



**DEAN PRESTON**

July 24, 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:

My office was surprised to learn late this past week that SFMTA determined the Shared Spaces street closure on the 400 block of Hayes Street would, after more than three years, abruptly end at the end of this month. I am writing to urge you to reconsider this decision.

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.

On August 30, 2020, my Chief of Staff Kyle Smeallie organized volunteers to staff the program kickoff on Hayes Street, at that time stretching from Laguna to Franklin. It was met with overwhelmingly positive feedback, a point of neighborhood pride in an otherwise uncertain period. Seeing the initial success, my office in 2020 allocated add-back funds to help compensate a volunteer coordinator to make sure the program could get off the ground. With partnership with the Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association, and buy-in from local businesses, the street closure started off as a major success.

While widespread, embrace of the program was not universal, with some business owners on the 500 block and 300 block of Hayes expressing concern on the impact on their businesses. In response, MTA refined the street closure to the 400 block of Hayes Street, where many restaurants could take advantage of the car free space with additional seating to meet weekend demand.

For more than a year and a half, the shared spaces program on the 400 block of Hayes Street had been operating successfully. I understand the permit applicants sought renewal in March of this year, and were told the decision would be postponed, with apparent, but not specific, concerns around emergency response. On July 19, without communication since the March ISCOTT hearing, permit holders were informed the program would expire July 31.

We are urging the MTA Board of Directors to immediately order the department to reverse their decision.

To the extent there are concerns with this program from other city departments, they have not been shared with our office. We have seen nearly three years of the shared spaces program in Hayes Valley without incident. It is deeply concerning to see this program slated to be discontinued based on vague allegations of safety concerns, concerns our office is learning about third hand and with no specificity.

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 the neighborhood leading the way in economic recovery.

Given the extensive benefits of this program, I believe the discussion should be about how/when to make this program permanent, and certainly not how/when to shut this down.

My office welcomes feedback on how we can improve shared spaces for Hayes Valley, but under no circumstance should this program be summarily shut down, without any satisfactory justification, on such short notice.

I sincerely thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Dean Preston  
District 5 Supervisor

CC: Mayor London Breed  
Monica Munowitch, SFMTA Shared Spaces Program Manager  
Nick Chapman, SFMTA Manager of Temporary Street Closures and Special Events  
Joél Ramos, SFMTA Local Government Affairs Manager  
Janet Martinsen, SFMTA Local Legislative Affairs Program Manager  
Chadwick Lee, SFMTA Senior Administrative Analyst  
Lloyd Silverstein, Hayes Valley Merchant Association  
Jen Laska, Hayes Valley Neighborhood Association (HVNA)  
Jason Henderson, HVNA Land Use and Transportation Chair  
Jodie Medeiros, WalkSF