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San Francisco Department of Public Health Launches WalkFirst Project

City Agencies to Identify Key Walking Streets and Prioritize Capital Improvements for Pedestrian Safety

San Francisco, CA – San Francisco pedestrians will move another step closer to having safer streets with the launch of WalkFirst, a \$200,000 grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.



The WalkFirst project will promote pedestrian safety and walking by identifying where people walk in San Francisco and the conditions they face, and determining where to make safety improvements to best serve pedestrians.

Like all pedestrian-related safety projects, the effort will combine the expertise of a number of City agencies. Leading the WalkFirst grant is the San Francisco Department of Public Health (DPH), along with San Francisco Planning Department, San Francisco Municipal Transportation Agency (MTA), and San Francisco County Transportation Authority (SFCTA).

“Preventing pedestrian injuries and promoting walking as physical activity are important prevention strategies to improve the health in the City,” said Director of Public Health Barbara Garcia. “We need our partner City agencies to work together to guide us in this effort.”

The grant will give the city a unified direction for establishing priorities. Currently, City agencies prioritize projects based on criteria established by various funding streams, creating a piecemeal approach to selecting pedestrian-related capital projects. “WalkFirst will change that by creating a comprehensive approach to making good decisions when it comes to pedestrian-related capital improvements in San Francisco,” noted Timothy Papandreou, MTA Deputy Director of Planning.

In order to fill this gap, the WalkFirst project will serve as a tool to guide City agencies to work on pedestrian-related capital improvements. Key work products of WalkFirst will include:

- a map of key walking streets in San Francisco
- method for prioritizing the most important safety improvements
- preliminary list of pedestrian safety upgrades
- draft policies to guide City decisions about pedestrian safety and walking conditions
- examples of street designs to improve the walking environment

“The City needs to make the best use of limited funding,” said Tilly Chang, Deputy Director for Planning at the San Francisco County Transportation Authority. “WalkFirst will make San Francisco more competitive to access state and federal dollars to make pedestrian improvements.”

This project builds on the award-winning Better Streets Plan, a comprehensive set of pedestrian-oriented policies and design guidelines for San Francisco’s streets and sidewalks. “We are proud to participate in WalkFirst, and look forward to identifying key walking streets, developing an initial project list, and updating relevant sections of the General Plan,” said David Alumbaugh, Director of the City Design Group at SF Planning Department.

For more information, please visit <http://walkfirst.sfplanning.org>.