

## **San Francisco Recreation and Park Department and San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency Provide Update on the Future of the Great Highway.**

On April 3, 2020, the Upper Great Highway was closed to vehicle traffic under an emergency order to provide additional space for safe, socially distant recreation during the COVID-19 pandemic. The car-free promenade was embraced by walkers, runners, cyclists, roller skaters – with over 3,000 visits each weekday and more than 9,000 visits each weekend in the past six months.<sup>1</sup> We also heard from frustrated motorists, who noted increased traffic and speeds on adjacent streets. In response, we successfully implemented a traffic calming strategy throughout the Outer Sunset. We have been monitoring the effectiveness of the traffic calming and our data shows a reduction in speed at 6/7 locations and a reduction in traffic volume at seven out of seven locations between January and June of 2021.

On Aug. 5, 2021, Mayor London Breed and Supervisor Gordon Mar, with support from Supervisors Connie Chan and Myrna Melgar, modified the emergency order so the Great Highway will be closed to vehicles from each Friday at noon until the following Monday at 6 a.m. and open to pedestrians, cycling and other recreational uses.

Throughout this time, Rec and Park and the SFMTA have been focusing on the Great Highway's long-term future beyond the emergency order. Together, we have been monitoring usage in order to recommend a two-year pilot program to the Board of Supervisors. Our target for presenting the plan, originally set for fall, will now be postponed as we study the impact of the partial opening, which went into effect August 16.

Other changes to the Great Highway are on the horizon. The Great Highway Extension, which connects Skyline Boulevard and the Upper Great Highway, would close in the event of approval of the proposed South Ocean Beach Climate Change Adaptation Project, led by the SFPUC. The proposed closure is estimated to reduce traffic volume on the Upper Great Highway by up to 25 percent and will transform the public shoreline and improve coastal access north of Fort Funston as the city protects vital municipal infrastructure from coastal erosion. In addition, intersection improvements are planned at key locations such as at Great Highway extension at Skyline Blvd which will improve connectivity between Ocean Beach, Fort Funston and Lake Merced.

Given the recent and proposed changes to the Great Highway, we are going to use this time to study the use of the Great Highway during its current configuration being used by cars on weekdays and by people walking and biking on weekends, holidays and Friday afternoons. Monitoring pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle traffic while this new configuration is in place will enable Rec and Park and SFMTA to better understand how the Great Highway is being used and how the configuration impacts westside traffic patterns. Monitoring the configuration over a 6-12 month period allows us to see how pedestrian, bike and vehicle usage on and near the Great Highway changes over various seasons and evolved over time. This data will help the ongoing management of the Great Highway as well as any future phases of the Great Highway.

We intend to engage in a public effort to recommend a pilot or long-term configuration on a timeline aligned with and informed by these other related changes, and anticipate initiating this work before the end of 2022. We will also consider the emergency order and response to COVID-19 as we move forward.

We will remain focused on the re-envisioning the long-term future of the Great Highway and proposing an equitable, sustainable plan based on robust data analysis and community engagement. The area remains a priority for both our agencies and we share the excitement about its potential as a hub for healthy recreation, expansion of a “Beach to Bay” car-free network that improved access to coastal open space for the public.