

September 30, 2024

Board of Directors
Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District
P.O. Box 29000, Presidio Station
San Francisco, CA 94129-9000

Dear President Cochran and Members of the Board of Directors,

Alexander Avenue is one of the most-ridden roads in the San Francisco Bay Area. Serving as the only link for bicyclists between San Francisco and Marin County, the road is heavily trafficked by commuters, local recreational riders, and tourists on rental bicycles. In the summer months, the road can see multiple thousands of daily riders, according to the most recent counts at Sausalito's southern city limit.

However, the road does not serve all these users well. In part due to its heavy use and many inexperienced riders, but also due to poor roadway conditions and auto-centric design, the road sees a shockingly high number of reported bicycle injury crashes. As of 2022, no single mile of road in Marin County saw as many bicycle injury crashes as Alexander Avenue. Since 2012, at least 50 people have been reported injured while riding on the District-owned segment of Alexander Avenue, 11 of them seriously enough to cause life-altering injuries. In the recently released Marin County Local Road Safety Plan, Alexander Avenue is on the county's high-collision network, the subset of streets that see the highest rates of injury collisions.

It is the opinion of the members of the Pedestrian-Bicycle Advisory Committee (PBAC) that Alexander Avenue, as the gateway to Marin and connection to one of the world's most famous bridges, should be safe for bicycle users of all ages and abilities. The District has an opportunity to achieve this goal with its upcoming repaving project on the corridor.

At its August 14th, 2024 meeting, the PBAC received a presentation from District staff about the planned repaving project on Alexander Avenue. After receiving the presentation, the PBAC made a number of recommendations for the project's scope and design, compiled and summarized below.

25 MPH Design Speed

Alexander Avenue has a posted speed limit of 35 mph. Anecdotally, driver speeds can be much higher. For such traffic speeds, the Federal Highway Administration Bikeway Selection Guide recommends a separated bike lane or shared use path in order to protect bicyclists from injury crashes. Given the right-of-way limitations, a simpler and more cost-effective way of improving safety would be to design the road for slower travel speeds. Due to its short length, a motorist traveling the corridor at 35 mph will save just over 30 seconds compared to a motorist traveling 25 mph. A design speed of 25 mph would significantly improve safety by reducing the likelihood and severity of driver-bicyclist collisions.

Narrower Travel Lanes

The roadway is currently configured with 12' travel lanes and 4' shoulders, encouraging high speeds and providing little space for bicyclists to travel out of the way of passing motorists. The PBAC recommends reducing the lane width to the minimum acceptable by staff at Golden Gate Transit, potentially as narrow as 10.5', and providing class 2 bicycle lanes with the newly-available space. Such lane widths are in line with the National Association of City Transportation Officials (NACTO) recommendations, as well as Caltrans Design Information Bulletin 94. In places where right-of-way is limited, the PBAC recommends prioritizing the width of the uphill climbing lane to maximize separation between slow-moving bicyclists and drivers.

Traffic Calming Gateway Treatment at Sausalito City Limit

When traveling north, drivers and bicyclists entering Sausalito are presented with a tight left turn, steep downhill grades, and an advisory 15 mph speed limit. The PBAC recommends some sort of gateway treatment to alert roadway users that they are entering an urbanized area with a lower speed limit.

Safety Improvements at Bunker Road and Fort Baker Road Intersections

The traffic collision data show significant hotspots at the intersections of Alexander Avenue/Bunker Road and Alexander Avenue/Fort Baker Road. The PBAC recommends "squaring up" these intersections (i.e. reducing curb radii), ensuring that motorists have to take slower, sharper turns (while accommodating any transit vehicles using the intersections). Left-turn hardening could also serve to slow driver turning speeds. Additionally, conflict striping be provided through the intersections to alert motorists to the presence of crossing bicyclists.

Pedestrian Crossings

Although the vast majority of users of Alexander Avenue are riding bicycles or traveling in a car, there are a surprising number of pedestrians on the road given the lack of accommodations. While there is not sufficient space for travel lanes, bicycle lanes, *and* a sidewalk without widening the road, particular consideration should be given at the road's bus stops at Bunker Road and Fort Baker Road and how pedestrians can safely cross the road.

Bicycle/Pedestrian Counters

Despite being one of the most ridden bridges in the United States, there is no automated bicycle counter on the Golden Gate Bridge or its approaches. This is in contrast to every other Bay Area bridge (those managed by the Metropolitan Transportation Commission), which all have automated counters that display use on an online web portal. The most recent user counts on the Golden Gate Bridge were collected by hand in 2015, nearly a decade ago. In order to better plan and understand usage patterns, the PBAC recommends that an automated bicycle/pedestrian counter be installed, as part of the Alexander Avenue repaving project. While not on the bridge itself, it would serve as a useful proxy for bridge counts. This could be done most cost effectively during construction when crews are already mobilized. Ideally the data from the counter would be displayed on an online portal, but would still be useful if accessible by staff.

Design Process

The PBAC politely requests that District staff present 10% conceptual project designs at a future meeting of this committee, so that valid feedback can be incorporated into the project without great expense or inconvenience. Additionally, the PBAC recommends that the District host a public meeting, either in person or online, to share information about initial concepts with nearby residents, commuters, and regular road users. Alexander Avenue is a critically important road for bicycle travel in the Bay Area, and keeping people informed will be appreciated by the wider community.

We, the members of the PBAC, sincerely thank District staff for the willingness to seek feedback on this project, and look forward to working closely to bring about substantial improvements to this important road.

Warren J. Wells, AICP
Chair, Pedestrian-Bicycle Advisory Committee
Golden Gate Bridge Highway and Transportation District