



NEWS
Thursday, February 15, 2007

Contacts: Rick Galbreath, 415-307-0321
David Miles, 415-412-9686
Leah Shahum, 415-269-4170

Study Shows Car-Free G.G. Park Increases Park Usage, Museum Attendance without Traffic Increase

San Francisco — **Neighbors, environmentalists, and park advocates are calling on Mayor Newsom to support a six-month trial of Healthy Saturdays based on a comprehensive study released today** showing that car-free space in Golden Gate Park more than doubles visitors' usage of the Park, as well as increases attendance at the deYoung Museum and local businesses. The study also shows that car-free space has no significant negative impact on neighborhood traffic surrounding the Park or parking availability.

"The Sierra Club sees the results of this survey as proof positive that urban open space adds immeasurably to the quality of life of the city's residents," says Rick Galbreath, of the Sierra Club SF Chapter's Executive Committee. "With 45% of park visitors walking or bicycling to Golden Gate Park and a 40% increase in visitation to the park's cultural institutions and surrounding businesses on Sundays, it is time for Mayor Newsom to support a trial of car-free space on Saturdays."

The study, (managed by the SF County Transportation Authority and the Municipal Transportation Agency), was commissioned by the Mayor's Office and Supervisor Jake McGoldrick, following the Mayor's veto last May of the Healthy Saturdays legislation sponsored by McGoldrick and passed by a majority of the Board of Supervisors. The legislation would have extended the popular car-free space on Sundays to Saturdays on a six-month trial basis. In his veto message, Newsom claimed that he did not have enough factual data about traffic and parking impacts to support the initiative.

"Finally, the facts about car-free space in Golden Gate Park speak for themselves. As

(contd.)

someone who spends a lot of time in the Park with my family on Sundays, it is obvious that this is one of the most popular and successful programs in the city,” says David Miles, a Richmond father and leader of the CA Outdoor Roller Skating Association. “Now thanks to this study, it is proven that car-free space has positive impacts not only *in* the Park but also in the neighborhoods. We are relieved that the myths about negative impacts on the neighborhoods have finally been dispelled by the facts.”

The study can be viewed in its entirety at www.goldengatepark.org The study findings include the following:

- The number of people using the Park increases by an average of 116% on Sundays compared to Saturdays, and more than triple (from 856 to 2,712) in the busiest areas.
- Pedestrian and bicycle usage also increases in the neighborhoods bordering the Park on Sundays, compared to Saturdays, by 24%.
- Traffic volumes around the Park do not increase significantly. No major intersection bordering the Park sees a significant delay in travel time, and residential streets measured were “virtually identical” on Saturday and Sunday.
- Car-free space encourages greater customer traffic to local businesses near the Park, based on figures showing half the people in the Park visit, or intend to visit, nearby businesses.
- Surveyed visitors state they were able to find parking “relatively quickly on both Saturday and Sunday, although visitors reported finding parking on Sunday somewhat faster.” On average, half of drivers to the Park find a parking spot within five minutes.
- More park users visit the de Young Museum on Sundays than on Saturdays (37% vs. 23% respectively).

Since Newsom’s veto, Republican Mayor Michael Bloomberg expanded car-free space in Manhattan’s Central Park and Brooklyn’s Prospect Park. Cities as diverse as Bogotá, Columbia; Guadalajara, Mexico; London and Paris have created major car-free spaces to encourage healthy outdoor activity and greater recreational opportunities for families.

“Now that we have the facts, Mayor Newsom should join the ranks of the world’s most environmentally friendly cities and fulfill the promise he made when he hosted World Environment Day two years ago and finally make San Francisco into a model sustainable and livable city,” says Tom Radulovich, Executive Director of Livable City.

Healthy Saturdays supporters are planning a rally this Sunday, 2/18/07, in Golden Gate Park to celebrate the study’s positive findings and to call for action on the trial of car-free Saturday space.

###