



HAIGHT ASHBURY IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

Ted Loewenberg, President
415 522-1560
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Chief Hayes-White
698 - 2nd Street
San Francisco, CA 94107

8 May 2012

Re: Lane Striping on JFK Drive Causes Safety Problems

Dear Chief Hayes-White,

On behalf of the Haight Ashbury Improvement Association (HAIA), I write to express our members' serious concerns regarding the safety of the new lane striping on JFK Drive on the eastern end of Golden Gate Park. Many of our members witnessed the traffic conditions related to this new striping on Saturday, April 14th. We believe the new striping, which has narrowed the travel lanes and has bike lanes on the passenger side of parked vehicles presents the following serious safety issues:

- **Response Times.** The two automobile travel lanes do not provide any room for a car to pull over to provide a right-of-way to emergency vehicles. Traffic on April 14th represented downtown rush hour gridlock conditions. As opposed to the prior JFK configuration of a wide boulevard, the narrow traffic lanes and parked vehicles make it impossible for a fire engine or ambulance to pass passenger vehicles that are now consistently at a standstill during busy times in the park. We are very concerned this will lead to unacceptable response time delays that may result in emergency responders unable to reach those in need before it is too late. We encourage you to discuss with the Recreation and Parks Department the restricted access that emergency vehicles will now have when responding to calls on the east end of the park during high use times and special events.
- **Safety.** Children, the elderly, and handicapped persons enjoy the park and often access it with an automobile. However, the placement of a bike lane on the passenger side of parked vehicles has created a dangerous situation for all users. People exiting vehicles will now be at risk of colliding with bicycles travelling at 10 to 15 mph from a location people are not expecting them: the supposedly safe curb side of a vehicle. Likewise, more cyclists can expect to be "door-ed" by passengers swinging open car doors without regard to passing traffic in the bike lane. Parents will now have difficulty ensuring children, who are prone to run in a park, wait to move from their parked car to the safety of the curb. As recent tragic events have demonstrated, bicyclists will not necessarily grant pedestrians the right-of-way or will not have sufficient time to react to a child running out from between cars. A similar issue is also presented to disabled adults that will be put at risk when trying to cross from a parked car and summit a high curb, when previously a parked car would provide such clearance of the curb and no risk of collision with a bicycle. Several disabled curb cuts were installed to avoid the problem of getting to the walkways. However, the only path to those cuts from a parked vehicle is in the bike lane! Finally, drivers and passengers on the left side open their doors into moving car traffic held captive in those very narrow traffic lanes. Our wheelchair-bound members and others have expressed great frustration at their lives being made less safe and more difficult as a result of a solution that lacked a problem.



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In sum, it appears JFK was a boulevard which could be enjoyed safely by all users and provided ready access for emergency vehicles. It has now been transformed into an unnecessarily risky roadway to satisfy the agenda of a small, but very vocal, interest group. The safety of park users must trump the San Francisco Bicycle Coalition's need to have regular press-releases on their schemes for redesigning the City. We hope you will meet with the Department of Rec and Park to discuss the safety issues presented by the new striping and hopefully and to encourage it to make changes to such striping to address the safety risks it creates. If left in place as is, your EMT response to Golden Gate Park injuries will surely increase, which would not be a good thing.

Please let me know what the SF FD will do to address this important concern, by 24 May, 2012.

Sincerely,

Ted Loewenberg