Director Jose Moscovich said that the area was "basically flat," which was met by disapproving groans.

Allman reiterated his view that sloping streets perpendicular to Geary make removing the stops a "north-south" travel issue for the elderly and disabled. Casey Hildreth, of Transportation for a Livable City, said the O'Farrell and Geary grades are 3%-3.5%, well within ADA 4% ramp guidelines, and that the organization supported the total plan.

The San Francisco Bike Map and Walking Guide, however, shows that the two blocks on Hyde, Leavenworth, Jones and Taylor below Geary have a 5%-10% street grade, with the exception of Leavenworth between Ellis and O'Farrell. That is a 10%-18% grade. And immediately outside of the Tenderloin, the three blocks on Leavenworth and Jones north of Geary are also 10%-18%.

In the hallway afterward, a discussion ensued with transportation officials and Daly, as a handful of activists looked on from a few feet away. Daly was promoting his idea of more 38-Limited stops before he returned to the meeting room.

"This is a discussion that has to happen," Muni's Speaks said to Allman, regarding the transit authority meeting on Nov. 23. Because "both sides are philosophically opposed," he wondered aloud if the outcome would "split the baby."

"We'll see," Allman said. But TL representatives and residents had more reason than before to believe that after 10 months on this issue the neighborhood could win. ■

Daly a daddy

BY TOM CARTER

DISTRICT Six Supervisor Chris Daly became a first-time father with the arrival of Jack Henry Daly, a seven-pounder, born Oct. 5 to his wife, Sarah Low Daly.

The happy package for District 6's first couple came a month after Daly aide Rachel Redondiez delivered a baby girl, Malaya. Redondiez won't return to the

office until January.

But Daly isn't taking any time off, despite up to 12 weeks with pay that city-employed moms and dads are entitled to under voter-approved 2002 parental leave benefits. It was Daly's ordinance the board passed last year that enabled the benefit through procedures developed by the city Department of Human Resources.

Daly will, however, utilize "a more flexible schedule," a spokesman said. ■

FUTURES COLLABORATIVE

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As artistic director, he plans to do 16 to 24 performances each of four plays annually and hopes to eventually increase that to six plays. Next up: Matthew Maguire's "Phaedra."

Asked if he was getting full houses, he said they were doing pretty well so far, "though some nights are slow." For such performances, he's willing to consider blocks of free or reduced-price seats, especially for neighborhood groups.

"We're very happy being in the Tenderloin," he said. "I think we'll be a nice, strong presence here."

And what's in a name? The Extra asked in a follow-up call. Any connection to Pluto, the last planet in our solar system?

Wilkins laughed. "No one's ever asked that. No connection. It's pretty simple: When we were starting, we got the notion that we wanted the word 'planet' in our name. Then we started adding adjectives we liked. Pluto? The dark, icy planet? Maybe it's because we're far out," he mused, "though once we start a production, it never seems far out." ■

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TENDERLOIN AIDS RESOURCE CENTER

Outreach and Community Events November 2004

Health Education Forum
Topic: "Barebacking" In the Tenderloin
Speaker: Paul Quick, MD, Primary Care Physician
Date/Time: Wednesday, November 10, 2004, 6 - 8 pm

HIV Education Forum
Topic: HIV and Pain
Speaker: Paul Quick, MD, Primary Care Physician
Date/Time: Wednesday, November 17, 2004, 6 - 7:30 pm

Location for Forums: 175 Golden Gate Ave. (St. Boniface Marion Group Room);
light meal will be provided

Client Advisory Panel CAP
Come talk with Alexander Fields, Consumer Board Representative; Tracy Brown, TARC's Executive Director and program managers about plans for TARC. Also provide input on new services and how we can improve.
Date/Time: Wednesday, November 24, 2004, 11:30 am - 1 pm

Volunteer for TARC
Orientation: November 14th 10 am - 4 pm; November 17th, 18th and 19th, 9:30 am - 11:30 am, 183 Golden Gate Ave.
You must pre-register for volunteer trainings. Stop in and see Ned Howey at TARC or call Ned at (415) 934-1792

For the current groups' schedule or more information, call 415.432.7476 or go to www.tarcsf.org

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