



January 25, 2007

Nathaniel P. Ford, Sr.
Executive Director/CEO
San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency
1 South Van Ness Avenue, 7th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94103

RE: Urgent Request to Address Dangerous Conditions at Market/Octavia Intersection

Dear Mr. Ford,

I am writing to urge the Municipal Transportation Agency (MTA) to take swift action to significantly improve the safety of the intersection of Market and Octavia at the Central Freeway ramp.

As you are probably aware, a woman bicycling to work was critically injured at that intersection this week when a truck driver, making an illegal right turn onto the freeway, struck her, and drove over her. While this is the most extreme injury we have heard about, it is unfortunately only one of many collisions or near-misses that have occurred at this intersection due to the City's lack of attention to existing dangerous conditions. In fact, I personally know of a dozen of the SFBC's 6,000 members who have been hit or nearly hit while bicycling legally through this intersection in the past year.

We have urged the MTA, since before the new boulevard and freeway ramp opened, to acknowledge and address this situation, but have seen disappointingly little action. Instead, MTA staff has claimed that they cannot change drivers' behavior at the intersection, so they have not even tried, ignoring most recommendations for engineering and enforcement adjustments.

Given the gravity of the recent collision, the situation cannot be ignored any longer.

We have shared recommendations with MTA staff numerous times before, as has staff of the Planning Department, but we will share them again. In summary, our recommendations include:

- ***Adding a far more prominent sign at Duboce and another at Gough***, (the two approved freeway access routes from upper Market St.), declaring "To Freeway" or the equivalent.
- ***Adding a prominent sign at the Central Freeway ramp***, declaring "No Freeway Access – Use Gough", or the equivalent. This sign should be large and placed at motorist-eye-level close to the turning point in question, at the southwest curb corner. The large, prominent signs used to direct Bay Bridge traffic during construction are a good model here.
- ***Working with the SF Police Department, bring more patrol officers to the dangerous intersection***, ticketing vehicles making the illegal right turn.
- ***Add enforcement cameras at the intersection***. State legislation may be needed, and if so, should be pursued immediately.
- ***Constructing a raised crosswalk/bike lane across the mouth of the intersection***. This slight raise will increase pedestrians' and cyclists' visibility, will better designate the space for pedestrians and cyclists, will deter motorists from illegally crossing right, and will slow traffic heading onto and off of the freeway. This proven traffic calming measure does not prohibit traffic from moving onto and off of the freeway.
- As an alternative to the suggestion above, ***adding colored pavement to designate the continuation of the bike lane across the intersection***. MTA staff has been hesitant to implement this measure, given that it is not an accepted traffic control treatment under Caltrans' California Traffic Control Devices Committee (CTCDC). But San Francisco's use of such a measure is not legally limited by lack of official Caltrans recognition, and based on earlier experience it could be many years before such state-level approval is granted and this safety measure can be brought to the intersection even under trial conditions. Given the circumstances of this intersection, we urge consideration of a colored pavement trial.

Please understand that we are neither traffic engineers nor planners, and we acknowledge there may be better solutions than these for improvements. But because the MTA's engineers and planners have failed to adequately address the situation, we offer these ideas as a starting ground for discussion and action.

I also feel the need to clarify some important history of this intersection's design. It is inaccurate (as some have claimed) that recent advocacy is what prompted the ban on the right turn onto the freeway. In fact, the original plan for the Boulevard project called for such a ban many years ago. The prohibition of the right turn was unanimously agreed upon by City staff as the top safety priority in January 2001 following an interagency discussion and decision-making process to engage Caltrans on the freeway touchdown design in conjunction with the Mayor's Office of Economic Development, Muni, DPT, DPW, SFCTA, and urban design and transportation consultants. In the following early months of 2001, Caltrans agreed to prohibit this movement and designed it out of the structure – settling the issue. The Boulevard's designer and former Planning Director Alan Jacobs supported the ban throughout the project's life, as does the Planning Department's current Market and Octavia Better Neighborhoods Plan, which was created through an extensive public outreach process.

The Board of Supervisors most recently reaffirmed the ban in its resolution in August 2004 (file 040912, signed by the Mayor on 8/25/04), prohibiting eastbound vehicles

traveling on Market Street from turning right onto the Central Freeway. In addition, this resolution calls for the Department of Parking and Traffic (now MTA) to:

install such traffic calming devices and traffic control devices at the Intersection as may be allowed by State law and regulations issued by the California Department of Transportation in order to provide the greatest possible protection to bicyclists and pedestrians crossing the Intersection and to the greatest extent possible prevent vehicles from turning right at the Intersection.

Unfortunately, this has not happened. We appreciate Supervisor Bevan Dufty's call for improvements at this week's Board of Supervisors meeting, and we hope MTA will step up to its responsibility.

The San Francisco Bicycle Coalition is, above all else, dedicated to promoting safer streets for cyclists and pedestrians; we want to see the Market/Octavia freeway ramp be as safe as it can be for all who use it, whether pedestrian, motorist, transit rider, or bicyclist. We urge you to make these changes for everyone's sake.

Sincerely,

Andy Thornley
Program Director

cc: *Mayor Gavin Newsom
Members of the SF Board of Supervisors
Members of the MTA Board of Directors
Jose Luis Moscovich, Transportation Authority Director
Dean Macris, Planning Director
Fred Abadi, Public Works Director
Bond Yee, DPT Director
Dan Sider, Director of Urban Greening*