

38-Geary cuts screech to a halt

New hearing set to review slashes

BY TOM CARTER

THE hard-fought fate of five Tenderloin bus stops proposed for elimination on the 38-Geary line goes before the Transportation Authority Nov. 23 after a key TA committee failed to endorse Muni's plan.

But just after that committee passed along the plan without recommendation — which, some believe, is the plan's kiss of death — the influential Senior Action Network joined the opposition by reversing its stand and now opposes slashing the stops.

Also on hold are other parts of Muni's \$400,000 Inner Geary Transit Improvement Plan. Construction of transit improvements and the repaving of O'Farrell Street, which were to begin this month, have been delayed until January.

After hearing comments from two dozen speakers on Oct. 19, the authority's Plans and Programs Committee conceded the need to look harder at alternatives to the bus stop cuts that are designed to save a minute or two on the 38's Richmond District run. The concern centered on how the elderly

and disabled in the high-density, low-income Tenderloin would be affected.

"It is difficult for me to accept this package as is," committee Chairman Bevan Dufty said of Muni's plan. The committee shortly afterward voted to send it to the full transit authority without recommendation.

A few days later, Senior Action Network urged Muni to compromise, significantly strengthening the opposition.

District 6 Supervisor Chris Daly, a TA committee member who opposes the cuts, told The Extra that TL residents' "concerns are being heard" and he is "encouraged" by the no-recommendation response. He said Muni has not contacted him about his suggestion that the 38-Limited take on the five stops.

The Transportation Authority rules on matters involving

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 3



PHOTO BY LENNY LIMJOCO

A plan to cut five stops on Muni's 38 line is on hold.

NO. 41

PUBLISHED BY THE SAN FRANCISCO STUDY CENTER

NOVEMBER 2004

SELF HELP GROUP MAKES A MOVE

PAGE 2



CRUSADER'S TENACITY PAYS OFF

Dan Stein takes on trashy SRO

PAGE 4



'OUR WORLD' IN CALENDAR FORM

PAGE 8

CENTRAL CITY

EXTRA!

SAN FRANCISCO

\$700 MILLION EVERY YEAR



PHOTO BY BILL ARON/JEROBOAM

Planning for payoff

City optimistic, convening the stakeholders

BY MARJORIE BEGGS

AFTER years of fighting to maintain the city's mental health budget, Community Behavioral Health Services is scrambling — happily — to figure out how to spend the largesse of Proposition 63.

Statewide, 5.4 million people voted for the initiative, which imposes a 1% surcharge on Californians with taxable incomes of more than \$1 million. Collection starts Jan. 1, money begins flowing in April, and it could start bringing \$700 million a year into the 58 counties' cash-strapped mental health coffers beginning July 1.

Edwin Batongbacal, Behavioral Health associate director, who is convening the stakeholders who will shape San Francisco's plan for the money, said there's "noticeable excitement" in his department about how much this means to the mental health system. "It's such a positive proposition — one that envisions transformation of the system and that has a visionary thread," he said.

Prop. 63 has given the mental health community "a feeling of great hope — and that's something that's worth its weight in gold," said Gwen Foster, senior program officer at the California Endowment's San Francisco office.

"Mental health care in California has changed forever," exulted Belinda Lyons, Mental Health Association of San Francisco executive director, in a post-election press

release.

No one knows yet how much each county will get, but, said Prop. 63 author, Assemblyman Darrell Steinberg, "The money will go to the counties that can demonstrate a plan to work closely with nonprofits and consumer groups. We're not just going to hand this money out by formula."

Batongbacal said that once a county's plan is accepted, allocations are likely to be based on the estimated prevalence of serious mental illness in the population. "Plus San Francisco will probably get a little above what's pro-rated because of our large numbers of poor and homeless," he said.

Ironically, one week after passage of Prop. 63, Mayor Newsom slashed Behavioral Health by 3% — \$1.4 million — this fiscal year to ease the city's nine-digit deficit. Prop. 63 money can't supplant existing services, the legislation states, but by the time the funding starts arriving, these services will be long gone.

While many glow over the initiative's potential, others are more measured.

"I think we need to manage our expectations, but I'm mostly enthusiastic about it," said Dr. Sandra Hernández, executive director of the San Francisco Foundation and former director of the city's Public Health Department. "Community mental health has been seriously underfunded for 35 years."

She reserves her optimism for the prevention piece of the legislation, which had few public resources in the past, and for services for children and adolescents "whose needs are enormous."

Most important is getting consumers involved in the planning, Hernández said. "I don't believe in designing programs for people without those people being at the table."

Foster also is reserving judgment about Prop. 63. "If it's implemented as written, it will

➤ CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

