

Freeway Demolition and Economic Regeneration in San Francisco

TRANS*form* Scotland

Is Transport Good for Your Wealth?

April 22, 2002

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Presentation Outline

- **Loma Prieta Earthquake**
- **Embarcadero Freeway**
- **Central Freeway**
- **Economic Impacts**
- **Lessons Learned**

Loma Prieta Earthquake

October 17, 1989

- Earthquake Strength: 7.1 Richter Scale
- Epicenter: About 70 miles south of San Francisco
- Serious Damage to Transportation Infrastructure:
 - SF Bay Bridge: Closed, Repaired, Re-opened (one Month)
 - Oakland Cypress Freeway: Collapsed, Demolished, Replaced
 - SF I-280 Freeway: Damaged – Repaired
 - SF Embarcadero Freeway: Damaged
 - SF Central Freeway: Damaged



San Francisco Earthquake Recovery

Repair Transportation System
=
Highest Economic Priority

But ...

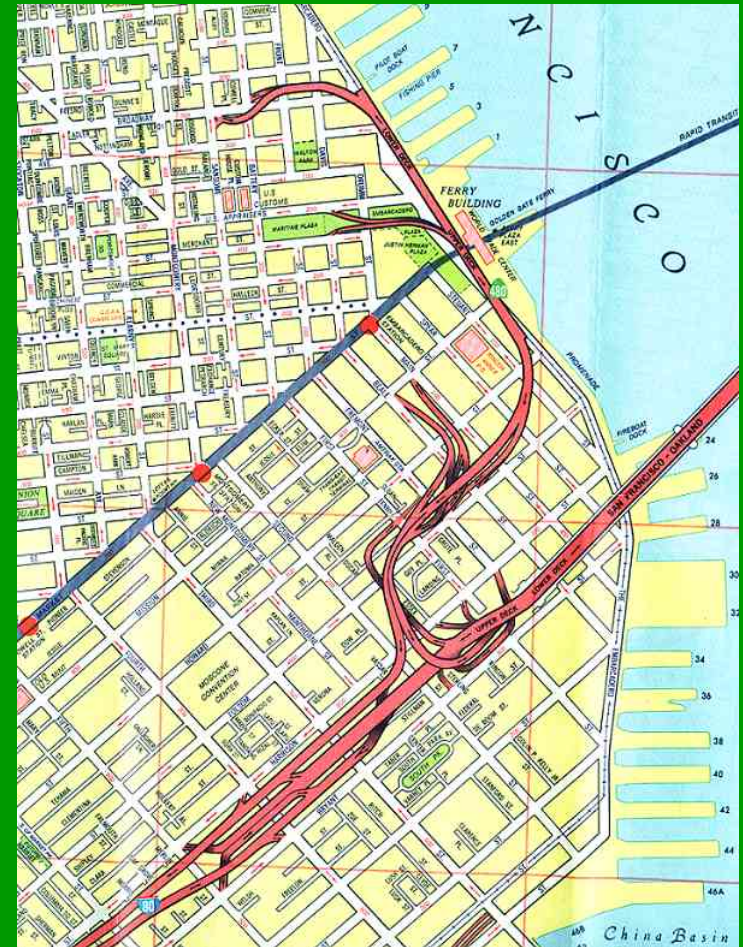
Recognized as Unique Opportunity to Address San Francisco's "Freeway Mistakes"

Who Decides?

- **Freeways owned by California Department of Transportation (CalTrans)**
- **Citizens of San Francisco: Well Organized and Politically Astute ... on BOTH SIDES!**
- **Multiple City Agencies**
- **Ultimately Required State Legislature and Federal Highway Administration Approvals**

Embarcadero Freeway

- Built mid-1950s as Part of Planned Freeway along SF Waterfront
- Led to 1960s San Francisco Freeway Revolt
- Several Previous Attempts to Remove Freeway (in 1984 voters rejected demolition)



Embarcadero Freeway

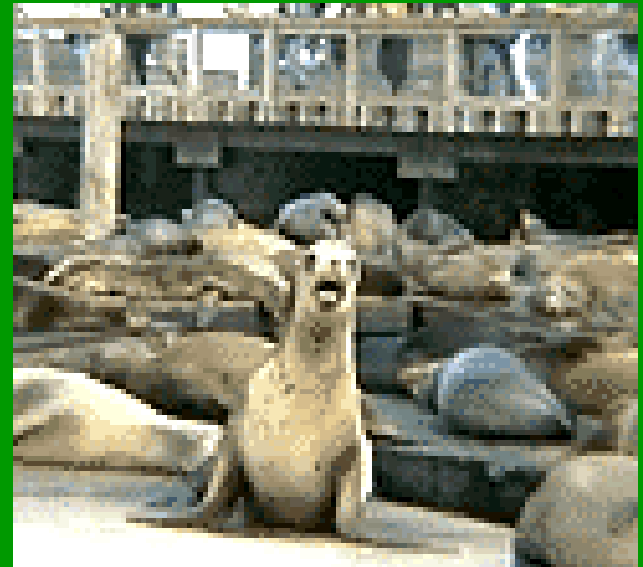


Embarcadero: Process

- **Environmental Groups organized quickly to demand removal**
- **Merchants Demanded Reconstruction – Especially Chinatown and Fisherman's Wharf**
- **Significant Technical Debate on Repair/ Rebuild and Costs/ Timing**

Embarcadero: Process

- **Sea Lion Paradox:** *If people could come see the Sea Lions, why couldn't they get to Chinatown and Fisherman's Wharf?*
- **Significant Discussion on *Attractiveness* of Chinatown and Fisherman's Wharf.**



Embarcadero: Process

- Long Political Process
- Decision: Replace Freeway with Extension to Planned Roadway with Historic Trolley Cars in Median
- Long Design Process



Embarcadero: Results

Economic Impacts

- **Encouraged New Development (Including Downtown Baseball Stadium)**
- **Created Attractive Urban Place**
- **Property Values Increased Significantly**
- **Many More People Visit and Use**

Embarcadero Roadway Redevelopment



Embarcadero Boulevard Development



Central Freeway

- Built mid-1950s as part of planned freeway through neighborhoods to Golden Gate Bridge
- Construction stopped after Freeway Revolt
- Huge cut destroyed neighborhood. Area rift with prostitution, drug-dealing, and other anti-social behavior.



Central Freeway: Process

- **Freeway Closed – Northern End Torn-Down (too damaged to repair)**
- **Significant Technical Debate on Repair/ Rebuild and Costs/ Timing**
- **Neighborhood begins to redevelop without freeway.**

Central Freeway: Process

- Neighbors organize and call for freeway demolition.
- Planning Process and Environmental Studies
- Plan for Freeway Alternatives
- West Side Awakens: Freeway Users Unite



Central Freeway: Politics

- 1997: Rebuild - **Passes**
- 1998: Boulevard - **Passes**
- 1999-a: Rebuild – **Fails**
- 1999-b: Boulevard – **Passes**
- Much Political Intrigue – *Often not related to Freeway Issues at all.*



Central Freeway: Process

- **Octavia Boulevard Design Process**
- **Citizen Based with Expert Input**
- **Boulevard Design & Planning Finally Approved by Caltrans (2000)**





Central Freeway Replacement: Octavia Boulevard



The central realm of Octavia Boulevard

Central Freeway: Results

Economic Impacts

- **Encouraged New Development: Hayes Valley**
 - Housing
 - Retail
 - Mixed Use
- **Created Attractive Urban Place**
- **Property Values Increased Significantly**

Hayes Valley Redevelopment



An Aside: Traffic Reduction in Zurich

- Extensive Transit Priority Program Implemented 1975 to Present ...
 - Significantly Improved Transit System
 - Reduced Downtown Parking
 - Improved Urban Design
 - Reduced Traffic Capacity
- Results: *Economically Vibrant and Successful Downtown*



Economic Impacts: Access

- **Ability to Get Somewhere**
 - Does a path exist? (Road, Transit, Walk)
 - What are the qualities of the travel experience?
- **Desire to Get There**
 - Is there something worth going for?

Access/Attractiveness Tradeoff

- When a place is attractive enough people will come no matter how hard it is to get there.
They ...
 - Change mode (are other modes available?)
 - Change travel time
- *Sea Lion Paradox*

“But Removing the Freeway Will Cause Gridlock!”

- **San Francisco Experience:** More traffic on surface streets, but no gridlock and increased retail activity.
- **Portland Oregon:** Riverfront freeway removed, improved economy.
- **Research by Sally Cairns, C. Hass-Klau & P.B. Goodwin:** Removing capacity leads to less traffic in local area.

Can Changing the Transportation System Make a Place More Attractive?

Yes ...

- San Francisco Development on the Waterfront and in the Hayes Valley has been Tremendous.**
- San Francisco's Economy has not suffered from the transportation changes.**

Can Changing the Transportation System Make a Place More Attractive?

... But

- San Francisco had alternative transportation available: *Access*.
- San Francisco's Economy has been extremely strong and the City is a very attractive place to live: *Attractiveness*.

Lesson 1: Public Support

- **Message: People buy things, cars don't.**
Therefore economic success ultimately means focusing on access by people not cars.
- **Show examples of successful places without freeways and heavy auto traffic.**
- **Communicate research findings such as Cairns, Hass-Klau & Goodwin.**

Lesson 2: Plan Carefully

- **Alternative access is critical; is it high quality?**
- **What complimentary techniques could help increase success and public support?**
- **Traffic engineering can make or break the plan; the traffic engineer should be your friend!**

Lesson 3: Politics

- **Recognize that politics will be involved and jump into the water (with the sharks).**
- **Learn how to be effective in your political environment.**

Lesson 4: Implement Carefully

- **Take small steps and keep focused on the long term vision.**
- **Implement big impact projects first – build support for more controversial projects.**
- **Don't unnecessarily alienate people; take street space only when you have a real use.**

Lesson 5: Seize Opportunities

- **Everyone can't rely on Earthquakes, ...**
- **But there are other major changes that you can take advantage of, use them!**
- **Advance planning can help you take advantage of the opportunities and can help create them.**

Thank You!