



Edwin M. Lee, Mayor
Mohammed Nuru, Director

Public Works Order No: 186059

The Director of Public Works held a Public Hearing on Monday, August 24, 2015 commencing at 5:30 PM at City Hall, Room 416, 1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place, San Francisco, CA 94102. The hearing was to consider Order No. 183850 regarding the removal of one hundred six (106) street trees with replacement of one hundred ninety-one (191) street trees along Van Ness Avenue from Market to Lombard St., as part of the Van Ness Avenue Streetscape Project.

Findings:

One month prior to the August 24, 2015 Tree Hearing, San Francisco Public Works ("Department") posted removal notices on the 106 street trees proposed for removal.

A few months prior to posting these notices, both the Department's Urban Forester and a Landscape Architect evaluated the condition of the existing street trees along Van Ness Ave and found that 106 street trees were either in poor condition or would be impacted by the Van Ness Corridor Transit Improvement Project (SFMTA "Van Ness BRT"), and not tolerate the installation of new sidewalks, curbs and roadway. At that time, 14 of these street trees were proposed for removal by the SFMTA due to bulb-ins or the placement of new utility poles as part of the Van Ness BRT, and the remaining 92 street trees proposed for removal were for the Van Ness Avenue Streetscape Project.

After the hearing, the Van Ness BRT Project (SFMTA) subsequently decided not to construct bulb-ins, which meant that 10 of the 14 sidewalk trees were no longer being pursued for removal as part of the Van Ness BRT. On March 28, 2016 the Director approved the removal of the remaining 4 street trees because the impacts were directly attributable to the Van Ness BRT Project.

The Urban Forester evaluated the condition of the 10 street trees that were no longer being pursued for removal by the SFMTA for the Van Ness BRT, and found that 4 of those street trees were in poor condition. Therefore, the total number of street trees considered for removal for the Van Ness Avenue Streetscape Project increased from 92 to 96.

- The 106 street trees originally proposed for removal is 24% of the sidewalk trees along the entire Van Ness Avenue corridor.



- The Van Ness Avenue Streetscape Project intends to plant 191 trees in the sidewalk; planting more than two trees for each tree that will be removed.
- The notices posted on the trees informed the public of the August 24, 2015 Public Works hearing to consider the proposed tree removals.
- At the August 24 hearing, a Public Works Landscape Architect, Public Works Urban Forester, and SFMTA staff provided testimony.
- 92 street trees in the sidewalk were originally recommended for removal by staff as part of the Van Ness Avenue Streetscape Project because those trees met the criteria for tree-removal: trees that were deemed to be in poor health or in decay, contain poor structure with injured trunks or limbs, pose public safety concerns (such as excessive leaning or branch failure), be prone to damage sidewalks again. 4 out of the 10 trees no longer being pursued for removal as part of the Van Ness BRT Project were added to the streets trees to be removed for the Van Ness Avenue Streetscape Project because they are in poor condition.
- Of the 92 sidewalk trees posted for removal as part of the streetscape project, the majority of the species are as follows: 45 of them are ficus trees (*Ficus microcarpa* 'Nitida'), 11 are blackwood acacia trees (*Acacia melanoxylon*), and 24 are London plane trees (*Platanus x hispanica*). Other species include *Ligustrum lucidum*, *Pittosporum undulatum* & *Pittosporum crassifolium*.
- The Public Works Urban Forester testified that many San Francisco ficus trees and blackwood acacia trees are in poor condition and that the Department no longer plants these species in sidewalks because they perform very poorly in San Francisco and are prone to large stem failures and root failures after sidewalk repairs or construction impacts have occurred.
- The Urban Forester also testified that, in November 2014, Public Works issued guidelines outlining removal criteria of *Ficus microcarpa* 'Nitida' trees ("Tree removal criteria for ficus trees," Order No. 183151).
- The Urban Forester explained that most of the 24 London plane trees are small and either have been vandalized, have poor structure from other injuries, or have a severe lean and need to be replaced.
- The Urban Forester also explained how an arborist assesses tree health, produced several photos/examples of Van Ness Avenue trees that met the tree-removal criteria, and volunteered to review any specific tree with any protester to ensure that the tree met the tree-removal criteria.
- At the hearing, approximately 28 speakers provided oral testimonies, and 2 written comments were submitted to the hearing officer.



- Approximately 21 speakers spoke against the removal of the trees either because they were not supportive of the Van Ness BRT or because they would like the existing trees to remain. Those speakers also extolled the benefits of mature healthy trees and testified that many of the existing trees have value.
- A few of the speakers spoke against the removal of specific sidewalk trees.
- Four of the speakers spoke in favor of the Van Ness BRT, therefore, were supportive of the tree-removals.
- The remaining speakers did not specifically say whether they were supportive or not supportive of the tree removal.
- At the time of the hearing, the two written submissions objected to the removal of the trees because they would like the existing trees to remain.
- After the hearing, many additional written comments were received. Most were advocating saving the existing trees.

After the hearing, the Urban Forester was directed by the hearing officer to meet with the tenants of 2701 Van Ness Avenue to address their concerns about the loss of the blackwood acacia tree adjacent to their property. The Urban Forester met with the residents on site and after reviewing the health of the tree and potential impacts, based on the amount of public testimony against the removal of this individual tree, Public Works will retain this tree and protect it from the construction activities.

Due to the amount of public testimony received against the proposed removals, the Director of Public Works directed the Urban Forester to review the health of all the sidewalk trees proposed for removal once again, to determine if any additional trees could be retained.

After this review, it was determined that in addition to retaining the blackwood acacia tree at 2701 Van Ness Avenue, five additional trees could be retained:

809 Van Ness: one (1) *Platanus acerifolia*
 1000 Van Ness: one (1) *Platanus acerifolia*
 1300 Van Ness: one (1) *Platanus acerifolia*
 2430 Van Ness: one (1) *Lophostemon confertus*
 2775 Van Ness: one (1) *Ficus microcarpa* 'Nitida'

When the Urban Forester evaluated the health of the 10 street trees that were no longer proposed for removal by the Van Ness BRT, the Urban Forest the following 6 trees were found to be in good enough condition to be retained. These trees are:

77 Van Ness: two (2) *Lophostemon confertus* (Tree no. 2 & 3)
 240 Van Ness: one (1) *Platanus acerifolia* (Tree no. 1)
 1142 Van Ness: one (1) *Platanus acerifolia* (Tree no. 1)
 1700 Van Ness: one (1) *Platanus acerifolia* (Tree no. 1)
 2323 Van Ness: one (1) *Lophostemon confertus* (Tree no. 1)



Overview of streetscape street tree removal quantities:

- 106 street trees originally proposed for removal (92 Van Ness Avenue Streetscape Project streetscape, 14 Van Ness BRT)
- 10 of the 14 street trees no longer sought for removal by the Van Ness BRT Project
- Department evaluated the 10 trees no longer slated for removal by the Van Ness BRT and found 4 were in poor condition
- Revised street tree removal total: 96 (92 + 4 = 96)
- Final review of streetscape trees proposed for removal
- 6 in good enough condition to retain
- Revised street tree total: 90 (96 – 6 = 90)

The Planning Department evaluated the environmental impacts, pursuant to CEQA, of the removal of the 90 street trees as part of the Better Streets Plan Related Improvement Projects MND checklist. The Better Streets Plan Related Improvement Projects checklist for the project is memorialized in a CEQA “note to file” with the Planning Department. Pursuant to a MND following mitigation measures will be adhered to:

- Mitigation Measure Bio-1: Biological Resources-Nesting Birds
- Mitigation Measure Cul-1: Archeological Accidental Discovery

Recommendation:

After consideration of letters and testimonies presented at the hearing the recommendation is as follows:

Approve the removal of the ninety (90) street trees in the sidewalk proposed for removal listed in Appendix A because:

- a) Those trees were deemed to be in poor health, contain poor structure, pose public safety concerns, or have root systems that are prone to damage sidewalks and the species are not tolerant of sidewalk and curb repairs.
- b) Public Works’ design for the project mitigated the tree removals by planning for the planting of nearly two trees for every sidewalk tree removed, and with the overall reduction in the number of trees proposed for removal, the replacement tree ratio is now greater than 2 to 1.
- c) Tree removals will be subject to Mitigation Measures Bio-1 and Cul-1 of the Better Streets Plan MND.

Appeal:

This Order may be appealed to the Board of Appeals within 15 days of June 20, 2017.

Board of Appeals
1650 Mission, Room 304
San Francisco, CA 94103
(between Van Ness and Duboce Avenues)
Phone: 415.575.6880
Fax: 415.575.6885



Regular office hours of the Board of Appeals are Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm. Appointments may be made for filing an appeal by calling 415-575-6880. All appeals must be filed in person. For additional information on the San Francisco Board of Appeals and to view the Appeal Process Overview, please visit their website at <http://sfgov.org/bdappeal/>

Appendix A

List of 90 street trees approved for removal

Trees are numbered with the flow of auto traffic on that side of the block

Address	/ Street	Tree #	Species
30	Van ness	2	Lophostemon confertus
100	Van ness	3	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
100	Van ness	4	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
100	Van ness	5	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
100	Van ness	6	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
100	Van ness	7	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
500	Van ness	2	Platanus acerifolia
512	Van ness	2	Platanus acerifolia
512	Van ness	3	Platanus acerifolia
590	Van ness	1	Platanus acerifolia
660 X	Van ness	2	Platanus acerifolia
750	Van ness	2	Platanus acerifolia
819	Van ness	1	Platanus acerifolia
851	van ness	2	Platanus acerifolia
1000	Van ness	3	Platanus acerifolia
1000	van ness	4	Platanus acerifolia
1001	Van ness	1	Platanus acerifolia
1001	van ness	3	Platanus acerifolia
1001	van ness	4	Platanus acerifolia
1035	van ness	1	Platanus acerifolia
1035	van ness	2	Platanus acerifolia
1035	van ness	3	Platanus acerifolia
1035	van ness	4	Platanus acerifolia
1233	van ness	2	Platanus acerifolia
1525	Van ness	1	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
1525	van ness	2	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
1595	van ness	1	Platanus acerifolia
1595	van ness	2	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
1640	Van ness	1	Pittosporum crassifolium
1640	Van ness	2	Pittosporum crassifolium
1640	Van ness	3	Pittosporum crassifolium
1700	van ness	2	Platanus acerifolia
1735	van ness	1	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
1735	van ness	2	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
1940	Van ness	1	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'



San Francisco Public Works

Making San Francisco a beautiful, livable, vibrant, and sustainable city.

1940	van ness	2	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
1946	van ness	1	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
1946	van ness	2	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2080	van ness	1	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2080	van ness	2	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2080	van ness	3	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2080	van ness	4	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2134	Van ness	1	Acacia melanoxylon
2107	Van ness	1	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2109	Van ness	1	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2113	Van ness	1	Ligustrum lucidum
2113	Van ness	2	Ligustrum lucidum
2113	Van ness	3	Ligustrum lucidum
2200	van ness	1	Acacia melanoxylon
2240	Van ness	1	Acacia melanoxylon
2300	Van ness	2	Lophostemon confertus
2300	Van ness	3	Platanus acerifolia
2305	Van ness	1	Acacia melanoxylon
2327	Van ness	1	Platanus acerifolia
2363	Van ness	2	Pittosporum undulatum
2363	Van ness	3	Pittosporum undulatum
2400	Van ness	1	Lophostemon confertus
2418	van ness	1	Acacia melanoxylon
2440	van ness	1	Acacia melanoxylon
2450	Van ness	1	Acacia melanoxylon
2415	Van ness	1	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2510	Van ness	1	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2511	Van ness	1	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2519	Van ness	1	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2529	Van ness	1	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2600	Van ness	1	Acacia melanoxylon
2620	Van ness	1	Acacia melanoxylon
2642	Van ness	2	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2656	Van ness	1	Acacia melanoxylon
2750	Van ness	1	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2750	Van ness	2	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2750	Van ness	3	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2750	Van ness	4	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2750	Van ness	5	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2750	Van ness	6	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2750	Van ness	7	Platanus acerifolia
2750	Van ness	8	Platanus acerifolia
2750	Van ness	9	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2750	Van ness	10	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2750	Van ness	11	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2750	Van ness	12	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'



2750	Van ness	13	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2750	Van ness	14	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2750	Van ness	15	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2750	Van ness	16	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2750	Van ness	17	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2750	Van ness	18	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2725	Van ness	1	Acacia melanoxylon
2805	Van ness	1	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'
2935	Van ness	1	Ficus microcarpa 'Nitida'

6/15/2017

X Mohammed Nuru

Nuru, Mohammed

Approver 1

Signed by: Nuru, Mohammed

