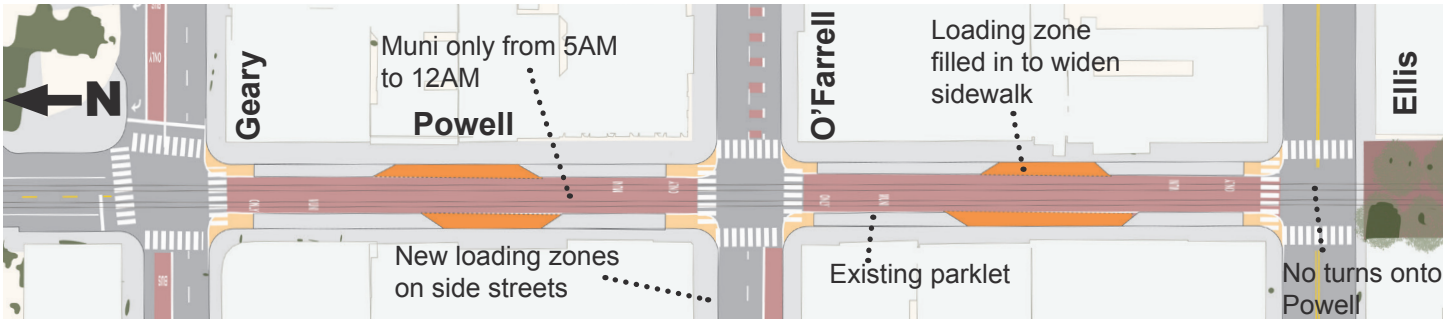
MUNI FORWARD

POWELL STREET
Safety & Sidewalk Improvement Pilot

What is the project?

The Powell Street Pilot project would prohibit all vehicles except Muni from driving on the 100 and 200 blocks of Powell Street between the hours of 5 AM and midnight. Commercial loading would be permitted on these blocks between midnight and 5 AM after the cable cars are shut down. This pilot project would be in place for 18 months while its effectiveness is being evaluated. If the pilot is successful, permanent legislation will be pursued.



Why is this project being proposed?

The SFMTA, the Planning Department, and the Union Square Business Improvement District have been observing conditions on Powell for several years and have determined that the following issues must be addressed:

Safety

In the Union Square area, traffic congestion is so heavy that the cable cars often must inch along on these blocks. Cable cars were not designed to operate in stop-and-go traffic, and inching along damages the cable and causes it to fray. These conditions makes a severe cable car accident more likely. Once a cable has frayed, it can be caught on the grip mechanism, and a cable car that is caught can be dragged along by the cable into vehicles or people in its path. Removing vehicles from the cable car right of way both reduces wear on the cable and decreases the chance that a runaway cable car will injure people and cause damage.

Efficiency

The increased damage to the cable causes it to have to be replaced more frequently. As a result of increased congestion in the area, cable life has been reduced about 25% over the past five years. Today, the cables must be replaced every 30 days on average, down from once per 50 days in 2000. Traffic congestion also increases the time it takes for a cable car to make one run, meaning Muni offers fewer cable car trips per day at a greater expense because of the congestion in the Union Square area. Passengers spend more time waiting in line and less time walking around the area and patronizing its shops and restaurants.

A better walking environment

Over 4,000 people per hour walk on Powell Street during the peak period, often overflowing into the street. Removing auto traffic from the street will enable the city to widen the sidewalks and provide more space for people to reach businesses on Powell and in Union Square. 2014 SFMTA studies have shown that people arriving to the Powell-Market area on foot spend more money than people arriving by any other mode.

A more enjoyable, less crowded walking environment will encourage people to spend more time in Union Square and to return more often. Improvements to the walking environment in Fisherman's Wharf increased foot traffic by 10%, and correspondingly month-over-month gross sales rose by between 10 and 21% after the improvements were put into place.

How will this project impact the area?

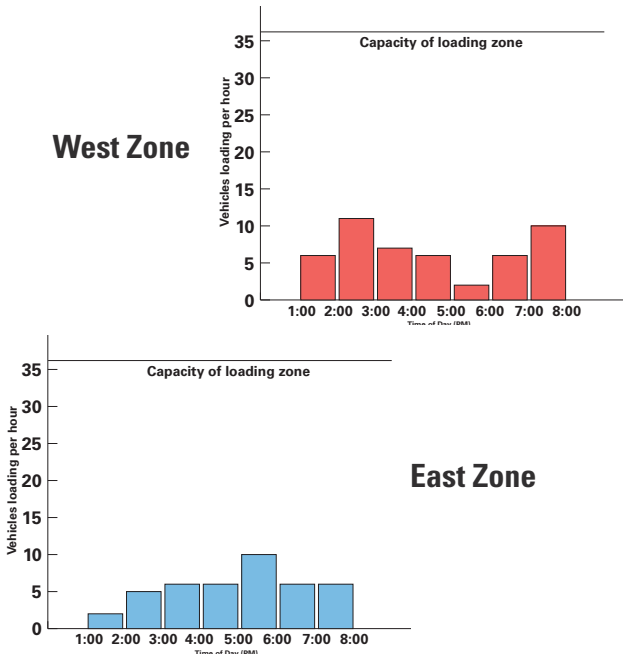
In addition to making Powell safer and improving it for people walking, this pilot project will require vehicles to change their routes to avoid this segment of Powell. It will also require changes to commercial and passenger loading patterns for the businesses on the 100 and 200 blocks of Powell Street. More detail on these impacts is provided below.

Passenger and Commercial Loading

The businesses on both blocks require access to loading zones for both commercial and passenger purposes. All four affected block faces have loading zones notched into the existing parklets. These notches would be filled in to create wider sidewalks on both sides of the street. Businesses were surveyed about their loading needs in May 2015, and City staff observed the loading zones over a three-month period. Most businesses who responded to the survey indicated that they conduct their loading on a side street or during late night hours when the cable cars are not running. Staff observations revealed that on average each loading zone hosts about 6 vehicles in an hour, and at the busiest times, this increases to 10 per hour. Staff observed one or more vehicles parked in the loading zones for 20 minutes or more on numerous occasions. These observations and the survey responses lead to the conclusion that the zones are underutilized.

Two passenger and commercial loading zones will be created at the corner of Powell and Ellis, O'Farrell, and Geary to facilitate loading operations during the day. Further, commercial vehicles will be permitted on the street between the hours of midnight and 5 AM after the cable cars are shut down, and they would be able to load while stopped in the street.

Hourly loading operations, 200-block of Powell

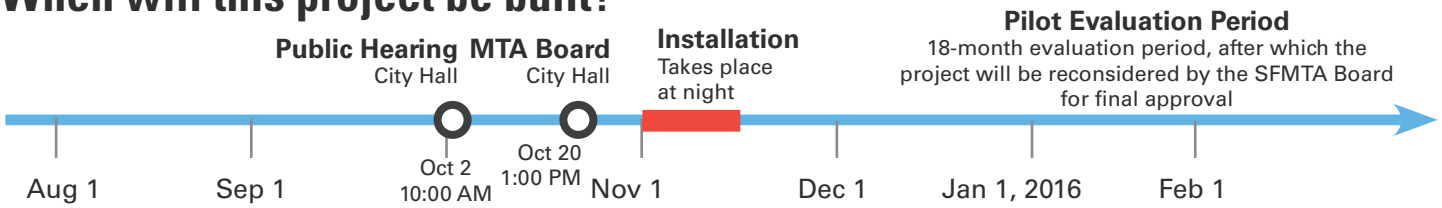


Traffic Routing

Peak traffic volumes on these two blocks of Powell are around 175 to 200 vehciles per hour, which is low even for urban streets. Vehicular traffic on Powell would no longer be permitted, so all of these vehicles can be expected to divert to other streets. The low volumes indicate that today Powell operates inefficiently during the peak due to congestion or other blockages. Very few vehicles (15 per hour) were found to have destinations on the two affected blocks of Powell Street.

Since the number of vehicles on Powell is low, the proposed changes are anticipated to minimally affect the other streets when traffic that would have used Powell is redistributed to alternate routes. In addition, this pilot project is intended to study the effects of this vehicle re-routing on traffic congestion in the area in order to inform permanent legislation.

When will this project be built?



The goal is to have these changes in place before the 2015 holiday shopping season. Installation of the signs and paint would take place starting Nov 1, and should be complete by November 15th. To meet this deadline, the project is intended to go to the SFMTA Board for legislation on October 20, 2015. There will be a public hearing for this item on October 2, 2015, at which time members of the public can comment on the proposals.

Who do I contact and how can I comment on the proposals?

Attend the public hearing on Oct 2, referred to above, or contact the project engineer with comments or questions:

Dan Howard, SFMTA project engineer, at **415.701.5691** or **Dan.Howard@sfmta.com.**