



**DEAN PRESTON**

October 16, 2023

Chair Amanda Eaken & MTA Board Members  
Director Jeff Tumlin  
San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency  
1 Van Ness Ave  
San Francisco, CA 94103

Re: *Hayes Street Shared Spaces Closure*

Dear Chair Eaken, MTA Board Members, and Director Tumlin:

I'm writing to register my objection to the SFMTA staff recommendation to eliminate two days of the three-day weekend closure to private vehicle traffic on Hayes Street, item 10.2.A on the agenda for the SFMTA Board meeting of Tuesday, October 17, 2023.

Since the onset of the pandemic and the start of car-free street programs citywide, my office has consistently advocated to create and maintain shared spaces throughout my district. In Hayes Valley, we worked closely with neighbors and small business owners to cultivate the car-free program in the neighborhood commercial corridor, one of the first shared spaces programs in the city, including setting aside add-back funds in 2020 to support the program.

In mid-July, it came to light that SFMTA planned to end the program at the end of the month. Following neighborhood outcry and a letter from my office, SFMTA agreed to postpone the previously announced termination, and allow time for stakeholders to find a path forward.

On July 25, the Mayor's office issued a statement saying they would be "convening stakeholders, including the merchants SFMTA, & Fire Department" to determine the program's future. On July 26, my office sent a request to be involved in any future stakeholder meetings, noting that "we are happy to work together on this."

We did not hear anything further until September 7th, when the permit applicant contacted my office. We were dismayed to learn that there had been multiple meetings without our involvement, despite our written request. After that date, my office was periodically updated on discussions among stakeholders, and was clear throughout that while we agreed with suggestions on adding barricades and wayfinding, that we believed it would be a mistake to eliminate days to this broadly popular program.

We were dismayed to see on October 10 that SFMTA published a set of recommendations, including the elimination of the Friday and Sunday closures, as well as moving the start time of the Saturday closure from 10am to 1pm.

We understand that SFMTA conducted their own survey of merchants on the block, and while we appreciate the effort at direct community engagements, we have questions about the methodology and the leading nature of some of the questions. More to the point, we view the merchants community as an important stakeholder in this conversation, but that members of the public, the vast majority of whom we have connected with, strongly support keeping the weekend closure as is. An online petition telling city leaders that neighbors “not only want car-free Hayes preserved, but expanded to permanent 24/7 car-free status” has more than 1,200 signatures.

It is worth noting, as I did in my previous correspondence, that the benefits of this program speak for themselves. Private vehicles are one of the highest producers of carbon emissions, and we should take every opportunity to reduce our reliance on private cars and trucks, including expansion of shared spaces citywide. In addition, collisions between pedestrians and private vehicles remain one of the most pressing threats to public safety and our Vision Zero goals, and car-free streets are a critical tool to reducing collisions between vehicles and pedestrians. Finally, in addition to providing safe recreation space to families, the shared spaces program has spurred people from all corners of San Francisco and beyond to visit Hayes Valley, and it has been a cornerstone of a neighborhood leading the way in economic recovery.

Given the extensive benefits of this program, I respectfully request that the Board amend the recommendation to restore the full three-day weekend closure to private vehicles. Alternatively, if the Board is not prepared to restore the full vehicle closure at this time, given that the recommendations were made public and shared with our office just a week ago, we request that the item be continued to early December in order to give the community a meaningful opportunity to address any outstanding issues without eliminating 70% of the hours of the program.

I sincerely thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Dean Preston  
District 5 Supervisor

CC: Monica Munowitch, SFMTA Shared Spaces Program Manager  
Joél Ramos, SFMTA Local Government Affairs Manager  
Janet Martinsen, SFMTA Local Legislative Affairs Program Manager  
Lloyd Silverstein, Hayes Valley Merchant Association  
Jen Laska, Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association (HVNA)  
Jason Henderson, HVNA Land Use and Transportation Chair  
Andrew Seigner, Hayes Valley for All